



Impact Report 2025



Dear CivicWell partners and supporters,

I've been a fan of biographies and historical fiction since I was a kid. So, it was no surprise that in 2025 I read several novels that were fictionalized accounts of women working behind the scenes of major innovations including physicist Mileva Marić and inventor Hedwig Kiesler Markey. Marić has recently been recognized as a key collaborator on developing the theory of relativity with her then-husband Albert Einstein. Kiesler Markey has been credited of late with the patent that was the precursor technology for modern Wi-Fi, GPS, and Bluetooth. She is more widely known by her stage name Hedy Lamarr.

Rather than viewing these stories as tragic, I see them as a source of inspiration. While CivicWell has spent more than four decades supporting local leaders doing transformative work that often flies under the radar, it does not diminish the impact or importance of these efforts.

In California—an influential global powerhouse and the country's biggest population—2.3 million residents live in rural communities, and 57 of our 58 counties have rural populations ([PPIC](#)). CivicWell has long provided partnership to small and rural communities through capacity building and technical assistance. In 2025, our [Community Design team](#) worked with residents of Fresno, Humboldt, Lake, Modoc, Riverside, Stanislaus, Tuolumne counties. In these smaller communities, the opportunity to move the needle is even more pronounced. Residents can engage directly with decision makers, and proportionally small financial investments and policy changes can yield monumental results.

On a national and statewide scale, 2025 brought forth titanic political shifts. Like thousands of other nonprofit organizations, CivicWell monitored and responded to seismic policy and funding changes under a new federal administration—one that was often at odds with our funders, partners, and policy priorities. Even within California, there were significant changes to the policy landscape. Our [fall webinar series](#) covered many of these topics including CEQA reform and the reimaged Cap and Invest program.

Reflecting on these diverse experiences in 2025, I take away two key lessons inspired by the novels I read about unsung scientists. First, we need to do a better job of telling our stories. Often the loudest megaphones control the narrative. Now more than ever, communities must leverage the myriad of media outlets and available resources to share their stories so that others are inspired to support their work. Second, and most importantly, we must convene and mobilize to make great things happen. Where one single leader or creator's expertise ends, the opportunity for another leader or creator begins. Our [Climate & Energy team](#) continued critical convenings of the [California Climate and Energy Collaborative \(CCEC\)](#), including the annual CCEC Forum, Local Energy Resources Network (LERN) meetings, State/Local Energy & Climate Coordination (SLECC) convenings, and the new Regional Energy & Climate Hubs (REACH). The CivicWell team took inspiration from these dialogues with state and regional leaders to prepare for innovative new approaches in 2026, including the debut of our [Policy Bridge](#) event.

I invite you to join CivicWell's network of inspirational leaders who are stepping out from behind the scenes to shape the narrative and amplify the message of a resilient and sustainable future for California and beyond.

Bernadette Austin
CivicWell CEO



2025 Impact

Inspire ◦ Equip ◦ Connect ◦ Cultivate



**\$680K
AWARDED**

Provided outreach and technical assistance to underserved communities, with \$680,135 awarded for Active and Multimodal Transportation Plans



10K+
LEADERS

connected through projects, communications, and events



18 MILLION+
RESIDENTS

live in areas where CivicWell is building local capacity



139 HOURS of programming provided to support and inspire local leaders



**10
RESOURCES**

New reports, tools, webinars, and guides



**76 MEETINGS
& EVENTS**

organized to engage communities and move priorities forward

Climate Change & Energy



California Climate and Energy Collaborative (CCEC)

In 2025, the Climate Change & Energy program strengthened CCEC's role as California's central hub for local and regional climate leadership, supporting hundreds of partners amid rapid policy shifts and growing urgency around affordability and resilience.



The team delivered the 16th Annual CCEC Forum with more than 550 participants, facilitated 11 Local Energy Resources Network (LERN) calls with over 750 registrants, and advanced the State/Local Energy & Climate Coordination (SLECC) initiative through quarterly convenings and the launch of a dynamic Priorities & Solutions Dashboard synthesizing hundreds of local and state solutions.

We expanded four Regional Energy & Climate Hubs (REACH) and produced regional landscape analyses for the Inland Empire, San Diego, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Looking ahead, we will scale REACH statewide, grow the SLECC platform, and continue accelerating implementation-focused, equitable climate and energy action.

Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition

In addition to CCEC, CivicWell administered the Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition (LGSEC) through September 2025, supporting its transition to fiscal sponsorship under the Urban Sustainability Directors Network.

For California, this is the premier local-government-focused event of the year, for staff, vendors, and others keeping pace with activities related to climate mitigation locally government trends.

Kim Springer
nextIs Solutions



After participating for over 10 years, I continue to appreciate how responsive and reflective this Forum is to the latest, greatest, and most impactful energy initiatives and policies.

Tyler Masters
I-REN/WRCOG



The ability to scope our projects in real-time, coupled with direct input from facilitators, insightful workshops, dynamic breakouts, and invaluable networking opportunities, was an absolute blessing.

Reverend Frank Jackson Jr.
Village Solutions Foundation



The experience was inspiring as I'm sure that with this level of effort and expertise, these individuals and [organizations] will have a significant positive impact on efforts to address climate change.

Petrea Ruth Moyle Marchand
Consero Solutions





The Community Design team partnered with communities around the state to conduct local visioning, planning and implementation of solutions for equitable and sustainable transportation, community connectivity, corridor and neighborhood revitalization, and safe routes to schools. We provided intensive technical assistance to help underserved communities and small towns develop ideas, recommendations, proposals, and access funding.

Funding for Community Mobility

We partnered with five jurisdictions to write proposal for Caltrans Sustainable Communities Planning Grants for combined total of \$1.5 million. Two have been awarded so far. We are awaiting announcements for the others this summer.

Community Engagement & Planning

Plans adopted by jurisdictions we partnered with include:

- Stanislaus County S 9th St Corridor Plan
- Firebaugh Community Connectivity and Downtown Revitalization Plan
- Lakeport Active Transportation Plan

We co-authored grant applications to secure funding and assemble multidisciplinary teams for these efforts. Our team supported project management, outreach, and education, and facilitated comprehensive public engagement processes including town halls, walk audits, design charrettes, and pop-up activities at community events and community destinations.

We are currently assisting Modoc County with “Modoc Moves,” a regionwide planning initiative to develop a comprehensive active transportation, transit, and multimodal safety plan.

Walk Audits, Safe Routes to School Assessments, and Quick Builds

Continuing our long-standing collaboration with renowned Walkable Communities expert and Civic Innovator Dan Burden and Blue Zones experts, we conducted walk audits, site assessments, and temporary pop-up installations with elected leaders, agency representatives, school officials, and community advocates in Arcata (Humboldt County); Sonora and Jamestown (Tuolumne County); Clearlake, Lower Lake, and Lakeport (Lake County); and Banning (Riverside County).

In Sonora and Clearlake, the focus was on active transportation and placemaking improvements along their historic main street corridors. In Arcata, Jamestown, Lakeport, Lower Lake, and Banning, efforts centered on strengthening Safe Routes to School.

In Arcata, Dan and CivicWell Community Design Program Director Josh Meyer partnered with city and school staff to temporarily transform an intersection and school frontage using art, tape, signage, and cones to demonstrate practical safety and walkability improvements. The city is now pursuing funding to implement upgrades.

In Banning, Josh and engineer Tom Bertulis collaborated with the city public works director to develop a quick-build design for improvements at a challenging intersection near a school entrance. The city plans to install the improvements later this year.

Project Highlight

As part of the Humboldt Multimodal and Vibrant Neighborhoods Planning Project, CivicWell, Dan Burden, and Victor Dover, Founding Principal of Dover, Kohl & Partners, visited Humboldt County to walk key corridors, meet with residents and local staff, and lead a public workshop on tools and strategies for creating safer, more walkable and rollable, and more vibrant communities.

“These events provided a hands-on opportunity for community members to walk and roll their streets alongside national leaders, share their lived experiences, and help shape safer, more inviting—and more fiscally sustainable—places for all.”

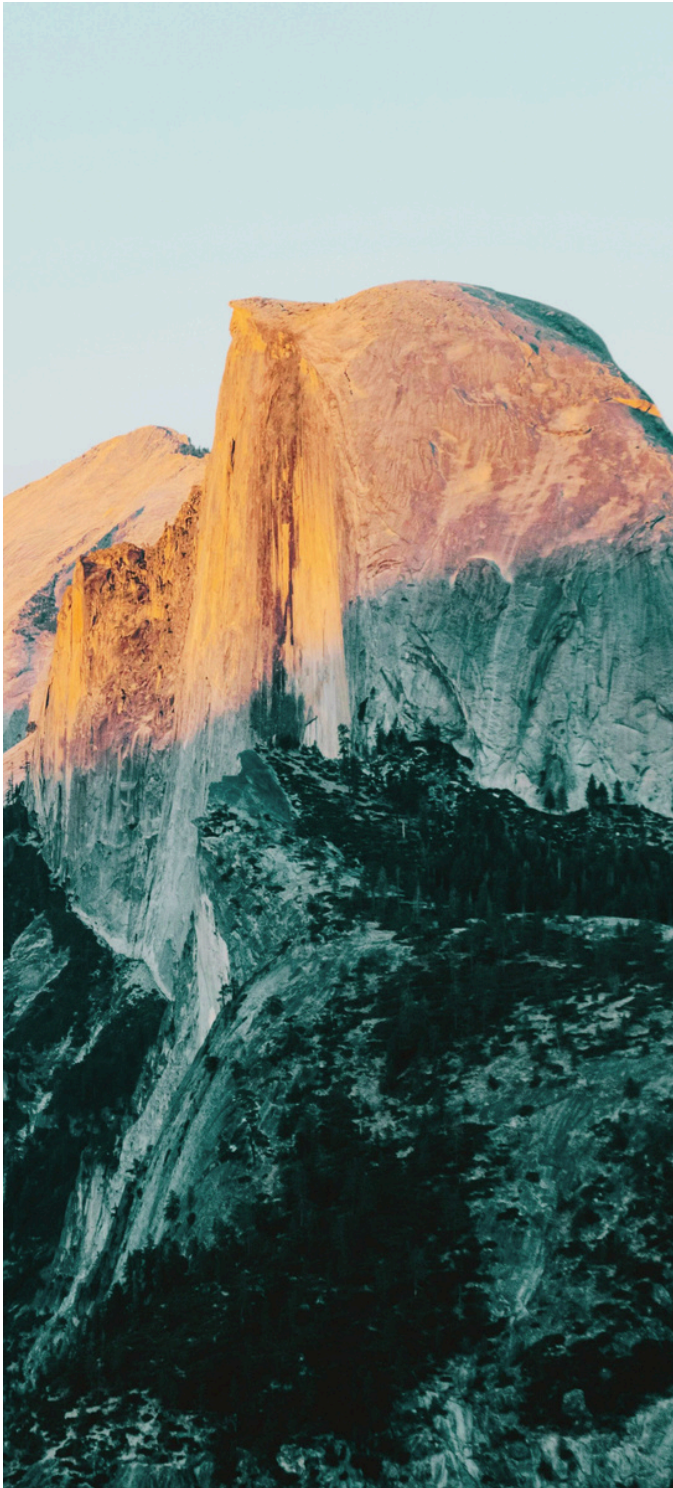
Oona Smith

Senior Regional Planner, Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG)

We are developing reports with recommendations based on site visits in Hoopa Valley, Arcata, and Eureka. We are also assisting HCAOG in developing an online resource with findings and recommendations from the series of walks, meetings, and presentations.



CivicWell Policymakers Conference



The 33rd annual CivicWell Policymakers Conference brought together over 110 local elected officials from across California in majestic Yosemite National Park. The agenda featured sessions on wildfire response and recovery, key insights from federal agency leaders on the next four years, forward-looking state and local collaboration, actions for safeguarding housing and wildlands amid wildfire risk and insurance uncertainty, lessons from pioneering local initiatives in water innovation, and affordability in a green economy.

A few highlights that local leaders brought back to their home communities:

Invest in recovery before disasters happen.

Prepare for disaster recovery, not just response. Find ways to save ourselves rather than relying on outside funding—Climate Resilience Districts are a promising model.

Rebuild the civic fabric. Invest in ways for residents to connect and communicate. Involve key stakeholders in decision-making. Invite folks to participate on Neighborhood Emergency Support Teams (NESTs) and Fire Safe Councils.

Restore faith in government. Evolve government structure. Improve public engagement strategies. Acknowledge that local control comes with local responsibility.

Joy is resistance. Embrace the power of everyday connections, time in nature, and the things that bring you joy.



Civicwell Policymakers Conference offers a community of leaders that focus on current city, state and national issues, in the picturesque setting of Yosemite. It's not only beautiful, it's a solution incubator for cities.

Jesse Loren
Councilmember, City of Winters



Trying to enact change as a policymaker in a rural region can be challenging and isolating. Attending the Policymakers Conference made me feel both inspired and supported in my efforts to make my community more resilient to climate change.

Bryce Goldstein
Councilmember, City of Chico

Webinars



Rebuilding California: Affordable, Sustainable Housing After Disaster

Speakers from various energy efficiency programs discussed what they offer and how California can rebuild sustainably and affordably.

[Watch Here](#)



Building Back Better with Efficiency and Electrification

Experts provided strategies and case studies on how efficiency and electrification can help communities “build back better,” align with Climate Action Plans, and strengthen local resilience.

[Watch Here](#)



The Future of the Circular Economy

This webinar featured innovative and cost-effective programs that work toward a truly circular economy—one that eliminates or even monetizes products at end-of-life and supports the recycling of industrial products and organics.

[Watch Here](#)



CEQA Reform: How Will 2025 Legislative Reforms to CEQA and Other Laws Affect My Community?

Experts from the public and private sectors provided an overview of the legislation that amended the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the California Planning and Zoning Law, the California Building Code, and other related laws. They shared insights on anticipated impacts for local governments and practitioners including housing development, climate action planning, and parks and trails.

[Watch Here](#)



Cap and Invest: What Do New Policies Mean for Local Leaders?

The final webinar of the series provided insights into the future of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund under the rebranded Cap and Invest Program and featured a panel of leaders involved in negotiating and implementing these policies.

[Watch Here](#)

Strategic Partners

CivicWell works to advance sustainable community solutions throughout California and the nation. We form strategic partnerships with businesses, philanthropic organizations, nonprofits, and other groups to help create a strong pipeline of transformative projects.

By becoming a member of the Strategic Partner Program, you expand your impact through cutting-edge initiatives advancing sustainable, equitable, and resilient community solutions. We strive to provide Strategic Partners with opportunities to build relationships with local elected officials and leaders, deepen your impact, and grow brand recognition in the clean and green economy.

Visit civicwell.org/partner for more information.





CivicWell's role as a trusted connector between state policy, local government priorities, and practitioners adds clear value to ICF's work in California. As a Strategic Partner, we're able to contribute practical expertise while staying closely aligned with evolving policy and funding landscapes.

Ryan Arba
Business Development Manager, ICF

MCE loves our connection to CivicWell because of the deep opportunities to connect with like-minded, forward-thinking public agencies to share best practices and support each other.

Dawn Weisz
CEO, MCE Clean Energy



As a Strategic Partner, AARP California gains meaningful opportunities to collaborate with and connect directly to local elected officials, turning statewide priorities into on-the-ground impact that benefit older adults and communities of all ages. Through joint initiatives like advancing livable communities, the partnership supports local governments in integrating issues like housing and transportation to support resilient, inclusive communities where people of all ages can thrive.

Jennifer Berdugo
Strategic Planning Director, AARP California



AARP California hosted a Nature Walk at the CivicWell Policymakers Conference in Yosemite

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CIVICWELL

PO Box 188800
Sacramento, CA 95818

916.448.1198

civicwell.org

