

**ATTACHMENT B**

**CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL EQUITY STUDY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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The Fund for Santa Barbara (FUND) is currently leading the region's first regional equity study in collaboration with USC's Equity Research Institute (ERI) and the UCSB Blum Center on Poverty, Inequality, and Democracy (Blum Center). The aim of the Central Coast Regional Equity Study is to produce equity-based actionable data for policy and systems change efforts in the Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties region. Building from prior regional equity profiles on regions such as the City and County of Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Oakland, the Central Coast Regional Equity Study centers vital research data and analysis on the particular ways the pandemic has both revealed and deepened pre-existing structural inequities, as well as the priorities elevated by the growing racial justice movement. Areas of particular focus will include: housing and homelessness, climate justice, racial justice, access to healthcare, K-12 education and post-secondary education. The overall project aims at building out the capacity locally for producing subsequent studies, which may expand to include other Central Coast counties and additional areas of focus.

#### **Roadmap to Recovery**

While the initial goal of the project was to replicate similar equity studies conducted around the state for completion in early 2021, the pandemic and the growing racial justice movement have significantly impacted the Central Coast Regional Equity Study, both in requiring an important research pivot, and therefore the incorporation of additional data gathering methodologies, as well as pushing back the initial timeline for the completion of the first report phase of the project and its community rollout. The overall stated goal of the project was to produce an equity profile of the California Central Coast region of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties in an effort to deepen the understanding of regional disparities, facilitate a region-wide conversation around equity, and support the planning and implementation of initiatives focused on advancing social, health, and economic equity. However, due to the importance of amplifying the COVID-19 pandemic's growing social and economic impacts in our region, FUND have worked to enhance the study framing and indicators to present particular impacts on communities and analysis on specific ways the pandemic has both revealed and deepened pre-existing structural inequities, as well as the priorities elevated by the growing racial justice movement. Areas of particular focus include policies related to: housing and homelessness, climate justice, criminal justice, access to healthcare, K-12 education, and post-secondary education. Even more of a priority than before, the regional equity study further aims to build the long-term local capacity for conducting subsequent studies by providing staffing and institutional engagement to ensure the data is accessible, actionable, and built upon over time. Over time this may include the addition of other Central Coast counties and additional areas of focus as well as future reiterations of the report.

Our project partners with UCSB and USC agreed that the template associated with the PolicyLink/National Equity Atlas was no longer the most appropriate for our study, especially given the importance of capturing the disparate impacts of the pandemic, the need for racial justice in systems of public safety, and the need to confront the structural inequities of low-wage work, as well as opportunity structures--and more generally to be responsive to the demands of the current moment. Several of the core indicators will remain the same, but moving away from the PolicyLink/National Equity Atlas template and branding will create more flexibility, as well as the opportunity to create a more distinctive, Central Coast-specific branding. A recent report, No Going Back, issued by the USC Equity Research Institute (ERI) in partnership with UCLA and a

consortium of L.A. funders is more closely aligned with the mix of issues and framing the FUND anticipates for the project.

### **Accomplishments of Regional Equity Study Over Last Year**

Since the Central Coast Regional Equity Study was launched in early 2020, the following accomplishments have been achieved:

#### **I. Establish Project Steering Committee**

In the early development of the project FUND recruited thirteen (13) individuals to the Central Coast Equity Study Steering Committee, with the role of guiding the project process, timeline, and the establishment of the foundation for building the long-term capacity of the project. Representation on the Steering Committee reflects the key partner institutions; the USC Equity Research Institute (ERI), UCSB Division of Social Sciences, and Blum Center on Poverty, Inequality, and Democracy (Blum Center), and the Fund for Santa Barbara (FUND)--alongside representatives from values-aligned trusted regional grassroots community-based organizations and public institutions, such as the Central Coast Alliance United for A Sustainable Economy (CAUSE) and Allan Hancock College, located in Santa Maria, among others.

#### **II. Establish Advisory Committee**

In an effort to maximize community input into the development of the project and promote community buy-in and utilization of the data generated by the project, in April 2020, the project established its community advisory committee. The Central Coast Regional Equity Study Advisory Committee is currently composed of 22 key stakeholders from throughout the two-county region, including representatives from foundations, non-profit community organizations, government agencies and legislative officials, higher education, business, and philanthropic sector stakeholders. For example, university institutions include California State University at Channel Islands, California Lutheran University, the three community colleges of the Ventura County Community College District, Allan Hancock Community College and Santa Barbara City College.

Over the last ten months, Advisory Committee members have provided advice on equity indicators and qualitative data collection, participated in community consultation sessions, and will provide feedback on the final report and its community-wide rollout. More specifically, Advisory Committee members have committed to also:

- Serve as ambassadors and advocates for the Regional Equity Study and its utilization;
- Connect the project to other similar and potentially aligned efforts in the region;
- Identify data sources for use in the current and subsequent year studies; and
- Identify financial and human resources to sustain the project long term.

#### **USC Initial Maps and List of Indicators**

To date, a working draft of over 50 indicators across various categories has been generated by the project's partner organization, the USC Equity Research Institute (ERI)--marking Opportunity, Economic Benefits, Equity, Adequacy, and Demographics. Several sample maps have also been provided demonstrating how the data might be presented. Informed by the community consultations described below, the next and final stage in the indicators' development is now near complete.

## **Municipal Budget Project**

Inspired by the growing public demands for a massive redirecting of public dollars as part of a reimagining of long-established policies and local government institutions, the project, with the support of UCSB graduate students, has also undertaken an auxiliary data gathering effort on municipal budgets and other local policies. The municipal budget effort has included documentation on city spending around such issues as environmental justice, affordable housing construction, law enforcement spending, COVID response policies, food bank usage, and others.

## **Community Consultations**

As part of the project's effort to capture critical data on the social and economic impact of the pandemic, the FUND and the UCSB Blum Center conducted seventeen community consultations between August 2020 and February 2021 with over 130 key community stakeholders, drafting an extensive summary of key findings and impact on possible indicators, framing, and additional research needed ahead.

Community consultations have included those focusing on priority issues; the audience and constituency of people/groups positioned to make use of the report; specific indicators that will be especially important to include; highlight issues/disparities/inter and intra-county disparities that emerge from 'on the ground' knowledge and don't readily appear in large-sample data bases; spotlight rural, sub-municipal, and unincorporated areas FUND should be sure to include.

The data was provided in a report to ERI toward the development and refinement of the final list of indicators that can be drawn from their sources; FUND/UCSB will continue to gather municipal-level policy, qualitative, and other important data not available from these sources.

The consultations spanned eight general sessions and nine issue-specific sessions covering K-12 Education, Public Higher Education, Racial Justice, Housing & Houselessness, Access to Public Health, Small Business, Criminal Justice and Climate Justice. Each 1.5-2-hour consultation was designed to learn about the issues and concerns that constituents of the FUND hope to see addressed in the Central Coast Regional Equity Study; insights they can provide about how inequality manifests "on the ground" and in their work; how they are experiencing the pandemic and the individual and organizational-level changes it has introduced; and how they are imagining change, informed by data, to move to a more equitable future. While each consultation was unique, naturally dynamic, and free flowing, they all included a brief summary of the Equity Study and its aims, encouragement for an ongoing conversation, and some or all of the following questions:

- *How has the pandemic affected your work?*
- *What information in our Equity Study would be helpful in your work?*
- *What are the highest priority issues for you?*
- *How do you think you might use this report in your work?*

This extensive consultation process, not only cultivated a wealth of insight into how to best position this study and what people are witnessing from their individual and their networks' vantage points, but also created a broad-based and vital community buy-in into the study, with participants overwhelmingly indicating their strong support and need for an initiative like this.

## **Preliminary Findings Presented to Steering Committee/ Feedback Being Compiled**

Based on the data obtained from the community consultations and initial feedback to the first set of maps and list of indicators generated by ERI, in early April the research team from USC's Equity Research Institute presented their preliminary findings. The research team is now compiling feedback from all of our Steering Committee members and several members of the advisory committee around additional questions, and identification of possible data gaps in the preliminary findings, as well as what local data sources may be available to us. FUND will be forwarding this feedback to ERI in the coming week, followed by an additional follow-up meeting with ERI and the project steering committee, as well as a convening with the full 22-member advisory committee in May for their feedback. In the meantime, FUND is completing the design of an interview instrument for conducting a number of individual interviews in May/June with key community members, as FUND also begin the writing of sections of the report.

### **Community Training Workshops**

As part of the project's effort to maximize the impact of the report through its use by community organizations, philanthropic institutions, and government agencies, the FUND scheduled its first series of training workshops for September and October 2020.

### **Funding Support**

Having secured sufficient funding for the first report phase of the project, a concerted effort has been made to develop funder partnerships for the project that could be lasting and could serve as a funding base for building the long-term ongoing capacity for undertaking subsequent regional equity studies. Providing significant foundation partnership credibility, early funders, such as the Weingart Foundation, California Endowment and Blue Shield Foundation grant support, have allowed the FUND to leverage grant funding support from several regional funders and project sponsors. They include: The Ventura County Community Foundation, the Santa Barbara Foundation, the McCune Foundation, the Santa Barbara City College Foundation, and the James Bower Foundation.

As addressed above, the pandemic and the national racial justice movement has impacted the overall framing of the project, as well as the inclusion of several additional research methodologies. As a result of these external influences, the Central Coast Regional Equity Study has placed even greater emphasis on producing equity-based actionable data for policy and systems change efforts in the Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties region in support of advancing progressive change and movements for social, political, economic, and environmental justice. Overall, in an effort to meet the new realities brought about by the COVID pandemic and the growing national racial justice movement, the project has undertaken several key project changes, including:

- The reframing of the research project to better reflect the perspective of ERI report, "No Going Back."
- Greater community engagement in order to gather data on the impact of the pandemic in the form of community consultations.
- Overall timeline pushed back, with plans of completion of the first research report and its roll out in September/ October 2021.

### **Community Partnership and Collaborative Approach**

From its inception, the project has placed a priority on collaboration and community partnerships -- an effort that has brought together multiple organizations, institutions, and community leaders from a broad range of sectors and representing a broad cross section of our region. The project comes from the premise that the structural change the project seeks to support cannot be

undertaken by one organization, but rather must be the collaborative work of multiple partners and across overlapping and intersecting issue areas and demographics.

The project's broad engagement of community stakeholders and leaders through community consultations and various other meetings also represents the project's strong collaborative approach. Our seventeen community consultations--some centering key issues of focus, others more generally--engaged over 130 community members representing hundreds more constituents from our region. This is helping us ensure the report remains true to the lived experiences and insight from those groups and is tailored to how they might use the report.

As stated above, from the very beginning, FUND envisioned this project being an ongoing collaborative effort for the long haul--not simply one report--which will ensure the report's ongoing responsiveness to community needs and current events, accessibility in data access, and continued improvement of its approach and content.

### **Equity Focus**

This study aims to produce actionable data for policy and systems change efforts in our region in support of advancing progressive change and movements for social, political, economic, and environmental justice--and does so with the explicit approach centering equity in our curation and presentation of actional data and research. Of particular interest is the ways in which the pandemic has both revealed and deepened pre-existing structural inequities in our social and economic fabric--as well as those elevated by the growing racial justice movement. Areas of particular focus will include policies related to housing and homelessness, climate justice, racial justice, access to healthcare, pre-K-12 and post-secondary education--as key areas of interest in better understanding core areas of opportunity when reimagining what a more equitable region might look like. Building from the project's community consultations, FUND have also sought to document in the report the voices of those most impacted by the pandemic, from educators to essential workers. Working closely with community-based organizations, the project is soon to undertake a series of interviews with community members and representatives from service organizations and agencies.

*Document produced on April 22, 2021 by Marcos Vargas, Executive Director of The Fund for Santa Barbara*