



2022 ANNUAL REPORT
BLUE SKY CENTER



**STOP AND SEE THE
BLUE SKIES
SMILING AT YOU**

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OUR MISSION

We're working to strengthen our rural communities by supporting entrepreneurs and building our regional creative and economic resources.

Estamos trabajando para fortalecer nuestras comunidades rurales apoyando a los empresarios y construyendo nuestros recursos creativos y económicos regionales.

NUESTRA MISIÓN

OUR TEAM

Kelly Schmandt Ferguson
2022 President of the Board;
Chief of Staff at [Automotus](#)

Jesse Sugarmann
2022 Memorykeeper of
the Board; Artist and
Educator at [California State
University, Bakersfield](#)

Coty Hastie
2022 Treasurer of the
Board; Analyst and Asset
Manager with [AutoCamp](#)

Bill Kelley Jr.
Member of the Board;
Curator, Writer, and
Educator at [California State
University, Bakersfield](#)

A Note from Our Board of Directors

What a tremendous year it's been: full of challenge, triumph, and change. The Blue Sky team faced a steep climb at the start of 2022, but through determination and commitment to the Cuyama Valley and rural resilience, we emerged stronger, more sustainable, and with a renewed appreciation for our community, partners, supporters, and friends.

This year has been an opportunity to celebrate and share in the beauty of the Cuyama Valley and community through art, drink, food, togetherness, and stories. This celebration would not be possible without our incredible team and the support of our friends through donations, time, and other countless resources to enable our emergence as a stronger organization in the years to come.

In the coming pages, we think you'll be inspired by these stories and connect with the unique character of the Cuyama Valley. We hope you will enjoy reading what our team has assembled and are inspired to come take part in a visit to Blue Sky.

Una Nota de Nuestra Junta Directiva

Qué tremendo año ha sido: lleno de desafíos, triunfos y cambios. El equipo de Blue Sky enfrentó un ascenso empinado a principios de 2022, pero a través de la determinación y el compromiso con el valle de Cuyama y la resiliencia rural, salimos más fuertes, más sostenibles y con un aprecio renovado por nuestra comunidad, socios, partidarios y amigos.

Este año ha sido una oportunidad para celebrar y compartir la belleza del Valle de Cuyama y la comunidad a través del arte, la bebida, la comida, la unión y las historias. Esta celebración no sería posible sin nuestro increíble equipo y el apoyo de nuestros amigos a través de donaciones, tiempo y otros innumerables recursos para permitirnos emerger como una organización más fuerte en los años próximos.

En las próximas páginas, creemos que se inspirará en estas historias y se conectará con el carácter único del valle de Cuyama. Esperamos que disfrute leyendo lo que nuestro equipo ha reunido y que se sienta inspirado para participar en una visita a Blue Sky.



Em Johnson, Executive Director (thru August) Director of Strategy (September forward)

Evolution is not linear. —Grace Lee Boggs

Through measured and deliberate work, Em has been leading rural innovation through social enterprises and systems thinking with Blue Sky Center since 2016. She is motivated by holistic community investment that uses celebratory tools of art and creative community engagement, often bringing people together over food. In the Cuyama Valley, Em connects people to resources, developing a self-sufficient model by blending entrepreneurial initiatives to reclaim the power of rural resiliency.

Jack Forinash, Executive Director

*A place for everything, everything in its place.
—Benjamin Franklin*

Jack's professional practice is one of tracking and sorting. The work Jack leads as a "spreadsheet artist" at Blue Sky Center delivers reports and assessments of what opportunities there are for investment in Cuyama. This work in 2022 came in the forms of securing funding to support community priorities as well as in opportunities to work with one another creatively as neighbors, making the artwork together. There's a lot to do, a lot that can get done by our resourceful community, and through background preparations, memorykeeping, and deliberate steady steps we can get us there.



Staff

Sandra Uribe, Land Steward

Emprendedora, compromiso, reunión

Mayela Rodriguez, Arts Program Manager

Artist, educator, astrologer

Asia Van Aken, Ventures Manager (July forward)

Bee enthusiast, bone collector, meadologist

Alicia Muniz, Community Coordinator (through October)

Optimist, supporter, mother

Corbin LaMont, Creative Director (through June)

Pepper jam, amarillo, wildflower

Katrina Staaf, Rural Community Designer (through July)

Daydreamer, absorber, synthesizer

Rob Barnett, Food Action Coordinator (through July)

Collaborator, researcher, hummingbird

ASIA



KATRINA



MAYELA



CORBIN



JACK



ROB



EM



ALICIA



SANDRA



Contractors and Consultants

The hands and minds that help Blue Sky get things done in 2022.

Abby Uribe, Dump Day Flyerer

Alejandro Hernandez, Dump Day Hauler

Alexander Hernandez, Dump Day Hauler

Alyssa Cantu, Dump Day Hauler

Anthony Fonseca, Dump Day Hauler

Aviation Striping, Inc., L88 Airstrip Markings Painter

Brenton Kelly, Dump Day Hauler

Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP, Water Adjudication Lawyer

Carlos Alberto Calel, Dump Day Hauler

Carolina Solorio, Housekeeper & Dump Day Hauler

Catalina Alarcon, Dump Day Flyerer

Cesar Uribe, Facilities Maintenance & Dump Day Hauler

Cesar E. Uribe, Dump Day Hauler

Conner Goller, Dump Day Flyerer

Corazón del Pueblo, Día de los Muertos Consultant

Diana Pereira, Balance Financial, Accountant

Eric Fonseca, Dump Day Hauler

Genesis Gonzalez, Dump Day Flyerer

Gerardo Moreno, Dump Day Flyerer and Hauler

Haris Mesic, Dump Day Hauler

John Schinnerer, Sociocracy Consultant

Instituto de Lengua S.C., Language Skills Teachers

Isai Gonzalez, Dump Day Flyerer

Kaylee Roden, Dump Day Flyerer

Kendall Ward, Dump Day Flyerer

Kern Asphalt, L88 Asphalt Paver

Lalo Eduardo Marcha, L88 Maintenance

Lucas Spivey, Interim Executive Director

Miguel A. Fonseca, Dump Day Hauler

Mike Gil, Dump Day Hauler

Organización en California de Líderes

Campesinas, Vecino-a-Vecino Outreach Consultant

Pedro Rodriguez, Dump Day Hauler

Pete Mendiburu, L88 Maintenance

Quinten Goller, Dump Day Flyerer

Raul Monzon, Groundskeeper & Dump Day Flyerer

Roberto Vasquez, Dump Day Hauler

Rural Community Assistance Corporation, Made in Cuyama & Sustainability Planning Consultant

Rylee Alarcon, Dump Day Flyerer

Samantha Ortiz, Dump Day Flyerer

Samantha Uribe-Deloya, Wedding Event Support & Dump Day Flyerer and Hauler

Sociocracy For All, Sociocracy Consultant

Will Price Backhoe Service, L88 Maintenance



Artists, Designers, & Co-Creators

The creative cultural workers that partnered with us to present work that is inclusive, impactful, and beautiful.

204 Made, Cuyama Beverage Co. Marketing Consultant

Abby Uribe-Deloya, Cast of Superbloom (“Leyland” & “Townie 2 / Residente 2”)

Alex Barreto Hathaway, Director of Superbloom

Alex Guerrero, Warrior Wagons, Property Maintenance, L88 Sign Project, & Jardines Victoria Fabricator

Alfonso Gamino, Panelist for Community Action Fellows

Alma Aguilar, Puppeteer / Titiritera of Superbloom (“Saint of Love and Patience / Santa del Amor y la Paciencia”)

Angelo Beaz, Cast of Superbloom (Ensemble / Ensemble)

Ash Hanson, Director of Superbloom

Brayden Peevy, Cast of Superbloom (“Mr. Barnes”)

Cesar “Elias” Uribe, Jardines Victoria Installation Assistance & Dump Day Hauler

Charlene Cooper, Cast of Superbloom (“Old-Timey Photographer / Fotógrafo de Antaño”)

Dabrya Plascencia Fonseca, Movement Captain / Capitana de Movimiento of Superbloom

Daleyza Barboza, Cast of Superbloom (Ensemble / Ensemble)

Dulcemaria Carranza, Cast of Superbloom (“Mariflor”)

Elias Montes, Puppeteer / Titiriterx of Superbloom (“Saint of Love and Patience / Santa del Amor y la Paciencia”)

Em Johnson, Cast of Superbloom (“Influencer 2 / Influyente 2”)

Fatima Fonseca, Cast of Superbloom (Ensemble / Ensemble)

Felicity Aguilar, Cast of Superbloom (Ensemble / Ensemble)

Felipe Garcia, Caterer for BSC Annual Summit & Dump Day

Garrett Gerstenberger, L88 Branding Designer

Gerardo Beaz, Cast of Superbloom (“Jesús” & Ensemble / Ensemble)

Graciela Dueñas Fonseca, Prop-maker / Fabricante de Utería of Superbloom

Guadalupe Fonseca, Cast of Superbloom (“Greg” and “Forinash”)

Imogen Montes, Puppeteer / Titiriterx of Superbloom (“Confusion Monster / Monstruo de Confusión”)

Ismael Garcia, Welder/Fabricator for L88 Project & Property Maintenance

Jack Forinash, Cast of Superbloom (“Influencer 1 / Influyente 1”)

Jessica Barboza, Cast of Superbloom (“Sra. Carrera”)

Jimmy Johnson, Songwriter, Performer, & Music Director / Director de Musica of Superbloom

Joel Martinez, Videographer / Videógrafo of Superbloom

John Coats, Set Designer / Diseñador de Escena of Superbloom

José Beaz, Cast of Superbloom (“Carrera”)

Joseph Fonseca, Movement Captain / Capitán de Movimiento of Superbloom

Katrina Staaf, Cast of Superbloom (“Townie 1 / Residente 1”)

Katy Alarcon, Cast of Superbloom (“Michele”)

Kaylee Ortega, Cast of Superbloom (Ensemble / Ensemble)

Kevin Soto, Cast of Superbloom (Ensemble / Ensemble)

Khloee Peevy, Cast of Superbloom (“Gamiño” & “Postmaster / Administrador de Correos”)

Kiana Toossi, Website Consultant

Artists, Designers, & Co-Creators

Luke Viscusi, Grants Data Analyst

Margarita de la Torre, Caterer for Jardines Victoria Meeting

Maria Carpenter, Translator for Dump Day Posters

Maria Carranza, Interpreter & Cinnamon Rolls Workshop Leader

Mary Welcome, Graphic Designer for Farmworker Housing Report, Event Feasibility Report, & 2022 Annual Report

Mathew Fonseca, Cast of Superbloom (Ensemble / Ensemble)

Mayela Rodriguez, Puppeteer / Titiritera of Superbloom (“Confusion Monster / Monstruo de Confusión”)

Michelle Lopez-Dohrn, Fermentation Workshop Leader

Miquela Davis, Zinemaker & Teaching Artist for Vecino-a-Vecino

Nettie Fonseca, Propmaker for Superbloom

Noé Montes, Artist-in-residence for Vecino-a-Vecino, Photographer / Fotógrafo of Superbloom

Noemi Vera, Propmaker for Superbloom & Garlic Planting Workshop Leader

Norma Lopez, Jardines Victoria Leader & Nopales Workshop Leader

Norma Soto, Co-Creator for Superbloom & Jardines Victoria Leader

Office of Virtue, Graphic Designer for 2021 Annual Report and Blue Sky Communications

Pam Baczuk, Costumer + Recruiter / Costuera + Reclutadora of Superbloom, Dump Day Coordinator, & Panelist for Community Action Fellows

Paul Schreiber, Translator of Farmworker Housing Report

Raul Pena, Cast of Superbloom (“José” & “Confusion Monster / Monstruo de Confusión”) & Panelist for Community Action Fellows

Richard Studer, Cast of Superbloom (“Saint of Love and Patience / Santa del Amor y la Paciencia”)

Rosalba (Rosy) Fonseca, Cast of Superbloom (“Consuelo”) & Panelist for Community Action Fellows

Rylee Alarcon, Cast of Superbloom (“Nerdy Gal / Chica Nerd”)

Sam Ihrig, Painter for Cuyama Kitchen

Samantha Uribe-Deloya, Flower-maker / Fabricante de Flores of Superbloom & Photographer for Workshops

Samuel Duarte, Poet & Artist for Día de los Muertos

Sandra Uribe, Community Coordinator & Propmaker for Superbloom

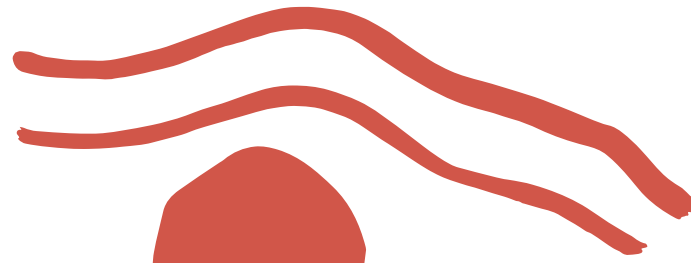
Sasha Alarcon, Propmaker for Superbloom

Susana Rivero, Proofreader for Farmworker Housing Report

Vanessa DeCouto, Community Action Fellow in partnership with [Amplify Arts Project](#)

Yuritze Fonseca, Cast of Superbloom (“Lupe”) & Wedding Event Support

Zale Morris, Cast of Superbloom (“Mr. Morel” & “VBP” [Very Bad Pup / Perrito Muy Malo]) & Panelist for Community Action Fellows



Ambassadors

An Ambassador is a professional volunteer role at the Blue Sky Center. BSC has ongoing special projects that can benefit from the experience and insight of our Ambassadors. In addition to their technical and strategic support, Ambassadors commit to be advocates for the organization, sharing BSC resources, updates, and impact with their circles of friends and contacts. If you're interested in this opportunity, visit blueskycenter.org/ambassadors and contact us!

Cecilia Lopez, Blue Sky Language Access Ambassador

Chris Cohen, Blue Sky Ventures Ambassador

David Kietzman, Blue Sky Communications Ambassador

Eric Junker, Blue Sky Los Angeles Ambassador

F. Paul Chounet, Blue Sky Partnerships Ambassador

Steve Sappington, Blue Sky L88 Airstrip Ambassador



FROM THE DIRECTORS

This year—2022—has Cuyama emerging. Just as the flower seeds wait patiently under the surface for the perfect mix of water, temperature, and sunlight, many of our neighbors have been practicing dormancy as a way of protecting each other. This year, though, we cautiously cracked the front doors, let in the opportunities, and began to have the energy and confidence to reconvene.

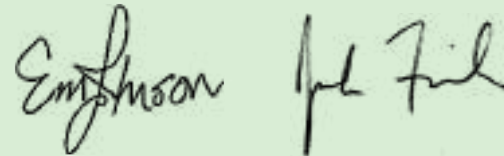
Although some flowers bloom on the hillsides every year, there hasn't been a full "superbloom"—as it is known—since 2019. Even in 2022 it still wasn't the ideal conditions. So instead we took on projects to support these milestones of emergence:

- we've hired three new team members to lead our ventures and programming beyond the completed five-year term of our AmeriCorps VISTA support;
- our Victory Gardens program bringing home-grown food to backyards now has 37 families participating;
- our L88 airstrip has been completely resurfaced, ensuring its availability for emergency services and recreation for years to come;
- and we built and performed a community-wide theatrical production "Superbloom!" that re-ignites our impulses to care for one another and work together.

We always appreciate the winter here in the Cuyama Valley. It's a time to gather close and reflect, while also making plans. We have a lot of activities coming up, many things we've never taken on before: a pilot project to provide water to Cuyama homes, a full slate of artists-in-residence, and a roadside beautification project, to name a few.

Our staff have carried us here, ever-enduring. And we often were simply providing opportunities, using our time to facilitate local co-creators doing the work. As you'll see from this report, we have quite an expansive team of Cuyamans that get things done, improving quality of life for our neighbors.

Neighbor to neighbor,



Em Johnson and Jack Forinash



DE LOS DIRECTORES

Este año, 2022, tiene Cuyama emergente. Así como las semillas de las flores esperan pacientemente bajo la superficie la combinación perfecta de agua, temperatura y luz solar, muchos de nuestros vecinos han estado practicando la latencia como una forma de protegerse unos a otros. Este año, sin embargo, abrimos las puertas con cuidado, dejamos entrar las oportunidades y comenzamos a tener la energía y la confianza para volver a reunirnos.

Aunque algunas flores florecen en las laderas todos los años, no ha habido una “Superbloom” completa, como se la conoce, desde 2019. Incluso en 2022 todavía no se dieron las condiciones ideales. Entonces, en cambio, asumimos proyectos para apoyar estos momentos de emergencia:

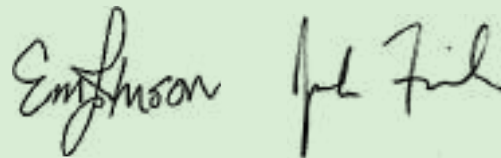
- hemos contratado a tres nuevos miembros del equipo para liderar nuestras empresas y programación más allá del término completo de cinco años de nuestro soporte de AmeriCorps VISTA;
- nuestro programa Jardines Victoria, que lleva alimentos cultivados en casa a los patios traseros, ahora cuenta con la participación de 37 familias;
- nuestra pista de aterrizaje L88 ha sido repavimentada por completo, asegurando su disponibilidad para servicios de emergencia y recreación en los años venideros;

- y creamos y representamos una producción teatral para toda la comunidad “Superbloom!” que reaviva nuestros impulsos de cuidarnos unos a otros y trabajar juntos.

Siempre apreciamos el invierno aquí en el valle de Cuyama. Es un momento para reunirse y reflexionar, al mismo tiempo que se hacen planes. Tenemos muchas actividades por venir, muchas cosas que nunca habíamos hecho: un proyecto piloto para proporcionar agua a los hogares de Cuyama, una lista completa de artistas en residencia y un proyecto de embellecimiento de la carretera, por nombrar algunos.

Nuestro personal nos ha traído hasta aquí, eternamente. Y simplemente brindábamos oportunidades, usando nuestro tiempo para facilitar que los co-creadores locales hicieran el trabajo. Como verá en este informe, tenemos un equipo bastante amplio de Cuyamans que hacen las cosas, mejorando la calidad de vida de nuestros vecinos.

De vecino a vecino,



Em Johnson y Jack Forinash



SUPERBLOOM!



Late in 2021 we responded to a request for proposals from the [CDC Foundation](#)—an independent 501(c)(3) charity which seeks collaboration between the CDC and organizations to improve health outcomes across the world. Public health agencies partnered with local arts organizations and artists to develop both timely messaging—regarding COVID and vaccination—and also to develop the capacity of local organizations as trusted sources for critical information. As one of just 30 organizations in the U.S. awarded a grant, Cuyama’s Vecino-a-Vecino (Neighbor-to-Neighbor) over the course of six months included 39 artist-led engagement opportunities: interviews, story circles, workshops in the schools and church as well as at Blue Sky, recording sessions, rehearsals, and the final performance. Through these all-ages activities, a total of 377 Cuyamans attended and participated, representing 34% of the total Cuyama population!

The final headline event was held In May 2022, where the Cuyama Valley was the stage for a community play about Cuyama, by Cuyamans, for Cuyamans, called [“Superbloom: A Story from a Time Without Flowers.”](#) Set in a slightly altered Cuyama reality, this community play explores our connection to our neighbors in divisive times and how we find hope in times of tension. Superbloom follows Mariflor, a Cuyama resident, as she and her community navigate the realities of a flowerless Cuyama Valley. One day before school, Mariflor can’t believe her eyes when she sees the first flower after a years-long shortage that’s caused Cuyama residents to stop seeing color. When she tries to tell her classmates and teacher, no one believes her. Seeking connection, community, and color, Mariflor must reignite hope in her community and family.





This production is credited to the 35 Cuyamans who served as Superbloom’s cast and crew (listed earlier in this report), contributing a total of 831 hours! Via the grant we compensated Cuyamans a total of \$17,820 for their time, at \$25 per hour for cast and crew members.

This creative community engagement work that empowered so many residents could not have been possible without our Co-Creators as well as the leadership and creative vision of our artists:

- Ash Hanson and Alex Barreto Hathaway of PlaceBase Productions: “Superbloom” directors
- Noé Montes: conversationalist and “Superbloom” photographer
- Jimmy Johnson: “Superbloom” songwriter and performer
- Miquela Davis: “What Makes Cuyama Bloom” zinemaker and teaching artist

Via this grant we compensated creative professionals a total of \$28,300 for their artist fees and travel. All told, the following artists contributed 637 hours in their artistic roles.

We are also very thankful to the guidance and perspective of our partners from the CDC Foundation, Santa Barbara County Department of Public Health, and Líderes Campesinas.



This is a story about a town that tries to work together through a confusing moment. But most importantly it's about learning how to accept the help of others to accept the love of others. And I guess it's all about how we've all become a little bit of an animal of late. Owwooooowo! Owwoooooooooooo!

ZALE MORRIS AS GIBFORD, THE VBP (VERY BAD PUP)

See more photos, read the full script, or watch the Superbloom play at blueskycenter.org/superbloom



REOPENING THE CUYAMA SKIES

As pilots, we are keenly aware of how few destination-worthy airstrips remain open, and how many are at risk of being closed. L88 has always been a premier destination due to its proximity to many local flight schools, and since its recent reopening, has grown into a true jewel.

KATERINA BARILOV & JOHN KURTZ



After months of closure for a full airstrip resurfacing project, Cuyama's beloved L88 airstrip officially reopened on October 13, 2022, with a ribbon cutting ceremony!

We at Blue Sky Center manage and maintain the community airstrip, which is critical to emergency support for Cuyama communities. It also serves to support local farming operations and as a portal for flying in visitors. L88 has gained widespread appeal as a go-to airport for computer simulator training!

With a generous donation from the San Simeon Fund and over \$32,000 raised through individual contributions, the airstrip was resurfaced over the summer, allowing for its permit to be reinstated in October 2022. A ribbon cutting was hosted on October 13th at the airstrip featuring First District representatives from the County of Santa Barbara, airport commissioners from the County of San Luis Obispo, and 80 supporters from both the local communities as well as regional aviation enthusiasts. The Cuyama Buckhorn sponsored a meal and accommodations for the L88 volunteers who worked tirelessly over the summer to ensure that the project was completed on time.

On November 12th, 15 kids from the Cuyama Valley received free Young Eagle introductory flights at L88. We want to thank EAA Chapter 77 and the pilots who flew in and volunteered their planes to give these kids an incredible experience.

L88 volunteers are transitioning focus to support airport maintenance and planned improvements that will increase airport use and safety. All of which will rely significantly on donations and volunteers. Consider supporting L88 through a donation, maintenance equipment, supplies, or by volunteering.

We are thrilled to reopen the Cuyama skies to you!

**It's a beautiful combination
of remote, tranquil, and
convenient. The flying in the
area is picturesque with Soda
Lake, Temblor Mountains,
Sierra Madre Mountains.**

KURT THAMS



More information about L88 can be found at visitcuyama.com/188



**CULTIVATING COMMUNITY
THROUGH VICTORY GARDENS**

**CULTIVAR LA COMUNIDAD A
TRAVÉS DE LOS JARDINES
VICTORIAS**

Es un proyecto que tenemos aquí en Blue Sky para motivarlos a que salven sus semillas. Semillas realmente es el inicio de todo lo verde que podemos ver.

SANDRA URIBE, CUIDADORA DE LA TIERRA DE BLUE SKY

In the spring of 2020, Blue Sky Center implemented the Cuyama Valley Victory Gardens Project to confront immediate issues of food access in the Cuyama Valley during COVID-19. First the Santa Barbara Foundation, then the Santa Barbara County Food Action Network and the FUND for Santa Barbara enabled our organization to install raised bed gardens, supply planter materials, seeds, and starter plants, as well as implement bilingual curricula.

Nearing the third year of Victory Gardens, we now serve 37 families. This project creates a supportive peer-to-peer network of 30 Latina leaders meeting monthly that facilitates information sharing, ensuring the success of each family's garden while providing a sense of community.

This year Victory Gardens hosted a number of workshops, including cabbage fermentation, nopales canning, bread-making, and garlic planting. All workshops were provided for free to Cuyamans with support from [The FUND for Santa Barbara](#).

En la primavera de 2020, Blue Sky Center implementó el Proyecto de Jardines Victoria del Valle de Cuyama para enfrentar los problemas inmediatos de acceso a los alimentos en el Valle de Cuyama durante el COVID-19. Primero, la Fundación de Santa Bárbara, luego la Red de Acción Alimentaria del Condado de Santa Bárbara y el Fondo para Santa Bárbara permitieron que nuestra organización instalara huertos elevados, suministra materiales para macetas, semillas y plantas iniciales, así como implementar planes de estudios bilingües.

Acercándonos al tercer año de Jardines Victoria, ahora servimos a 37 familias. Este proyecto crea una red de apoyo entre pares de 30 líderes latinas que se reúnen cada mes que facilita el intercambio de información, lo que garantiza el éxito del jardín de cada familia y proporciona un sentido de comunidad.

Este año, Jardines Victoria organizó una serie de talleres, que incluyeron fermentación de repollo, enlatado de nopales, hornear pan y siembra de ajo. Todos los talleres se proporcionaron de forma gratuita a Cuyamans con el apoyo de [el Fondo para Santa Barbara](#).





COOKING UP A BUSINESS

COCINANDO UN NEGOCIO

I already know what I want to do, but I'm taking my time. I'm getting ready to start my business. I live by Ventucopa, close to the road, and I have a little spot there and I'm trying to get a little cart to start selling fruits, corn chips, and sodas, because you know a lot of people come by after and before work. I'm going little by little to see what the people need, that way they can get to know me and I can get to know them. These classes motivated me to know that I can do it, step by step, with confidence.

MARIA RAMONA CARRANZA, GRADUATE OF "COCINANDO UN NEGOCIO"

Prior to the pandemic, Blue Sky Center implemented the “Start, Grow, Revive Your Business” curriculum as part of [Rural Community Assistance Corporation’s Building Rural Economies](#) initiative. Nine Cuyama Valley businesses graduated in 2020 from the program, which taught essential skills to increase wealth for our local entrepreneurs and stimulated a healthy business network in our community. In 2021 members of the Cuyama Valley Victory Garden Network supported Ali—our Community Coordinator—and Sandra—our Land Steward—in redesigning the curriculum for cottage food industries, while fully translating the curriculum into Spanish to serve our larger community!

This work could not have happened without the support of our Líderes Jardines (our Garden Leaders) who contributed to the redesign of the curriculum. One of our core values is to build wealth in every aspect of our work, so we ensure that workshop leaders as well as peer mentors are paid for their time.

In the summer of 2022, another seven entrepreneurs completed our new and improved Talleres de Negocios, which we called “Cocinando un Negocio,” or “Cooking Up a Business,” as the local entrepreneurs were focused on learning the marketing skills, licensing and legal requirements, and competitive advantages for developing home-based food businesses into family wealth-generating enterprises.

Antes de la pandemia, Blue Sky Center implementó el plan de estudios “Comience, Haga Crecer, Reviva Su Negocio” como parte de la iniciativa [Building Rural Economies de Rural Community Assistance Corporation](#). Nueve empresas del Valle de Cuyama se graduaron en 2020 del programa, que enseñó habilidades esenciales para aumentar la riqueza de nuestros empresarios locales y estimuló una red empresarial saludable en nuestra comunidad. En 2021, los miembros de la Red de Jardines Victoria del Valle de Cuyama apoyaron a Ali, nuestra coordinadora comunitaria, y a Sandra, nuestra administradora de tierras, en el rediseño del plan de estudios para las industrias de alimentos artesanales, mientras traducían completamente el plan de estudios al español para servir a nuestra comunidad en general.

Este trabajo no hubiera sido posible sin el apoyo de nuestros Líderes Jardines quienes contribuyeron al rediseño del plan de estudios. Uno de nuestros valores fundamentales es crear riqueza en todos los aspectos de nuestro trabajo, por lo que nos aseguramos de que los líderes de los talleres y los mentores sean remunerados por su tiempo.

En el verano de 2022, otros siete empresarios completaron nuestros nuevos y mejorados Talleres de Negocios, a los que llamamos “Cocinando un Negocio,” ya que los empresarios locales se concentraron en aprender las habilidades de marketing, licencias y legal. requisitos y ventajas competitivas para convertir negocios de alimentos basados en el hogar en empresas familiares generadoras de riqueza.



Ya sé lo que quiero hacer, pero me estoy tomando mi tiempo. Me estoy preparando para comenzar mi negocio. Vivo por Ventucopa, cerca de la carretera, y tengo un rinconcito ahí y estoy tratando de conseguir un carrito para empezar a vender frutas, totopos y sodas, porque sabes que pasa mucha gente después y antes de trabajo. Voy poco a poco a ver qué necesita la gente, así me van conociendo y yo los voy conociendo. Estas clases me motivaron a saber que puedo hacerlo, paso a paso, con confianza.

MARIA RAMONA CARRANZA, GRADUADA DE “COCINANDO UN NEGOCIO”



THE LOST ART OF UNWINDING

Stare at the stars in the pitch dark sky, gawk at the rolling mountains, lose oneself, or find oneself, and do so with style and comfort, with people who take care of you and trust you.

THERINI, ORANGE COUNTY

As the pandemic moves into our rearview mirror, we find ourselves with the opportunity to relax, to breathe, to simply BE. For many of us, it's a relearning of what we had lost to the years of stress. As one visitor to Blue Sky recounted, the camp is a place where we can "relearn how to live simple."

Most of our visitors come from Los Angeles and other populated coastal cities, where "nature deficit disorder" can reach epidemic proportions. Much of the anxiety is relieved with stargazing, the quiet buzz of a hummingbird's wings, or the smell of wet dirt after a desert rain. These charms are free! And yet they are becoming unattainable for many.

Our lodging here is not just for selfies—though we do encourage that—it's also about reconnection with the good earth around us. Over the course of 2022 we hosted 816 overnight visitors on our property: 375 campers in our six huts, 68 guests in our Flagship Suites, and 373 in our three dispersed camping tent platforms (soon to be eight in 2023!).





Restore the magic of simplicity, and remove the distraction from beauty that already exists. Good company, night time bonfires, a beautiful hut and endless stars was everything I needed to feel restored.

LUCREZIA, LOS ANGELES

GATHERING UNDER THE BLUE SKIES





In February 2022 we published the [Cuyama Valley Event Feasibility Study](#) to help steer events toward supporting local residents, businesses, and community organizations in genuine ways, supporting the Cuyama Valley economy by bringing in outside dollars. Be it anniversaries, birthdays parties reserving our six huts, company retreats booking our dorms and meeting spaces, or weddings of up to 110 people, we're able to welcome a variety of people to our desert oasis. We're proud to say that for the year of 2022, we hosted 16 private events with a total of 568 attendees.



The memories and stories that Blue Sky brought us are unexplainable. It was unique, comfortable, and absolutely perfect in every way. If I could watch any sunset again, it would be over the landing strip in New Cuyama. Thank you to the team for being so hospitable, friendly, and for hosting one of the best nights of our lives. See you again soon!

GENNELLE & RICARDO, MARRIED MAY 14, 2022, AT BLUE SKY CENTER

A TASTE OF THE DESERT



**Crisp and shockingly
smooth.**

LUCREZIA D.

**The bubbles really
surprised us!
Yummy.**

JESSICA P.

Our Cuyama Beverage Company is cultivated by our community—not extracted from it. Our Jujubee and Desert Sage meads are made from local honey in the Cuyama Valley and nurtured through water-smart agriculture in our region. We're passionate about creating unique small-batch beverages because our success means the success of our local farmers and producers. From this promise the Cuyama Beverage Company was established.

Now in our second year, we hosted Sunset Sips at Blue Sky Center, featuring a two-flavor tasting of our Cuyama Beverage Company champagne-style meads along with other sustainable products in the Cuyama Valley: Rock Front Ranch honey and jujubes, Santa Barbara Pistachios' flavored nuts, and Santa Barbara Cheese Company's varieties made from Cuyama Dairy's cows. Please email hello@cuyamabeverage.com to reserve your sunset today!

This year we hired Asia Van Aken in our new Ventures Manager position to generate new demand for our local producers through tastings outside the Cuyama Valley! We now have our beverages in thirteen retailer locations across the Southern and Central Coast of California. Visit our website and order a taste of the desert, or see our list of stockists at cuyamabeverage.com/find-us.



**Crujiente y
sorprendentemente
suave.**

LUCREZIA D.

**¡Las burbujas
realmente nos
sorprendieron!
Delicioso.**

JESSICA P.



EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE

The Dump Day project was a collaboration of efforts by Cuyama Valley residents including students who canvassed house to house, locals with trucks and trailers able to haul trash, and coordinated planning to pick up from households. All told, we completely filled four super-size dumpsters! It is a testimonial to what community can do when we work together.

PAM BACZUK, DUMP DAY CO-COORDINATOR

When Caltrans called us to see if Cuyama was interested in receiving funding for a Highway I66 roadside beautification project, their stipulations for having a meeting to discuss the opportunity was that we one, had a group of local residents engaged in beautification efforts, and two, had a plan in place. Thanks to the [Cuyama Valley Community Action Plan](#) and the Townsites Beautification & Wayfinding Working Group, we were in fact “resource ready”!

Over 2022 Blue Sky Center facilitated the Working Group to develop a detailed beautification plan with Caltrans that includes planting a series of palo verde trees, installing benches and landscape viewfinders, and producing orienting display signs directed at visitors to provide an introduction to the Native history, local economy, and natural bounty of the area. Beyond the roadside, funds are also budgeted to support creative activities and cash prizes within Cuyama schools. And in December 2022 the Working Group coordinated with local residents to host a free Dump Day, resulting in 19,980 pounds of trash and excess household equipment removed from Cuyama and recycled. Of the \$10,000 provided by Caltrans for this event, after paying \$4,790 for the dumpster costs and recycling fees, \$5,155 was paid to locals of all ages to assist in promoting the event and hauling trash from houses that scheduled free pick-ups from their yards across the Cuyama Valley.





MARIGOLDS & MEMORIES

Blue Sky Center established the Cuyama Valley's annual Día de los Muertos celebration in 2016, in honor of its cultural significance to many residents of our community. Each year we work closely with the teachers and students of our local youth groups to pre-determine activities and other elements of the celebration.

This year we received a \$4,950 Quick Grant from [California Humanities](#), a nonprofit partner of the National Endowment of the Humanities, for our Día de los Muertos community event. We worked with our regional neighbors [Corazón del Pueblo](#), an arts and culture non-profit, and writer Samuel Duarte to work with the youth groups. Leading up to the Día de los Muertos community event, Duarte led a series of workshops with students to learn about Día de los Muertos, create a communal altar, and create a collective poem remembering lost loved ones.

During the Día de los Muertos event, several students from the youth groups read aloud the collective poem to event attendees. The communal altar the students made was also showcased. Other event activities for attendees included opportunities to create paper flower crowns, face painting, and interactive altars where 94 attendees were invited to contribute offerings. Through the California Humanities grant, we were able to compensate the teachers we worked with for their time and pay Samuel Duarte for his work with the students. We also offered in-kind use of our mobile Cuyama Kitchen, where parents of the youth groups prepared food and drink to sell for fundraising. In total the groups raised \$1,500!

We're excited to see what our community creates for next year's Día de los Muertos celebration!

Día de los Muertos was a wonderful experience for the community! The children and teenagers were impacted by the fun and amazing workshops that Samuel Duarte presented.

ROSY FONSECA, TEACHER FOR THE FIRST COMMUNION CLASS



2022 FINANCIALS

At the overview, Fiscal Year 2022 exceeded 2021 as the best year in terms of revenue and highest expenses in a year. But there is one big caveat: the L88 airport resurfacing project. When 2022 began we did not plan to take on this major community infrastructure project. But with a \$350,000 commitment by the San Simeon Fund, and with the organization and expertise of our L88 Circle of volunteer pilots, this project was started and completed in 2022. The L88 project alone had a cost of \$380,465, matched by income collected from 2021 and 2022. In the analysis below—since this project can be isolated by its scope—we present financial narratives that exclude this income and expense.

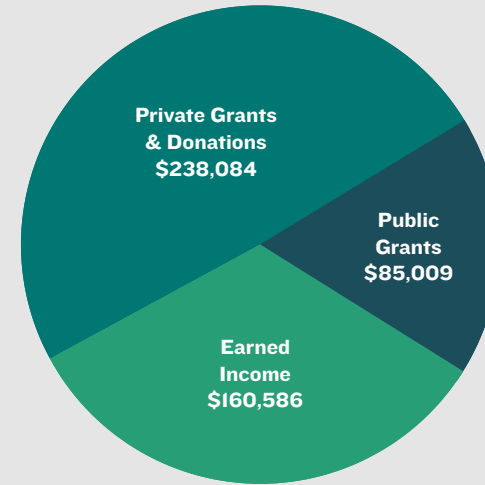
As a small rural organization, as with most organizations, it is important that we have a diversity of funding sources. We follow the common practice of identifying income into three main “buckets”: 1) private grants from corporations, foundations, and individuals that receive tax benefits for investing in 501(c)(3) organizations; 2) public grants from county, state, and federal governments; and 3) income from mission-aligned programs and activities we undertake, also called “earned income.”

Even with the L88 project set aside, 2022 was the second highest year of revenue to date at \$483,679, up 48% from the prior year (only 2018 was higher, due to a significant one-time gift).

Matching the prior year, our earned revenue programs accounted for a third (33%) of our total income, private sources 49%, and public sources 18%. Excluding the L88 project, 2022’s income by category is shown via the following charts:

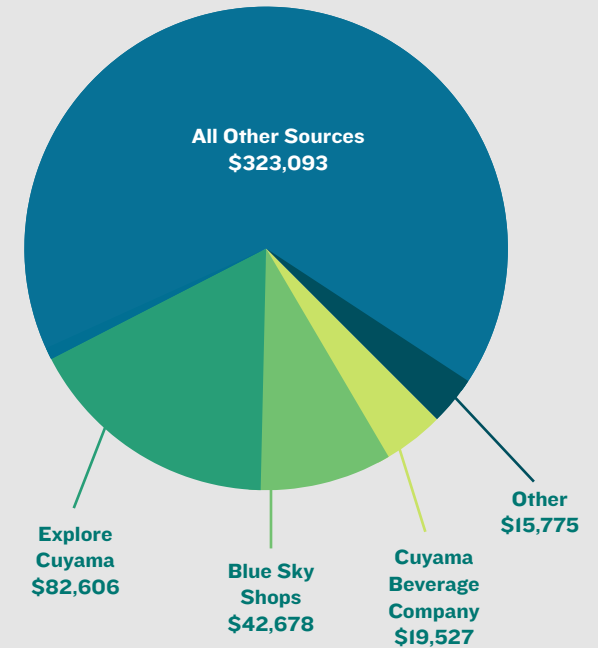
2022 TOTAL INCOME by Category

(Excluding L88 Resurfacing Project)

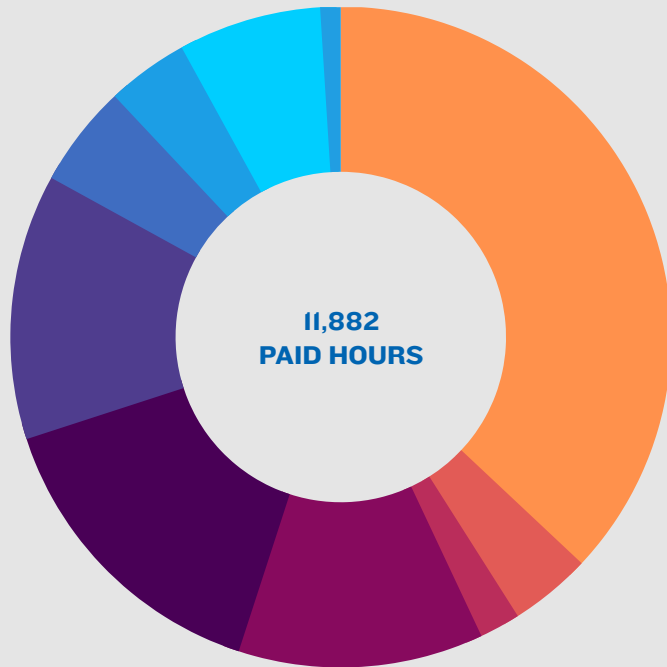


2022 EARNED INCOME by Share

(Excluding L88 Resurfacing Project)



TIME SPENT by Activity



- **Program Activities (37%)**
*Made in Cuyama (5%)
 Victory Gardens Network Programming (5%)
 Creative Arts Programming (21%)
 Community Resiliency and Planning (5%)*
- **Blue Sky Ventures (4%)**
- **Community Meetings (2%)**
- **Facilities Management (12%)**
- **General Operations (15%)**
*Administrative Tasks (2%)
 Financial Management (2%)
 Human Resources, Orientation,
 & Team Building (3%)
 Office Meetings (3%)
 Communications, Web, & Social Media (6%)*
- **Hospitality Operations (13%)**
- **Professional Development (5%)**
- **Paid Time Off (4%)**
- **Resource Development (7%)**
- **Travel (1%)**



We carefully track expenses, which in 2022 came in the form of 2270 individual financial transactions. Common to nonprofit organizations, a significant percentage of our costs are in employing our staff, amounting to 45% of 2022's expenses (excluding the L88 Project). Additionally, we spent another 27% for the time and expertise of contractors: artist fees, professional expenses, groundskeeping, and housekeeping. The "goods" that we offer as a community organization is most closely understood as our time and effort; in 2022 we tabulated 11,882 paid hours performed by staff members and our co-creators!

In total since our 501(c)(3) IRS designation in July 2014, Blue Sky Center has invested \$3,037,000 into our rural development initiatives that envision resilient, thriving, and inclusive rural economies for the Cuyama Valley.

Dive into our finances from this and every year at blueskycenter.org/disclosures.

INCOME

Private Grants	\$577,984
Public Grants	\$85,009
Donations	\$30,112
In-kind Contributions	\$2,098
Interest Income	\$292
Other Income	\$4,459
Program Income	\$158,103

TOTAL INCOME**\$858,058****EXPENSES**

Salaries & Wages	\$156,369
Fringe Benefits	\$20,764
Payroll Expenses & Fees	\$15,963
Consulting & Professional Services	\$43,996
Artists Honoraria & Stipends	\$42,570
Housekeeping	\$21,630
Groundskeeping	\$7,993
Accounting, Bank Fees, Legal Expenses	\$3,578
Airstrip Resurfacing Combined Expenses	\$380,023
Booking Fees	\$2,500
Depreciation Expense	\$34,000
Facilities, Equipment, Construction Expenses	\$25,567
Fundraising Expenses	\$3,007
Insurance	\$7,724
Licenses & Permits	\$1,463
Media & Marketing	\$384
Operations Expenses	\$8,191
Property Tax	\$10,146
Supplies	\$17,134
Travel & Meetings	\$18,990
Utilities	\$23,157

TOTAL EXPENSES**\$845,151****NET****\$4,599****ASSETS**

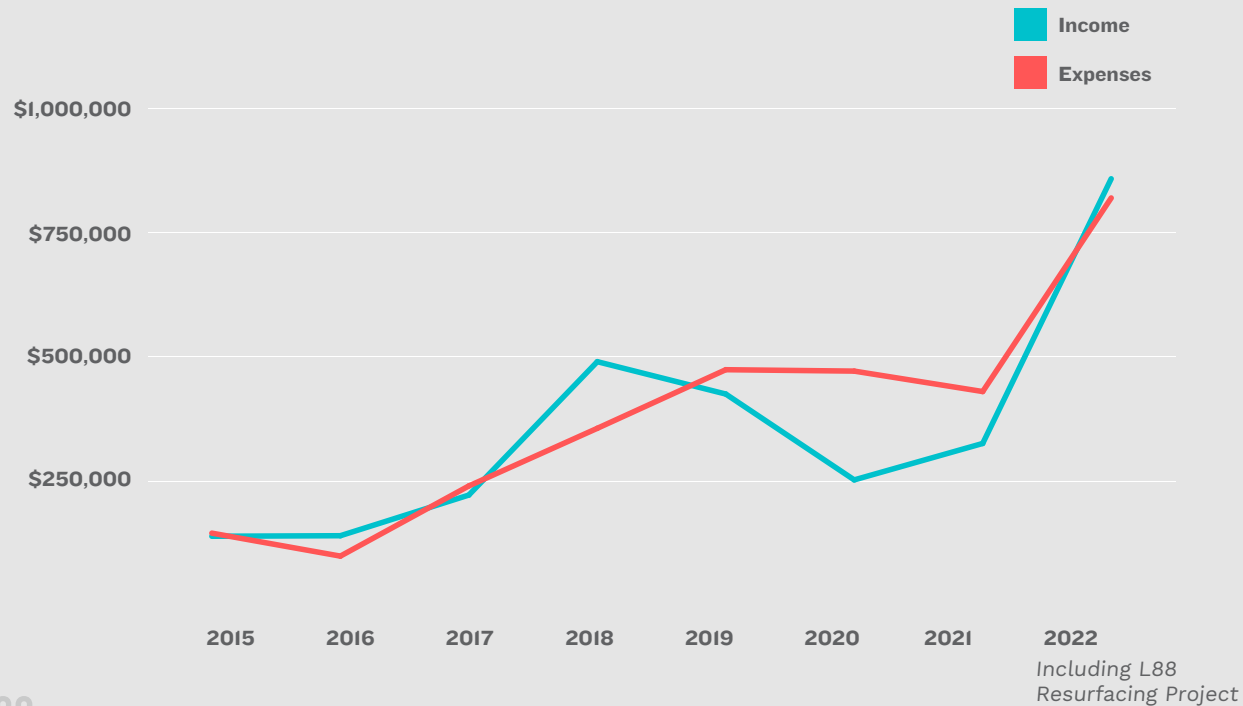
Cash	\$153,469
Accounts Receivable	\$14,102
Inventory Assets	\$15,324
Prepaid Expenses	\$2,922
Property	\$482,146
Buildings	\$564,124
Dwellings	\$13,000
Equipment & Furniture	\$37,509
Vehicles	\$55,000
Accumulated Depreciation	\$(153,712)

TOTAL ASSETS**\$1,183,883****LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS**

Accounts Payable	\$2,181
Deferred Revenue	\$3,945
Sales Tax Payable	\$730
Net Assets & Income	\$1,177,027

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS**\$1,183,883**

INCOME & EXPENSES Historical



Grant proposals are dreams; budgets are ethical statements. How a business seeks and spends money reflects the priorities and values of the business. Blue Sky Center—as a small business itself, one that receives extra oversight as a 501(c)(3) organization—is the most transparent organization I’ve ever worked with, and I’m proud of our team of board members, staff, and co-creators that employ our resources to the highest and best use in the pursuit of our shared dreams for Cuyama.

JACK FORINASH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOOKKEEPER

IN THE PRESS

[A Company Town Comes Back to Life](#)

Alta Magazine, Ed Leibowitz, December 21, 2022

[Santa Barbara County helping cities, towns adapt to extreme weather](#)

KSBY News, Austin Herbaugh, November 2, 2022

[New Life for New Cuyama](#)

Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association (AOPA), Amelia Walsh, July 28, 2022

[New Cuyama, Who Dis? Part 3 - Em Johnson \(Cuyama Beverage Company\) is Up & Adam in the Morning!](#)

KKAL 92.5FM, Up & Adam in the Morning, June 2022

[Cabin Fever? Check into These Cozy Stays, Just off the Beaten Path](#)

Sunset Magazine, Christine Lennon, May 24, 2022

[Climate Costs: a public radio special exploring the high price of climate change for California communities](#)

KVPR, NPR for Central California, April 5, 2022



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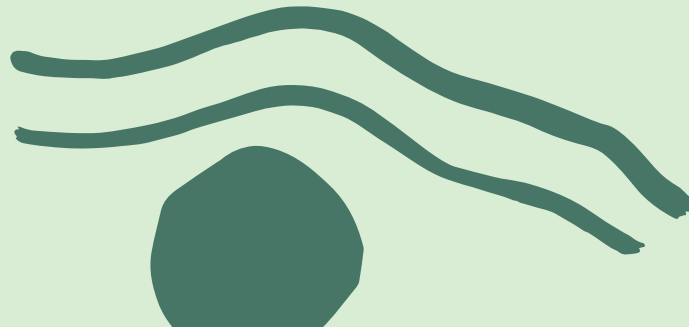
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High Desert Print Co.
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Sonya Herrera

Cuyama Beverage Co. Retailers

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Cuyama Buckhorn
Full of Life Foods
Gjelina
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Paradise Pantry
Pinyon Ojai
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What attracts me here, and why I get so fired up and feel so purposeful about our work, is that no matter what, we always prioritize this inclusive stewardship of community building.

EM JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY



**Building models
for resilient,
thriving, and
inclusive rural
economies.**



**Construyendo
modelos para
economías rurales
resistentes,
prósperas e
inclusivas.**