

Cuyama Valley Event Feasibility Study

PREPARED BY BLUE SKY CENTER AND QUAIL SPRINGS
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Cuyama Valley Event Feasibility Study

This report researches the feasibility of hosting varying types and scales of events in the Cuyama Valley. Understanding the Cuyama Valley as a specific place with a population holding unique skills and interests, the research focuses on opportunities for Cuyama-centric events that would celebrate the specificity of the Cuyama Valley, highlighting the natural beauty of the high desert, the talents and services of our fellow residents, organizations, and businesses, and relate to the interests of Cuyamans.

The report provides in the sections that follow:

- context on the Cuyama Valley's opportunities and resources,
- case studies from similarly situated rural communities that host events meant to bring in attendees from outside the locale,
- Cuyama-specific research on types of desired events and interested stakeholders,
- possible locations for events within the Cuyama Valley, including histories of events, and
- determinations of next steps for development and support of event ideas discovered through this process.

Blue Sky Center and Quail Springs, two Cuyama nonprofit organizations, worked together to create this report. Contributions of content were solicited from each organization/business profiled in this report. The authors recognize that the critical input and feedback we have received from our neighbors and partners throughout this process ground this report in the realities of place and thereby seek to celebrate the abundance that the Cuyama Valley offers. Should you have any feedback or interest in supporting this work—or would like to get in touch about hosting your next special event here—please contact hello@blueskycenter.org.

A note regarding health safety: This report was originally developed and researched in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, a report promoting convening people together and bringing in groups of non-residents was not appropriate. Now as this report is revisited, edited, and finalized in late 2021, there remains a continuing and evolving pandemic that threatens the health and safety of all Americans, perhaps especially those in remote, rural communities. Any event proposed or held in Cuyama must respect the continuing need to protect the health of everyone involved, taking appropriate precautions and designing the event specific to this place. As an environment, the wide-open spaces of the Cuyama Valley may provide opportunities not found in crowded, urbanized places; even so, this is home to 1,100 residents who are to be respected. For guidelines on creating a safe event, it is best to look to the local and state health departments as well as the CDC, which provide specific, regularly updated guidance and checklists for events based on the type, location, and size of event.

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About the Cuyama Valley

Introduction to Cuyama

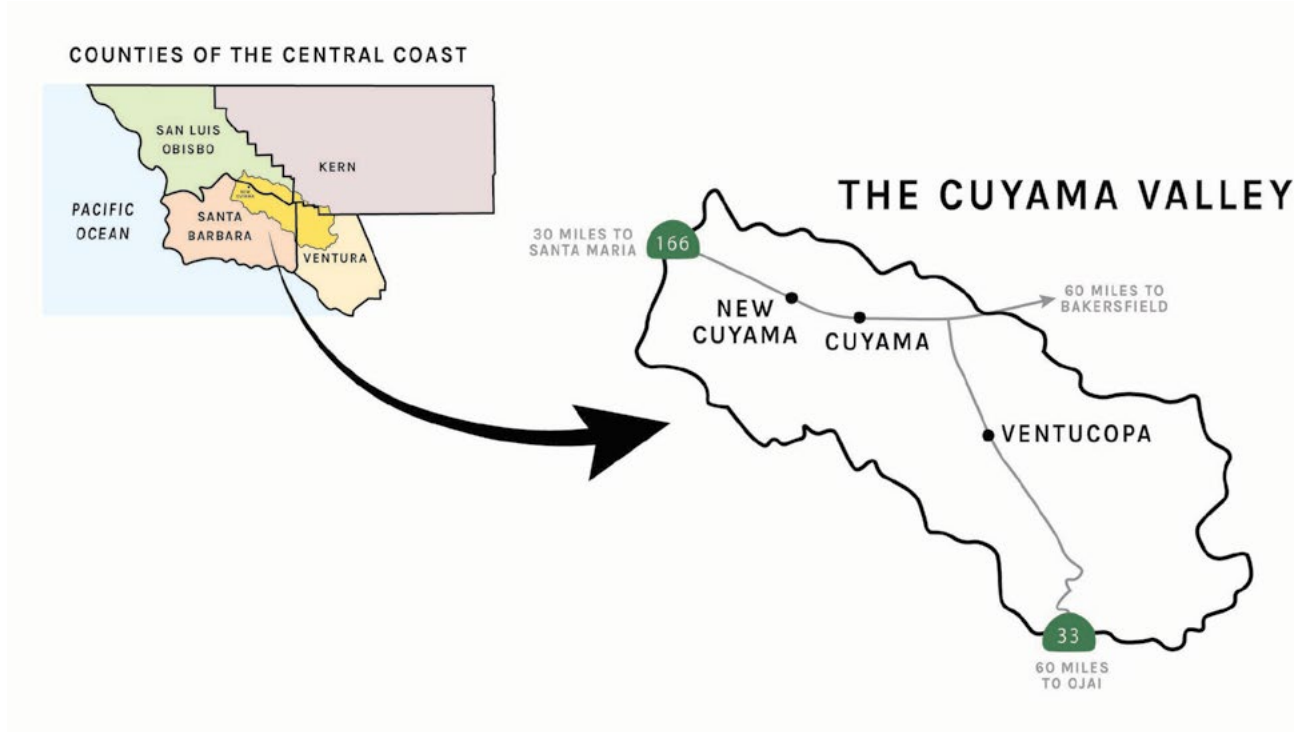
Cuyama is a Chumash word meaning “clam.” The Cuyama River (now dry most of the year) hosted these freshwater mollusks as evidenced in the fossil record. Since recorded history including Native use, the Valley was used as a thoroughfare, connecting the coast to inland, with sparse settlement.

The following land acknowledgement borrows language from the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture, who help us put it eloquently:

Every community owes its existence and vitality to generations from around the world who contributed their hopes, dreams, and energy to making the history that led to this moment. Some were brought here against their will, some were drawn to leave their distant homes in hope of a better life, and some have lived on this land for more generations than can be counted. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference. We begin this effort to acknowledge what has been buried by honoring the truth. The Cuyama Valley is part of the ancestral lands of the Chumash People. We pay respects to their elders past and present. Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that exist now and into the future on this land.

In the early 1800s, European and Mexican settlers divided the land into parcels to form two large ranches, using the land primarily for cattle grazing. By the early 1900s, water pumps brought water from deep aquifers to allow for irrigated agricultural land. The townsites of Ventucopa and Cuyama were established. Oil was discovered in the late 1940s, and with that came Richfield Oil Company (now Atlantic Richfield Oil Company, or ARCO). ARCO built the townsite of New Cuyama (five miles west of Cuyama) in its entirety, including housing, infrastructure, commercial spaces, schools, and an industrial campus. By the 1960s and 1970s, the oil cache was beginning to play out. New Cuyama as a “company town” existed from 1950 to the late 1970’s, when ARCO finished selling off its ownership in the properties to private citizens and businesses. Many direct ARCO employees and ancillary business people that depended on ARCO left the Valley.

New Cuyama continues to serve as a hub of activity for the Cuyama Valley, with about half of the Cuyama Valley population (of the 1,100 total residents in the Cuyama Valley) residing within the New Cuyama townsite. The Cuyama Basin is known as an organic hot spot. Agriculture and cattle grazing are the prominent land uses. Grimmway Farms, Bolthouse Farms, and Caliente Ranch Cuyama LLC are the largest landowners in the Valley, collectively owning over 35,000 acres of the land, most of which was originally part of the Mexican land-grant Cuyama Rancho #2. Major agricultural exports are carrots, lettuces, onions, grapes, pistachios, olives, apples, hay, and cattle. Since groundwater is used, farms rely on watering best-practices to reduce the amount of water needed to grow crops. Even as Cuyama is known primarily as a farming and ranching Valley based on land use and employment, many Cuyamans make this valley their home and work outside of the agricultural sector.



The Cuyama Valley is defined primarily by its geography. With a land area of about 300 square miles, the extents are bound by the La Panza and Caliente Ranges on the north and northeast and the Sierra Madre Mountains on the south and west. These mountain ranges cause the high desert climate of the Cuyama Valley (at an elevation between 2,000 and 3,000 feet), which receives on average about five inches of rain per year. The east-west California Highway 166 connects the Cuyama Valley to Santa Maria and the Pacific Coast on the west and the southern end of the Central Valley (Maricopa) on the east. California Scenic Highway 33 connects the Valley to Ojai and Ventura to the south, and Taft, to the north.

The Cuyama River follows the path of Highway 33 northwest then west along Highway 166 to, eventually, the Twitchell Reservoir beyond the Valley. Most residents live in the Valley's lower elevations that the Cuyama River passes nearby, within the unincorporated townsites of New Cuyama (pop. 551), Cuyama (pop. 80), and Ventucopa (pop. 92). Many residents live on ranches and farms outside the townsites and into the foothills of the mountain ranges.

(This section adapted from the [2020 Cuyama Valley Community Action Plan](#).)

ABOUT THE CUYAMA VALLEY



TOP Cuyaman entrepreneurs meet in the Alta Conference Room at Blue Sky Center for a “Start, Grow, Revive Your Business” seminar lead by Rural Community Assistance Corporation. (PHOTO COURTESY BLUE SKY CENTER)

BOTTOM A chef from Moonrise Standard prepares a community dinner over campfire at the Shelton Hut Circle at Blue Sky Center. (PHOTO COURTESY JESUS FRAYRE)

Community Assets

In the almost four miles that lie between the Caliente and Sierra Madre Mountain Ranges, there is an abundance of space to share. Scenic views are particularly abundant with beautiful views of mountains, blazing sunsets, and summer's Milky Way visible in the night sky. Cuyamans take pride in the valley's natural beauty and the spaces that are near and dear to their lives. They want to share that beauty with visitors who will respect the land and culture. This is a rich and rugged valley with vibrant and resilient people.

The Cuyama Valley is where you can learn about Nancy Kelsey (who created the first California flag), take horseback riding lessons, participate in community grape harvesting, hunt, camp, stargaze, hike, and go off-roading. The people of this valley can offer their expertise in rainwater harvesting, bee keeping, plein air painting, botanical drawing, poetry, bird watching, and a great deal more. The wide range of businesses found in the valley include residential and commercial fencing, skin care, house painting, sewing, water well services, and BBQ catering. Eateries in the valley cover everything from tri-tip to pies, farm-to-table meals of local ingredients, milkshakes and IPA's. On some ranches and farms that surround the townsites, pygmy goats, cattle, poultry, pigs, and lambs are kept for producing fine egg, dairy, and meat products. Other ranches and farms produce and sell lavender, honey, jujubes, jams, and pistachios. Living in the high desert creates adaptable people and, as a result, the entities that manage the spaces and facilitate events are also adaptable.

In the southeastern Cuyama Valley, the innovative community at Quail Springs—a leading educational nonprofit that resides on a 450-acre permaculture demonstration site—shares their environmental expertise to cultivate ecological and social health. They are the stewards of lands within the National Forest wilderness and use their spaces to test and teach about earthen building technologies, watershed stewardship, and regenerative dryland farming. Prior to the pandemic, that education took the form of day-long archery classes, week-long cob building workshops, and month-long permaculture design courses; as pandemic health security needs adapt, they offer farm tours and online courses. You can find educators, farmers, ecologists, chefs, artists, musicians, natural builders, and other talented team members nestled in their quiet canyon surrounded by the beautiful Los Padres National Forest.

On the south side of the New Cuyama townsite, ARCO's former industrial and office buildings are now home to Blue Sky Center. The repurposed mid-century corporate campus provides visitors with unique spaces for recreation and relaxation. The distinct spaces can be adapted to meet the needs of artists, community groups, and local residents that want to hold holiday celebrations, watch movie screenings, or sell their creations, as well as visitors looking to host their wedding, corporate retreat, or special event. Locals refer to the campus as "the airport" because of the almost 4,000-foot-long runway on the site that is still in use today.

If you leave Blue Sky Center and travel a quarter-mile north on Perkins Road, you'll arrive at the Cuyama Buckhorn: an artfully-restored roadside resort in the heart of New Cuyama. Originally established as a roadside motel and restaurant, the property has drastically evolved over the course of its existence and has now emerged as an elevated retreat after a full renovation. The restaurant and hotel spaces cater to various groups. The resort is now a destination, with a large heated pool, jacuzzi, sauna, firepits, and venue spaces. The restaurant, bar, and coffee shop functions as a community gathering place, as well as a stop for visitors to enjoy a local, farm-to-table meal and purchase local Cuyama goods from The Buckhorn Market. Much like other spaces of the valley, Cuyama Buckhorn is versatile and can accommodate live music, vendor events, meetings and retreats, intimate weddings, parties and celebrations, or even a night of backgammon on the patio.



ABOVE Participants circle up for the Cuyama Valley Exchange Club's Sort-N-Rope event. (PHOTO COURTESY JACK FORINASH)

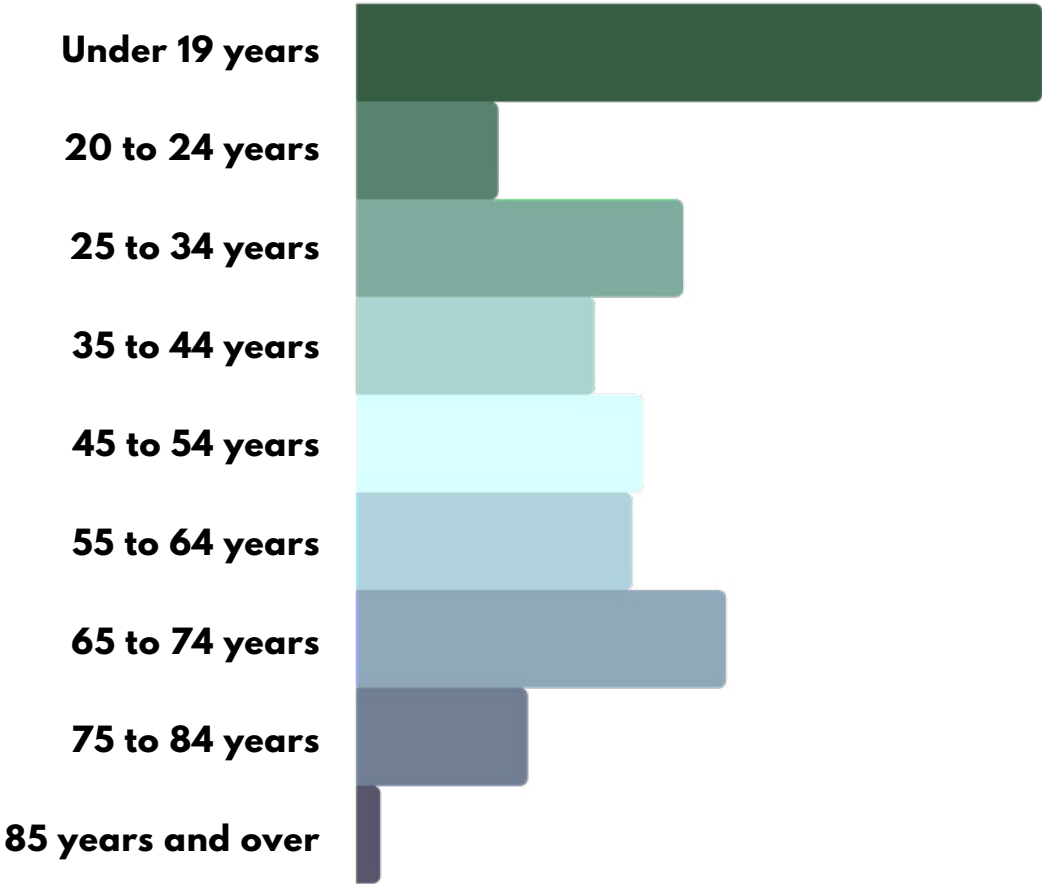
Population demographics

When seeking to begin to understand Cuyama, it's important to have a bird's-eye view of the basic demographics of the local community. Of course, Cuyama in reality is made up of individuality that you would find in any community, large or small. We provide this information only as an introduction to Cuyama, and invite you to get to know the peculiarities of each of us in due time.

Typical to California, the percentage of the population that are children in the Cuyama Valley is about a quarter (27%). The Census figures show that Cuyama is consistently below state averages for the age groups of 20 through 64, with a higher percentage for ages 65 to 84 (typically retiree ages).

POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

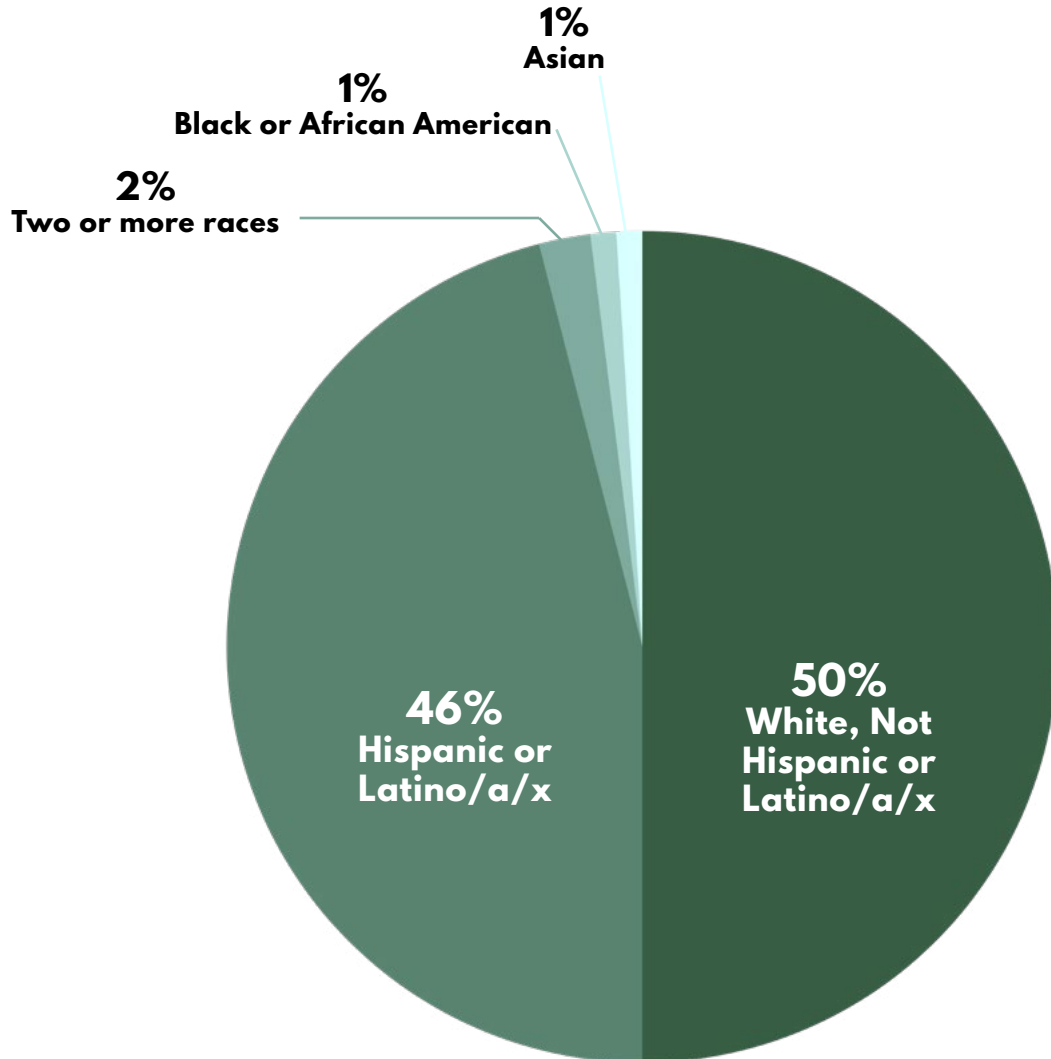
This data is from US Census American Community Survey 2017 for Santa Barbara County Census Tract 18, data.census.gov



According to US Census figures, about half of the Cuyama Valley population identifies as Hispanic or Latinx, with the other half identifying as White, non-Hispanic or Latinx. Based on the ethnicity and race data collected by the Cuyama school district, Cuyama demographics are trending toward higher Hispanic or Latinx representation, with four-in-five students (79%) identifying as Hispanic or Latinx.

POPULATION BY ETHNICITY AND RACE

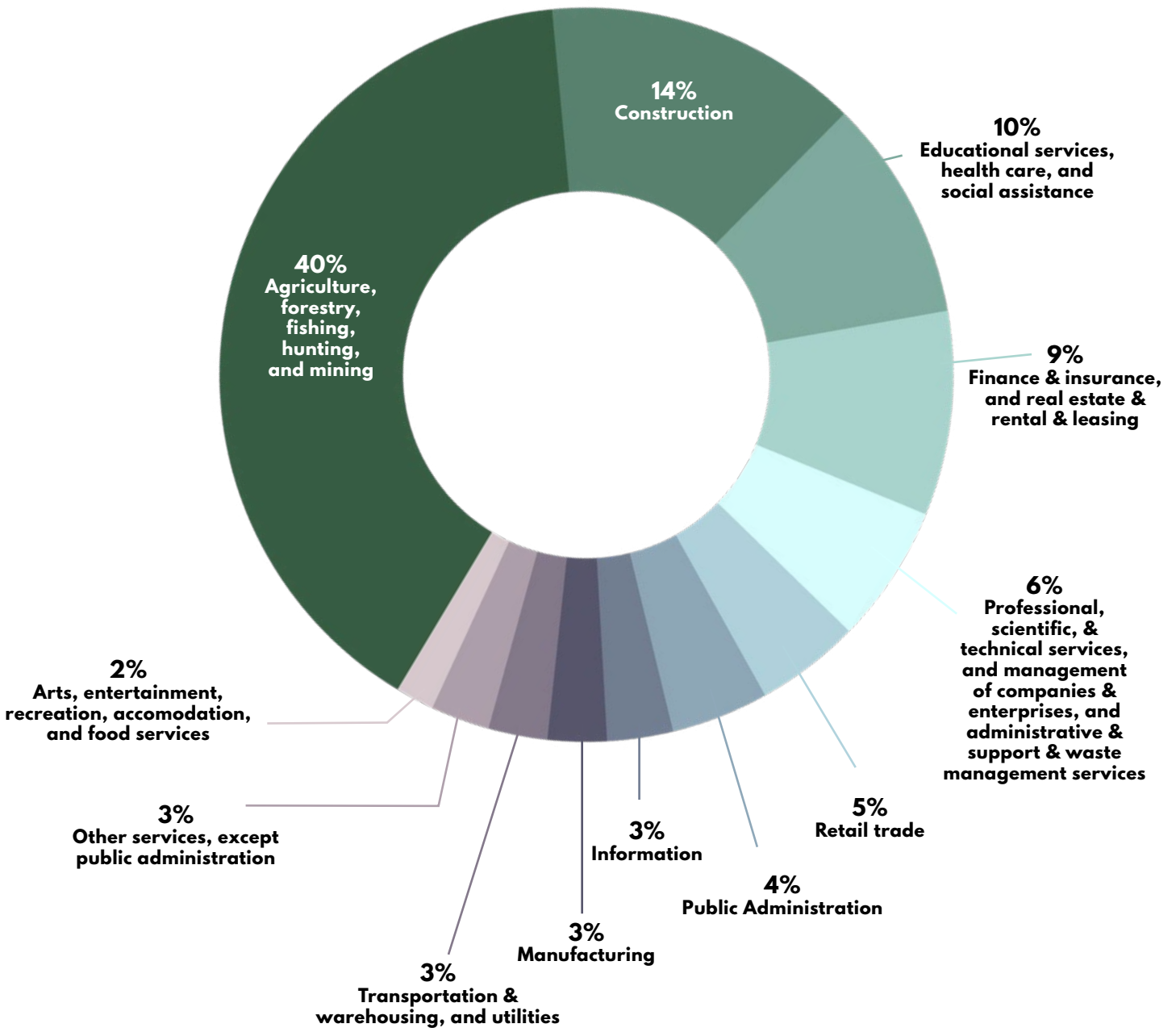
This data is from US Census American Community Survey 2017 for Santa Barbara County Census Tract 18, data.census.gov



The principal employers within the Cuyama Valley are farms and ranches. The US Census reports that 40% of the employed population works within the sectors of “agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining.” Data collected from a 2019 community-wide survey indicated that of those traveling to work, workers drive 27 miles (or 31 minutes) on average, ranging from 0 to 200 miles each way. Many Cuyamans choose to live here and work out of the Cuyama Valley in the closest urbanized areas of Santa Maria, Taft, Bakersfield, and surrounding towns.

EMPLOYMENT

This data is from US Census American Community Survey 2017 for Santa Barbara County Census Tract 18, data.census.gov



Case Studies

Case Studies from Other Similarly Situated Communities

In looking for case studies of events, we researched with a filter of looking to similarly sized and situated communities across rural America. We created this criteria for identifying events and the content of the profiles:

- Relevant communities for study will be remote/rural and have a population of 2,000 or less;
- Case studies will focus on capacity of community, economic impact of event, and community impact of event; and
- Case studies will also include information about the scale and type of event, lessons learned, and best practices.

In collaboration we made a list of 12 communities with events to look into. A few that we did not select but also can be seen as comparatives include: [Haunted Palouse](#) in Palouse, WA; the [Rent Ants Pants Festival](#) in White Sulphur Springs, MT; and [Grumpy Old Men Festival](#) in Wabasha, MN.

The four that we chose—Bigfoot Daze in Willow Creek, CA; Frozen Dead Guy Days in Nederland, CO; Marfa Myths in Marfa, TX; and the Mushroom Festival in McCloud CA—represent the ingenuity, creative-focus, and humor found in rural communities that we can see too in the Cuyama Valley. All examples are very much place-specific, relying on the stories and character of the individual community. These events represent attendance capped at under 1000 to another drawing in 25,000, bringing in from \$10,000 to \$1.8m in gross receipts to the community organizations. The events profiled here are not meant to be examples to be replicated per se or even as baselines of what to expect, but rather as inspiration for what other rural communities have done to bring interest and economic impact in from beyond the community, with residents working together to be good hosts and raise funds for community projects.



PHOTO COURTESY BLUE SKY CENTER

BIGFOOT DAZE

Willow Creek, California

A remote forest town celebrates its common culture through the legend of Bigfoot.

About Willow Creek

Willow Creek, CA is a forested small town located in eastern Humboldt county. Its closest large town is Arcata, CA, through the national forest approximately an hour away. The closest international airport is 189 miles and 4 hours north, across the state border in Medford, OR. At various points in history, Willow Creek has been a settlement for railroad workers, a mining camp, and logging town. As those industries no longer are the main employers in the community, ecotourism is a central industry that brings income into Willow Creek.

Willow Creek is the seat of numerous Bigfoot legends, dating back far before the 1967 Patterson-Gimlin Bigfoot footage that made it famous. The Six River National Forest surrounding Willow Creek has been the site of many Bigfoot sightings and tracks.



About Bigfoot Daze

“Bigfoot Daze has a long tradition and the heart of the event is a few local families who have kept it going all through the years. Making it into a huge event is not the goal. Covering costs, providing a venue for local non-profits to fundraise, celebrating the town and history, and having a good time are the main goals.” ANN KEANEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WILLOW CREEK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Sixty years ago, a group of Willow Creek community members started Willow Creek Bigfoot Daze, a yearly event meant to celebrate the logging industry and the Bigfoot legend Willow Creek is known for. Bigfoot’s legend keeps giving as the community of Willow Creek creatively uses the Bigfoot lore to support its tourist economy. This year the Humboldt County Visitors Bureau is a finalist for a public relations award due to a creative marketing strategy in which iPhone users using a face swap application can choose a Bigfoot face filter. Over 300,000 people used the Bigfoot face filter on the application, encouraging interest in visiting Humboldt County, and Willow Creek in particular as the seat of this legend.

Community Impact

Bigfoot Daze is a primarily local event, with approximately 2000 people driving in from Arcata and Redding, as well as other nearby towns. There are a smaller number of tourists and Bigfoot enthusiasts who plan their Labor Day weekend around the event. All the local inns, motels, and campgrounds in and around Willow Creek fill to capacity with visitors for the weekend.

The main event is held in a large park a ten-minute walk from town – and as folks prefer to drive, there has been issues with parking in the past. The Willow Creek Chamber of Commerce (WCCC) is considering running a shuttle, or renting a nearby lot for future events.

Economic Impact

- **A FALL FUNDRAISER PROVIDES FUNDS FOR NEXT YEAR’S EVENT**
- **2,000 ATTENDEES**
- **WCCC GENERATES INCOME THROUGH VENDOR FEES AND EVENT TICKETS**

Largely, the event is more about culture and heart than about income for Willow Creek. The highest cost is the insurance that the WCCC carries for the event. Special sanctions are secured for children’s bouncy houses, climbing walls, and water slides. The WCCC generates income through vendor fees, children’s event tickets, and beer sales. A fundraiser is held in November of each year to support the coming event, and reportedly local businesses and individuals are generous in their giving at this time to support next year’s event. Yearly fundraising efforts by a small dedicated group is what allows this event to continue.

Although exact numbers are unknown, local vendors generate income during the event and get a chance to showcase their work. Often, they return year after year. Local non-profits use food vending as a forum to fundraise, although generally, the goal of the day is less about income and more about community pride and celebration.

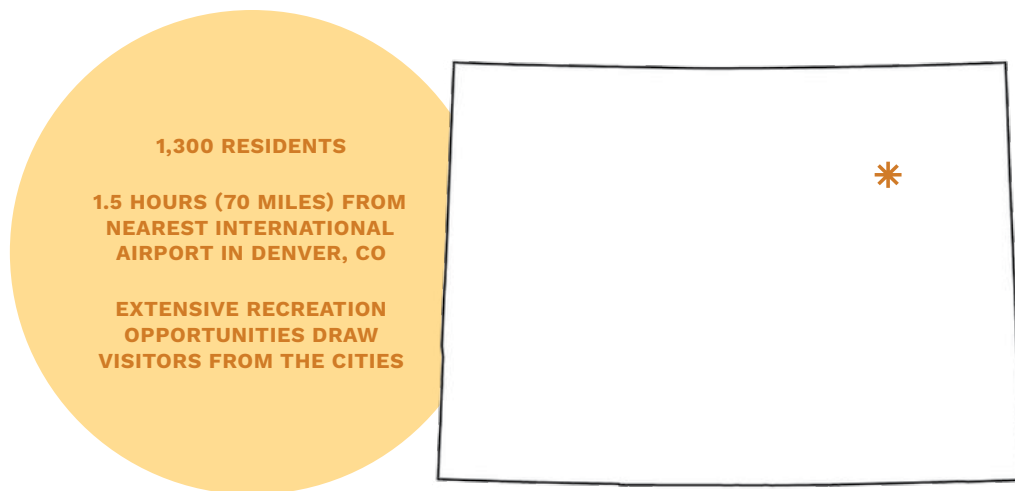
Frozen Dead Guy Days

Nederland, Colorado

Festival of winter revelry boosts small Colorado town economy.

About Nederland

Nederland, CO is a small town nestled in the mountains outside of the larger metropolitan area of Boulder, CO. Tucked away 1.5 hours from Denver’s international airport, outdoor recreation opportunities abound in this picturesque community that sits on the edge of a reservoir. Many of Nederland’s 1,300 residents take advantage of the hiking, skiing, and other nature-based activities that this area provides.



About Frozen Dead Guy Days

Every year since 2010, Nederland has been the host of Frozen Dead Guy Days (FDGD), an event that has been described as a festival of winter revelry. FDGD is a party, loosely based on the cryogenic freezing of Norwegian immigrant Bredo Morstoel (aka “Grandpa” to the FDGD community) and the maintaining of his body in a shed above Nederland. Frozen Dead Guy Days is a delightfully morbid combination of winter, music, and games. Activities include a polar plunge, coffin races, frozen fix-a-flat races, and much more.

Community Impact

The festival brings in 25,000 people and is held on grounds just outside town. All of the hotels, inns, motels, and vacation homes in the area fill to capacity. FDGD runs a daily shuttle service from Boulder, CO, where visitors who can't secure accommodations in Nederland often stay. FDGD also has exclusive partnerships with A-Hotel in Boulder to hold festival goers.

In the FDGD 2020 Guide there is a clear request that festival goers only park once in clearly designated areas as to reduce traffic in Nederland. The festival grounds are located on the outskirts of Nederland, and due to the intense high energy atmosphere of the festival, this arrangement seems well-suited to keep the community of Nederland insulated from repeated negative impacts from the festival.

Economic Impact

- **GROSS INCOME ESTIMATE: \$1.8 MILLION**
- **25,000 ATTENDEES**
- **FDGD PAYS HEADLINING MUSICIANS TO PLAY THE FESTIVAL**

At \$25/day to attend the three live music tents, the 3-day festival is affordable and option orientated. With a combination of free and pay-to-attend events, festival goers get to choose their own price and speed. VIP tickets for the festival that include exclusive access to a number of events as well as VIP drinks costs \$175 for the whole event. At 25,000 people on average paying \$75 for the FDGD festival experience, the event would gross at least \$1.8 million. Profit is significantly reduced by the added costs of event insurance, musician and stage fees, as well as other event costs.

Local government, civic bodies, and businesses in Nederland are credited repeatedly in FDGD written content about the festival, clearly demonstrating that the festival's success requires a high level of local collaboration to operate gracefully.

MARFA MYTHS FESTIVAL

Marfa, Texas

An exploratory arts festival puts community first in high desert Texas.

About Marfa

Founded in the 1880s as a railroad water stop, Marfa, Texas, is a tiny town whose reputation is seismically larger than its population. Minimalist painter Donald Judd moved to Marfa in 1971 and as he installed his art in and around Marfa, the town began the process of solidifying Marfa's place in art history.

With just over 1,900 residents and three hours away from any metropolitan area or international airport, Marfa is isolated—a trait that residents value and see as supporting the creativity and strength of the community. Many current residents call Marfa home because of its removed individualism and orientation towards the arts.



About Marfa Myths

“Our goal is total discovery.” **KEITH ABRAHAMSSON, CO-FOUNDER OF MEXICAN SUMMER & CO-CURATOR OF MARFA MYTHS**

Marfa Myths was born out of a collaboration between local arts non-profit, Ballroom Marfa, and Brooklyn-based music label, Mexican Summer. Since 2014 they have run the music and “multi-disciplinary arts program” that is Marfa Myths. With an attendance cap of 800, and strong community based ethic the event is a popular intimate arts experience.

Community Impact:

The goal of Marfa Myths is to be a completely permanent event as an antithesis to festivals that bring in everything from beds to stages and then truck them out at the end of the event. All of Marfa Myths attendees stay at Marfa’s hotels and inns, eat at Marfa’s restaurants and taco trucks, and all art and musical performances are held at local stages or venues. Marfa Myths is woven into the fabric of Marfa itself, and therefore special permitting that other pop-up festivals might require, Marfa Myths does not. Marfa has a community health clinic in town, and a regional medical center nearby, as well as a fire station equipped to handle emergencies related to the event.

Its attendance cap serves a twofold purpose: it keeps the event intimate and experiential while limiting any negative impacts that a larger event might have on the community and residents of Marfa. Marfa Myths aims to be aware and responsive to the ways that support the cultural health of Marfa.

Economic Impact:

- **GROSS INCOME ESTIMATE: \$180,000**
- **ATTENDANCE CAP AT 800 PEOPLE**
- **TICKET PRICES FROM \$45 TO \$225**

With ticket prices ranging from \$45-\$225, a gross income estimate could range from \$36,000-\$180,000. As Marfa Myths does not bring in external infrastructure, costs of the event itself are likely lower than typical festival costs might be. Because Marfa Myths is regarded highly in the arts community, artists looking to push their comfort zones may be willing to perform at Marfa Myths for a combination of niche-prestige and compensation.

Although not a non-profit event, the goal of Marfa Myths is not solely profit. Based on their strict community based protocol, attendance cap, and their allegiance to art, it is clear that Marfa Myths strives to deepen its attendees’ relationship with art and their own creative process.

McCloud Mushroom Festival

McCloud, California

California lumber town celebrates the yearly return of spring mushrooms.

About McCloud

McCloud, CA is a small town nestled in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains, in the northernmost part of California. Formerly a logging community, this town is now a hub for ecotourism, and visitors come from all over California to go trout fishing, mountain biking, and backpacking. The closest large town is Redding, CA, an hour down the mountain, with the nearest international airport being 100 miles north across the state border in Medford, OR.



About McCloud Mushroom Festival

Every Memorial Day weekend for the last 7 years, this town of 1,100 people hosts the McCloud Mushroom Festival, an event that celebrates the delectable wild mushrooms that emerge in and around McCloud during the spring.

The event offers musical performances, wild mushrooming classes, and multi-course meals by premier chefs featuring mushrooms in every dish. Close to 70 vendors line the Historic District of McCloud offering food, crafts, and other goods.

Community Impact

The event brings in over 8,000 people who all stay in and around McCloud for the weekend. McCloud hosts around a dozen quality hotels, inns, and bed & breakfasts, all of which fill up during the weekend. There are RV and tent campgrounds as well as a number of vacation home rentals in close proximity to McCloud which also have the capacity to host visitors who chose not to, or cannot, stay in McCloud's other lodging options.

Because McCloud swells to almost eight times its regular size during this event, the McCloud Chamber of Commerce brings in trash cans, porta-potties, and mobile handwashing stations to be placed in and around the Historic District during the event.

Due to the extremely high fire danger in Siskiyou County, there is publicly posted literature about fire prevention and reduction in the McCloud area, which is essential when bringing in visitors. All campgrounds, hotels and inns have printed literature on fire prevention along with their other available brochures on recreation and touristic opportunities in the area. McCloud also has a local hospital, clinic, and fire station to respond to emergencies of any kind.

McCloud's locale supports its capacity to host this many visitors and not run out of space – parking is ample, and many visitors can walk from their lodging in the Historic District to the main activities of the event.

Economic Impact:

- **MINIMUMS GROSS INCOME ESTIMATE: \$17,500**
- **8,000 ATTENDEES**
- **COSTS \$8,000 TO RUN THE EVENT**

The McCloud Mushroom Festival costs the McCloud Chamber of Commerce (MCC) approximately \$8,000 to run. With community volunteers to support setting up and breaking down the event, certain costs are low while others such as waste systems, musicians and stage setup, and vendor tents are higher.

The MCC charges food vendors \$250 and craft vendors \$150 to set up at the event. Tickets for the multi-course mushroom dinner are \$75. All of these tickets are purchasable on the MCC website. With up to 70 vendors at this event, MCC has the potential to make a gross income of between \$10,500-\$17,500 on vendor fees alone, excluding the income generated from ticket sales to the exclusive mushroom dinner and other pay-to-attend events over the weekend.

McCloud, CA has hosted the McCloud Mushroom Festival for 7 years with plans to carry it forward indefinitely with the support of the local community. The economic boost to local businesses and the vibrant culture that gets built and supported during the Mushroom Festival are reasons the community continues to support its return.

Community Background and Desires

Community Background and Desires

The 2019 Cuyama Valley Community Survey—which accounted for 393 residents or 42% of the estimated population of the Cuyama Valley—indicated that 53% of respondents rated their quality of life as either “good” or “excellent.” This data supports the notion that Cuyamans enjoy the small-town lifestyle and want to continue maintaining it. The top responses as to why respondents chose to live in the Cuyama Valley include it being “quiet” (42%), “rural” (39%), and having a “small population” (32%). This reinforces the common neighbor-to-neighbor feedback that residents are choosing to live here specifically due to the benefits of being a part of a small community away from urbanization. Events that are going to be held in the Cuyama Valley need to take these desires seriously so that residents are not alienated in their own valley.

Community members have voiced concerns of events that are too big or too long that will negatively affect the community. Just over 1,000 people reside in the valley, so an event that has over 1,000 attendees would effectively double the amount of people in the valley at one time. Suddenly bringing that many people into the valley could overwhelm both the residents and infrastructure. Traffic concerns along the two-lane, accident-prone Cuyama Highway (CA 166) would need to be addressed for any large event. One possible solution to better ensure safety for visitors and residents is to sell a set maximum number of tickets to the event so that the amount of people attending is controlled, which will both make it a more exclusive event and allow Cuyamans to prepare for the influx of visitors. Despite the challenges, Cuyama community members are eager to share the beauty of the Cuyama Valley if it's done in a responsible manner that contributes to the Valley and promotes community ideals without taking advantage of the area or members of the community.

It would be optimal if events held in the valley are designed for Cuyamans to attend as well. The Cuyama community has shown that they will support activities geared towards adults with an expanded group of visitors, especially if those events celebrate the valley's people. In 2019 a swap meet event known as the Cuyama Swap was planned by and for Cuyama community entrepreneurs to sell their goods, crafts, and products that highlighted the skills abundant in our high-desert region. The inaugural event proved successful with 15 local vendors that ranged from Western jewelry, artisanal crafts, food products made in the Cuyama Valley, and homemade cosmetics. The event had over 130 attendees, from both in and outside the Valley, and one family utilized La Cocina Cuyama (Blue Sky Center's mobile community commercial kitchen) to serve up delicious tacos, drinks, and raspados to attendees. Another event to look to is the annual homecoming football game. On that night Cuyama joins together under the lights to celebrate the senior high school class while welcoming back alumni who traveled from all over California so they could reunite with their family and old friends in the Valley they grew up in. Funds raised support athletic and leadership opportunities at the school, and local businesses are supported by the influx of returning Cuyamans and festive atmosphere.

The Cuyama Valley has benefitted from curated events and retreats which bring visitors from far outside Cuyama. Those instances have shown that guests of the Cuyama Valley not only have memorable experiences but also bond out in nature in a unique way while helping Cuyama small businesses at the same time. In early 2020

Enterprise Community Partners held a grantee convening that brought people from across the country to Cuyama for their first ever visit. Blue Sky Center partnered with Cuyama Buckhorn and a few locals to highlight some of the hidden gems the valley has to offer, including catered meals by Cuyama residents, wine tasting, hiking excursions, stargazing, yoga, and horseback riding. Their group of less than 30 visitors ultimately had an amazing experience in Cuyama because they were right-sized to not overwhelm the local establishments or alienate the residents.

Additional findings from the 2019 Cuyama Valley Community Survey shed light on the perceived economic conditions in the valley; just 26% of respondents rated the Cuyama economy as “good” or “excellent.” Nearly half of those respondents (47%) indicated the Cuyama Valley’s economy has mostly stayed the same within the previous five years (2014-2019), with 21% saying it has gotten better and 32% saying it has gotten worse. The data shows that residents want the local economy to improve and feel it has stagnated over the past few years. This sentiment is also supported by Blue Sky Center’s recent work with local businesses and residents. Over the course of 2018-2020, a rigorous process was undertaken of working with Cuyama residents and stakeholders to identify community priorities and opportunities. The resulting [2020 Cuyama Valley Community Action Plan](#)¹ identified seven (7) priorities for community development. One identified priority (“Priority A: Townsites beautification and wayfinding”) is particularly relevant to this event feasibility report. This priority’s stated rationale was as follows:

“Tourism to the Cuyama Valley results in income to the community businesses from outside sources. Providing a welcoming atmosphere through physical improvements to the roadsides, marketing the Valley’s amenities, and connecting visitors to local businesses result in a return on investment for local businesses, individuals, and organizations.”

This community priority established the following goals:

- Increased consumer spending in the Cuyama Valley.
- Increased tourism in the Cuyama Valley.
- Sustained revenue for Cuyama communities.
- Increased community pride.
- Increased involvement in workshops from community members.
- Improved quality of transportation infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, trails) and increased maintenance schedules.

In addition to the desire for tourism, there is also a desire to create a brighter future for the youth of the Cuyama Valley. Almost all respondents (96%) of the 2019 Cuyama Valley Community Survey indicated there were not sufficient opportunities for young adults in the valley. New events that can provide a benefit to the community members, businesses, and youth, while promoting tourism would address the needs reported by Cuyamans. This may be an event such as a music festival that not only brings income to local businesses and provides opportunities for local entrepreneurs but also provides opportunities for students to learn a skill or showcase musical talents.

All events held here in the high-desert should contribute to the Cuyama Valley and promote community ideals without taking advantage of the area or members of the community. Cuyamans want people to know they live here and want people to enjoy the valley, as long as they can continue to live here in a healthy, dignified way.

¹ The complete Cuyama Valley Community Action Plan (2020) is available at blueskycenter.org/action-plan.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND & DESIRES



TOP The two-person team works to rope a calf at the Cuyama Rodeo. (PHOTO COURTESY CHARLENE COOPER)

BOTTOM Attendees for a creative cross-pollination event by the organizers at Field Trip sit down for pre-dinner conversation under the Flagship Pergola at Blue Sky Center. (PHOTO COURTESY MADISON KOTAK)

Opportunity to highlight Cuyama-centric craftspeople

Many residents of the Cuyama Valley supplement the income they receive from full-time employment with small enterprises. The resourceful and entrepreneurial culture that has developed within the valley has created a need for vendor events. The aforementioned Cuyama Swap is just one example of this type of event that happens in Cuyama. Vendor events are frequent throughout the year, usually happening once every other month, giving local entrepreneurs a place to sell their goods or services. In December, a Christmas Bazaar is held annually at the high school that features locally made jewelry, ornaments, knick-knacks, and soap among many other items showcased. The Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center usually holds a health fair where vendors can also reserve spots alongside resource providers. Sometimes vendors may be hosted outside the post office, sometimes they may be hosted at Cuyama Buckhorn, and other times they may be hosted in Richardson Park. While these events may be vendor-centric, there are also annual events that include local craftspeople as a part of a larger event by allowing them to set up a table. One example is the Car Show hosted by the Cuyama Booster Club that brings in many car clubs from outside of the Cuyama Valley. The one-day event has time slots for local vendors to sell goods and food to participants and visitors. The event also has the additional benefit of addressing students' graduation requirement for community service hours. Using the Car Show as a precedent for including Cuyama craftspeople would be a good way to ensure that the community is considered, involved, and incorporated into the event.

Although Cuyama craftspeople are accustomed to highlighting themselves and their business, having someone else to assist with promotion takes the pressure off them. Having help to get the word out about their goods or services while creating a space to meet new customers would be a great incentive for supporting any event that may happen. Any group planning to host an event in the valley should see it as an opportunity to highlight our local businesses and entrepreneurs. Local caterers, farmers, or ranchers could provide produce and meat to feed attendees. Musicians could play at a music event or artists could lead workshops. Local craftspeople can teach their craft through classes or help to create equipment needed for the event. Local storytellers can provide tours, inform event attendees of important cultural contexts, and share their stories of Cuyama.

In 2020 a collaboration between various Cuyama Valley organizations developed the [Cuyama Valley Resource & Business Directory](#), which provides an introductory look at locally available resources along with listings of local businesses and services. Many of the directory entries also provide a number of other services outside of what is listed. An up-to-date version of this resource directory is available online at visitcuyama.com/directory. On the website are listings for local businesses, restaurants, catering, lodging, ranches, farms, arts, entertainment, local government, community organizations, religious services, and schools. It is intended to be a way for both local residents and visitors to learn about the opportunities available in our region and provide a way to contact Cuyama businesses and craftspeople. Prospective event hosts should familiarize themselves with the directory website because it could prove to be extremely helpful for certain events.



TOP Special farm-to-table dinner event at Cuyama Buckhorn on The Lobby Patio. (PHOTO COURTESY KIANA TOOSI)

BOTTOM Entrants to the Cuyama Valley Car Show check in with organizers and set up for the annual event that supports youth programming at the Cuyama Valley High School. (PHOTO COURTESY RUSS BARNES)

Types of events, champions for the event planning, decision makers

The geography, ecology, and culture of the Cuyama Valley make certain events ideal. Five event types that would be best for the people and spaces of the valley are:

- Vendor events
- Hobby/shared interest events
- Skill sharing/education events
- Tourist events
- Short-term celebration events

Vendor events work really well because they cater to entrepreneurs and have a strong history of being successful. These events can also be accommodated by most of the indoor and outdoor spaces available in Cuyama. Hobby or shared interest events such as live music, car shows, or car/motorcycle rides would likely attract both locals and visitors to the Valley. California Highways 166 and 33 are frequently traveled by car and biker clubs on weekends, and they use The Place and Cuyama Buckhorn as a destination or pit stop along their journey. Yoga retreats and van dweller festivals have also been successful because they incorporate the beauty of the Cuyama Valley, promote tourism, and give visitors the space to bond over their shared interest. Artists who have visited Cuyama have shown that skill sharing and educational events are valued by locals. Visiting artists have held workshops for screen printing, creative writing, photography, and other art forms for Cuyama youth. The trade skills of welding, woodworking, and metal fabrication have also gained a lot of interest within the high school over the past few years. Professionals that offer a craft not common in the Cuyama Valley and bring with them the perspective of what is possible by practicing that craft are highly valued by Cuyamans. The Valley is also home to artists that could help with skill building classes or provide their craft for an event. Tourism events would be focused on showcasing the valley's natural beauty and culture to visitors. An event that attracted many people from outside of the community was the Cuyama Poker Ride. This event, established by the Cuyama Valley Exchange Club, was hosted annually as a fundraiser. The event brought in around 100 people from all over the California Central Coast to participate in a trail ride through the Cuyama Valley mountain ranges and ended with a cowboy-style BBQ and campout. Proceeds from the event went to the youth of Cuyama through scholarships, donations, and other support as needed throughout the year. The Exchange Club also hosted a Sort and Rope rodeo event that brought between 75 to 100 participants both from the community and outside the valley. The Cuyama Valley's venues and lodging entities would be able to help facilitate short-term celebration events since that is a fairly common occurrence. Weddings, birthdays, and holiday celebrations can all take advantage of the abundant space, and likely will include a backdrop of mountain ranges.

Cuyama's community organizations have a deep understanding of the needs and desires of valley residents. They should be leaned on or consulted when planning an event. Some of the most well-informed and experienced businesses and organizations in regard to event planning include:

Blue Sky Center | Small business support, artist residencies, community resources, and events

Booster Club | Serves the youth of Cuyama

Condor's Hope Vineyard | Wine tasting, farm tours, special retreats, and community harvesting

Cuyama Buckhorn | Resort, restaurant, bar, coffee shop, and event venue

Cuyama Exchange Club | Sponsors fundraising events to support Cuyama Valley youth

Cuyama Oaks Ranch | Camping and glamping grounds

Cuyama Valley Community Association | Community advocacy and improvement

Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center | Community organization and social services

Cuyama Valley Recreation District | Public recreation and community events

Hidden Creek Ranch | Horse riding lessons, horse training, and private retreats

Parent's Club | Supports students and teachers

Quail Springs | Educational nonprofit cultivating ecological and social health



LEFT Local residents learn about heritage grains at a bread-making workshop hosted in the Design Room at Blue Sky Center. (PHOTO COURTESY BLUE SKY CENTER)

RIGHT Attendees gather at dusk in the Shelton Hut Circle at Blue Sky Center for artist presentations at the 2017 Rural Summit. (PHOTO COURTESY HIPCAMP)

While any of the entities listed above can provide critical Cuyama Valley information to help with solidifying event details and interest, it is best to consult with certain organizations, businesses, or people for specific event types and needs. The following contacts may be advantageous for learning about best practices, different spaces available, pit stops to utilize, and possible contacts to coordinate with for each event type:

→ **Vendor events**

- o Best practices:
 - Blue Sky Center
 - Cuyama Exchange Club
 - Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center
 - Cuyama Valley Recreation District
- o Space to rent:
 - 1952 Vintage Finds
 - Blue Sky Center
 - C&H Market (including open land surrounding)
 - Cuyama Buckhorn
 - Cuyama Valley Recreation District
 - Cuyama Valley Joint Unified School District

→ **Hobby/shared interest events**

- o Pit stops:
 - Burger Barn and Deli
 - Cuyama Buckhorn
 - Santa Barbara Pistachio Company
 - The Place
- o Space to rent:
 - Blue Sky Center
 - Cuyama Buckhorn
 - Cuyama Oaks Ranch
 - Cuyama Valley Recreation District
 - Cuyama Valley Joint Unified School District
 - Hidden Creek Ranch

→ **Skill sharing/education events**

- o Best practices:
 - Blue Sky Center
 - Cuyama Joint Unified School District
 - Cuyama Valley Recreation District
 - Hidden Creek Ranch
 - Quail Springs
- o Possible contacts (*contact hello@blueskycenter.org to get put in touch*)
 - Alexx Pryjma
 - Aris Romero
 - Ashwin Manthripragada
 - Brenton Kelly
 - Matt Galindo
 - Melanie Shaw
 - Sue Blackshear

→ **Tourist events**

- o Best practices:
 - Blue Sky Center
 - Condor's Hope Vineyard
 - Cuyama Buckhorn
 - Cuyama Exchange Club
 - Cuyama Oaks Ranch
 - Quail Springs
- o Possible contacts (*contact hello@blueskycenter.org to get put in touch*)
 - Dani Mingo
 - Bonnie Goller
 - Carmen Sandoval
 - Dick Gibford
- o Space to rent:
 - Aliso Canyon Park
 - Ballinger Canyon
 - Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge
 - Blue Sky Center
 - Carrizo Plain National Monument
 - Chimineas Ranch
 - Condor's Hope Vineyard
 - Cuyama Buckhorn
 - Cuyama Oaks Ranch
 - Hidden Creek Ranch
 - Sleepy Creek Ranch
 - Wind Wolves Preserve

→ **Short-term celebration events**

- o Best Practices:
 - Blue Sky Center
 - Cuyama Buckhorn
 - Cuyama Exchange Club
 - Cuyama Valley Recreation District
- o Space to rent:
 - Blue Sky Center
 - Condor's Hope Vineyard
 - Cuyama Buckhorn
 - Cuyama Oaks Ranch
 - Cuyama Valley Recreation District
 - The Place



LEFT Volunteers and Quail Springs staff paint a mural inaugurating the Imagination Garden at the Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center. (PHOTO COURTESY QUAIL SPRINGS)

RIGHT Quail Springs researches and teaches dryland, regenerative, organic farming with sunken corn beds. (PHOTO COURTESY QUAIL SPRINGS)

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND & DESIRES



TOP Forty-person farm-to-table dinner at the 40' x 6' Ranch Table at Cuyama Buckhorn. (PHOTO COURTESY KIANA TOSSI)

BOTTOM Famous homemade pies from The Place and knickknacks are for sale at the Cuyama Swap, hosted in the Upper Warehouse at Blue Sky Center. (PHOTO COURTESY BLUE SKY CENTER)

Possible Event Locations

Descriptions, Opportunities, and Event History

For space size relative to attendees, we are using the following terms in the charts that follow:

- Small: 5-30
- Medium: 30-70
- Large 70-200
- Extra Large: 200+

Blue Sky Center

1000 Perkins Road, New Cuyama, CA 93254

hello@blueskycenter.org

(661) 413-3005

Blue Sky Center is a rural, place-based nonprofit organization that uses their campus in New Cuyama to blend community programming, resource development, and facilities management to best make their spaces available for community use and impact. The renovated industrial and office buildings which they operate out of, along with glamping and dispersed camping sites, are ideal for special events. Additional spaces such as a pergola, a 2,600-square foot warehouse, seven dorm-style rooms, and a commercial grade licensed catering trailer (La Cocina Cuyama) are available for use as well.

SPACES	PAST EVENTS	OPPORTUNITIES/CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Flagship Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorm rooms • Meeting rooms • Kitchen • Pergola 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community meals • Cooking classes • Workshops • Community meetings • Conferences/summits (The Rural Summit, The Long Weekend) • Artist residencies • Group/company retreats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dorm and Meeting rooms are small-sized spaces, and the Pergola is a medium-sized space • Visitors should be considerate of Blue Sky Center staff hours • The building can get hot in the summer and cold in the winter because there is no central heating or air conditioning
<p>Campsite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khalili Cantina • Shelton Hut Circle • Parking lot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community meals • Dancing • Raffles • Games • Conferences/summits (The Rural Summit, The Long Weekend) • Cowboy poetry • Film screening • Artist residencies • Group/company retreats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-sized space • Restrooms in the Flagship Building and Warehouses can be used, but are limited • The Campsite is near homes, so visitors should be considerate of how New Cuyama residents will be affected

POSSIBLE EVENT LOCATIONS

SPACES	PAST EVENTS	OPPORTUNITIES/CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Warehouses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper Warehouse • Shops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swap meet (Cuyama Swap) • Holiday celebrations (Dia de los Muertos) • Conferences/summits (The Rural Summit The Long Weekend) • Welding workshop • Screen printing • Art workshops • Cowboy poetry • Fall Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large-sized space • There are businesses that occupy the Warehouse Shops that may be able to help with an event • The Upper Warehouse can get hot in the summer and cold in the winter because there is no insulation • The Warehouses are near homes, so visitors should be considerate of how New Cuyama residents will be affected
<p>Air Strip</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stargazing • Conferences/summits (The Rural Summit The Long Weekend) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra large-sized space • A generator would be needed for electricity • Fairly far from restrooms, so port-a-potties may be need



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Church’s confirmation class fundraises using La Cocina Cuyama food truck at Día de los Muertos. (PHOTO COURTESY NOÉ MONTES); Moonrise Standard dinner guests sit down at the Hut Circle’s long tables. (PHOTO COURTESY JESUS FRAYRE); Panelists present on the power of art in rural communities at the Rural Summit. (PHOTO COURTESY HIPCAMP); Locals enjoy the bar at Summer Fest put on by the Cuyama Valley Exchange Club. (PHOTO COURTESY BLUE SKY CENTER)

Cuyama Buckhorn

4923 Primero Street, New Cuyama, CA 93254

cuyamabuckhorn.com

hello@cuyamabuckhorn.com

events@cuyamabuckhorn.com

(661) 766-2825

Cuyama Buckhorn is a timeless roadside resort, located in New Cuyama, with 21 newly refined rooms and two acres of artfully designed outdoor space. The resort consists of a full service restaurant and bar, a craft coffee shop, a market featuring house-made and local products, and indoor and outdoor venue spaces for events, gatherings, dining experiences, and celebrations. Guests also have access to a heated swimming pool, jacuzzi, barrel sauna, outdoor firepits, and games.



LEFT Hudson's Dining Room set for a private event at Cuyama Buckhorn. (PHOTO COURTESY STEPHANIE RUSSO)

RIGHT The heated pool with fountains at Cuyama Buckhorn. (PHOTO COURTESY STEPHANIE RUSSO)

SPACES	PAST EVENTS	OPPORTUNITES/CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Restaurant and Bar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diner • The Buck Stop Coffee Shop • The Buckhorn Bar • The Garden Outdoor Dining Area • The Buckhorn Kitchen Culinary Education Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holiday celebrations • Community hog roasts • Small farmers and ranchers gatherings • Live music • Motorcycle rides/rallies • Car club rides • Guest chef events • Staff events, workshops, training sessions • Culinary classes • Sports watch parties and local sports afterparties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-sized spaces • The Patio tables have benches and umbrellas • The Buckhorn Bar has stools and tv's • The Culinary Education space has stainless steel tables and a large Santa Maria grill

POSSIBLE EVENT LOCATIONS

SPACES	PAST EVENTS	OPPORTUNITIES/CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Hotel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pool Area featuring heated pool, jacuzzi, sauna and large pool deck • Outdoor courtyard spaces with outdoor games, large 40' x 6' table, projector screen, and outdoor bar • The Lobby and Lobby Patio • The Vista: ceremony and event space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotel buyouts and group reservations for private events, meetings and retreats, weddings and other celebrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-sized spaces • Usually only available to guests of the Inn • Long tables and benches can be set up for large meals • There are multiple firepits
<p>Venue Spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Addition Dining Room • Hudson's Dining Room • The Russell Drawing Room (Conference Room) • The Garden Outdoor Dining Space • Greenhouse Dining Space within The Garden • The Buckhorn Kitchen, Outdoor Dining Space with large Santa Maria Grill • The Desertscape: large venue space for markets, festivals, or concerts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holiday parties and events • Football game afterparties and sporting events • Community events, such as Cuyama Chronicles a story night for the local community featuring poetry by the community's cowboy poet and stories told by community members • Small farmers and ranchers gatherings • Community meetings • Live music • Motorcycle rides/rallies • Car club rides • Guest chef events • Super Bowl watch parties • Staff events, workshops, training sessions • Culinary classes • Birthdays and anniversary parties • Showers • Intimate dining events • Local vendor events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium and large venue spaces • AV equipment available for rent • Various configurations for tables and chairs available • Meeting space with AV equipment • Spaces for weddings, festivals, concerts, markets, parties, and community gatherings

Cuyama Oaks Ranch

1900 Wasioja Road, New Cuyama, CA 93254

cuyamaoaksranch.com

cuyamaoaksranch@gmail.com

(740) 258-8561

Tucked away off Wasioja Road, west of New Cuyama, **Cuyama Oaks Ranch** is 82-acres of majestic mountain views and vast canyons for hiking and trail access. The secluded ranch has a designated area for tent camping and for RV's, trailers, vans, and tiny homes. In addition to the wide open spaces that accommodate all types of vehicles, there is an enclosed dog run for when visitors are gone or hiking, an expansive petting zoo, pools, cornhole, and many other campsite amenities.

SPACES	PAST EVENTS	OPPORTUNITIES/CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Center Camp Farm Oasis (16 people)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group gathering site Movie theatre Pools Bonfire area <p>Yurt Glamping Sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three solar-powered yurts <p>Private Hilltop Canyon Glampsite (10 people)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire pit Cooking/grilling/dining area <p>Double Sided Rustic Mountain Camping Sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooking/grilling/dining area Shades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silent disco Retreats Weddings Birthday parties Live music Dancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large outdoor space Dining/meal prep areas provided Pit toilets available

Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center

4689 Highway 166, Unit B, New Cuyama, CA 93254
office@cvfrc.org
 (740) 258-8561

The Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center serves as the primary provider of social services to all residents of the Valley through senior, family, youth, and community-focused programming. Their building, which is accessible off Highway 166, is commonly used for community meetings, presentations, and small classes. They also have a backyard space that has been used for small events.

SPACES	PAST EVENTS	OPPORTUNITIES/CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Office and Group Space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community meetings • Town hall meetings • Food bank drop offs • Balance and strength classes • Parents group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-sized space • Good for presentations • There are restrooms in the building • Visitors using the Group Space should be considerate of Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center staff hours and other community members using the building • Tables and chairs are stored in the space
<p>Backyard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-sized space • The space would be good for outdoor demonstrations • Not currently shaded, but there will be trees planted in and around the space in the coming years • There is a handicap accessible ramp to access the restrooms inside the building

Cuyama Valley Recreation District

4885 Primero Street, New Cuyama, CA 93254
 cuyamarec@gmail.com
 (661) 766-2270

The local parks and recreation district (the **Cuyama Valley Recreation District**) helps to maintain a few different spaces within the New Cuyama townsite. The most commonly used of those spaces is Richardson Park, which includes scattered picnic tables, a covered picnic area, barbecue pits for cookouts, and a swimming pool. The offices of the Cuyama Valley Recreation District are located at Montgomery Hall, known colloquially as the Rec Hall, which has a gym, stage, and event space.

SPACES	PAST EVENTS	OPPORTUNITIES/CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Richardson Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnic Area w/ BBQ Pits • Community Swimming Pool • Football and Baseball Fields • Race Track • School Bus Stop • Skate Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawnmower races • Easter egg hunts • 4th of July parties • Football games • Soccer games • Art installations • BBQ's • Birthday parties • Health fairs (Arts & Craft Mental Health Fair, Annual FRC Health Fair) • Food bank drop offs • Taco Truck (la Cocina Cuyama) • Outdoor vendor markets • Community meals • Live music • Water aerobics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Picnic Area, Football and Baseball Fields, and Race Track are all large-sized spaces, while the Pool, Bus Stop, and Skate Park are small-sized spaces • There is not much shade around the Football and Baseball Fields, Race Track, and Skate Park • There is a large amount of open space available • All the spaces are near homes, so visitors should be considerate of how New Cuyama residents will be affected • A generator will be needed for electricity for most of the spaces • There are public restrooms near the Picnic Area • Port-a-potties may be needed depending on the size of the event

POSSIBLE EVENT LOCATIONS

SPACES	PAST EVENTS	OPPORTUNITIES/CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Montgomery Hall (Rec Hall)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gym • Auditorium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holiday parties (Halloween Party, Breakfast with Santa) • Presentations • Art workshops • School events • Bunko tournaments • Celebrations (quinceaneras, birthdays, communions, confirmations, etc.) • Gala events (Denim and Diamonds Gala) • Dancing • Movies • Luncheons and dinners • Theatre classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-sized space • Tables and chairs are stored in the space
<p>Cebrian Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small playground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to be the town pool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small space with some playground equipment

Cuyama Valley's Schools

2300 Highway 166, Cuyama, CA 93254
 agamino@cuyamaunified.org
 (661) 766-2642

There are two schools within the Cuyama Valley: **Cuyama Elementary School** (kindergarten to 8th grade) and **Cuyama Valley High School** (9th grade to 12th grade), which are located in “Old” Cuyama and New Cuyama, respectively. Both schools are venues for sporting events, meetings, and celebrations throughout the year. Each campus has an auditorium/gymnasium that can accommodate events of about 100 people and ample outdoor space for larger gatherings.

SPACES	PAST EVENTS	OPPORTUNITIES/CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Elementary and Middle School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cafeteria / Auditorium • Fields • Classrooms • Meeting Rooms • Outdoor amphitheater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemblies / graduations • Fall Festival • Valentine’s Dinner and Show • Soccer • Basketball • Community meetings • Faculty/staff meet and greets • Fundraisers • Board meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cafeteria/Auditorium and Fields are large-sized spaces and the classrooms are small-sized spaces • No alcohol is allowed on the campus • A generator may be needed if holding an event in the Fields • Tables and chairs can be set up in the Gymnasium/Auditorium
<p>High School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gymnasium / Auditorium • Classrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemblies / Graduations • Christmas Bazaar • Car Show • Workshops • Basketball games • Volleyball games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gymnasium/Auditorium are large-sized spaces and the classrooms are small-sized spaces • No alcohol is allowed on the campus • Gymnasium/Auditorium has bleacher seating

The Place

4014 Highway 33, Ventucopa, CA 93252
(661) 766-2660

Located in Ventucopa, **The Place** is the Cuyama Valley's mom-and-pop restaurant and bar, cherished for its all-you-can-eat buffets, pies, chili, and small-town atmosphere. On event nights, between 30 to 50 people may be packed inside while around 20 people can be found out on the patio, along with the musicians. The restaurant is frequented by motorcycle groups that use it as a pit-stop along California Highway 33, as well as those that camp in the spacious land behind the building.

SPACES	PAST EVENTS	OPPORTUNITIES/CONSIDERATIONS
Indoor Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-You-Can-Eat dinners • Live music • Holiday dinners • Motorcycle rides/rallies • Car club rides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-sized space • There are restrooms in the building • Has a bar with stools and TVs, as well as other seating areas
Patio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-You-Can Eat • Live music • Motorcycle rides/rallies • Car club rides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-sized space • Tables have benches and umbrellas
Land in the Back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motorcycle rides/rallies • Car club rides • Dispersed camping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large-sized space • There are houses adjacent to the property that visitors should be considerate of • Parking may be limited • There are no hookups for RVs/campers • There is very little shade • Good for sunsets and stargazing

Quail Springs

Highway 33, Maricopa, CA 93252
 info@quailsprings.org
 (805) 886-7239

Nestled within the Los Padres National Forest, just southeast of Ventucopa, **Quail Springs** is using their expertise of the land to build, grow, protect, and regenerate. The nonprofit organization shares what they learn as stewards with classes and workshops, with work-traders who come for 3-6 month periods, with small-scale personal tours, and with Cuyamans at the Family Resource Center. They use their spaces, which include cob buildings, a yurt, a dryland farm irrigated by a gravity fed surface water spring, greenhouses, a patio for dining, a dispersed camping site, and extensive rangeland, to learn and teach through doing.

SPACES	PAST EVENTS	OPPORTUNITIES/CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Indoor/Outdoor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and gathering spaces across the property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permaculture Design Course • Archery Workshop • Natural Dye Workshop • Natural Building Workshops • Greywater Workshop • Elementary School Farm & Nature Days • Groups/company retreats • Volunteer weekends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large open-air property with specific-use spaces for eating, gathering, learning, and skill sharing



LEFT Brenton Kelly, local watershed expert and advocate, leads a group of Quail Springs' Work-Traders on a hike to understand the role of this precious resource in the high desert. (PHOTO COURTESY QUAIL SPRINGS)



RIGHT Tišina Parker works on a sheep hide as part of a Quail Springs hide-tanning workshop. (PHOTO COURTESY QUAIL SPRINGS)

Next Steps

for Event Organizers

Next Steps for Event Organizers

Before an event organizer reaches out to any Cuyama organizations, businesses, or residents, there are few questions that should be thought through. Solidifying answers for these questions will greatly help with event direction and clarity for Cuyamans. Some initial considerations include:

→ **Attendance:**

- Who is the event for?
- How many people do you wish to attend?
- How many people may realistically attend?
- How many people may come from outside of the Cuyama Valley?
- Will there be a cap on attendance or a limited amount of tickets?
- What kind of atmosphere do you want to create?
- What kind of space(s) would be best for the event?
- Is the scale of the event appropriate for the Cuyama Valley?

→ **Cuyama Connections:**

- Has there been a similar event done before?
- Who are good people within the Cuyama Valley to contact?
- What are good organizations within the Cuyama Valley to contact?
- How are the organizations/businesses/residents of the Cuyama Valley going to be incorporated into event decisions?
- How are the organizations/businesses/residents of the Cuyama Valley going to be engaged in the event planning process?
- In what ways can an event promote the people of the Cuyama Valley?
- In what ways is the event by and for the Cuyama Valley community?
- How might this event affect the day-to-day lifestyle of Cuyama residents while it is happening (commuting, parking, noise, etc.)?
- How long do the organizations/businesses/residents of the Cuyama Valley have to prepare for the event?
- What communications channels are being used to spread word of the event to Cuyamans?

Coming to a shared understanding of the event between the primary planners and Cuyamans will be critical for event success and community buy-in. Including Cuyaman perspectives in the planning process may also open up avenues not previously anticipated since the organizations, businesses, and people of the Valley are in tune with community-wide needs and desires; they are experts of their community and that expertise should be respected and utilized. For example, it is likely that any Cuyama entity contacted will be able to help with deciding upon an appropriate event scale that could benefit the community while also promoting tourism.

NEXT STEPS



TOP Infamous local resident Dick Gibford shares his original cowboy poems at a newspaper release party for the Cuyama issue of The Changing Times, held at Blue Sky Center. (PHOTO COURTESY LIZ KUBALL)

BOTTOM Conference attendee prints her own souvenir bandanna at a creative workshop hosted by High Desert Print Co. (PHOTO COURTESY BLUE SKY CENTER)

Funding Opportunities

For financing events, consider ticket sales as a way to both keep a cap on the number of attendees and also pay for event operations. For vendor events, vendor fees are very common, and in fact expected, so that is a viable option for operations costs as well. However, while fee-based events are good for keeping the size of the event limited, the fee options need to be considerate of the Valley's local economy. In the 2019 Cuyama Valley Community Survey, 33% of respondents indicated a gross annual income of \$30,100 or less and 30% reported an annual income of between \$30,101 and \$50,150. Another 17% indicated an income of up to \$80,300. Based on a family size of four and relative to the county as a whole, this relates that an estimated 80% of households are considered low, very-low, or extremely-low income. For vendor fees, \$10 to \$20 is common for Cuyama residents and entrepreneurs, with discounts or waivers for "info-only" booths. For ticket fees, events that wish to include the local population may want to consider implementing a local discount; that would likely be a good way to promote local attendance and gain community buy-in.

For additional funding that would not come from attendees or vendors, banks and credit unions within the region may be open to either donating to or sponsoring events. Most banks and credit unions have some form of community giving, event sponsorship, or grant program that can be found through their websites. Desired financial institutions should be contacted to verify whether events are eligible for funding. A few banks and credit unions in the region to consider are: American Riviera Bank, Bank of the West, Valley Republic Bank, Mechanics Bank, Valley Strong Credit Union, Montecito Bank and Trust, or Coast Hills Credit Union. There are no financial institutions in the Cuyama Valley, but there are quite a few in the nearby cities of Bakersfield, Santa Maria, Taft, and Santa Barbara that may be open to funding requests.

Corporate sponsors may also be an avenue for funding. Corporations with nearby stores, such as Walmart, Albertsons, or Dollar Tree, may be open to event sponsorships. Funding requests can also be submitted to energy companies, telecommunications providers, or even local farms that serve the region. Event planners should make sure the mission of the event and its benefit for attendees and residents of the Cuyama Valley is clear in any proposal. The best approach would be to consult with a Cuyama business or organization before submitting a funding request.



LEFT Farm-to-table dinner with live music for a private event at Cuyama Buckhorn with projector screen in the background. (PHOTO COURTESY KIANA TOOSSI)

BELOW Homemade bread and dishes featuring locally sourced ingredients are highlighted at the annual Small Farmers and Ranchers Gathering. (PHOTO COURTESY BLUE SKY CENTER)



Interested Parties

To navigate the hurdles of limited facilities, communication with residents, appropriate scale, community buy-in, and other critical logistics that come with the high desert region, it is best to consult with a local organization or business that has experience hosting successful events of various scales. For example, restroom options available may be difficult to understand for outsiders planning an event, but the entities here in the Cuyama Valley have a good grasp on those specifics. Blue Sky Center, Quail Springs, Cuyama Buckhorn, the Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center, and the Cuyama Valley Community Association are all fantastic places to contact when planning a possible event. All five entities are well connected to the community, have a strong history of event planning, and will be able to share their lessons learned to help with the direction of future events. They can help to identify and possibly coordinate with local vendors, caterers, and contractors that are the right fit so that the event is both successful and employs or promotes local residents.

The facilities of Blue Sky, Quail Springs, Cuyama Buckhorn, and the Family Resource Center are often used for events of all scales and can accommodate most event needs. One example is that all four have kitchens that can be utilized, depending on the event. What really makes these entities a great choice to contact when doing initial planning is that they can perform a warm handoff to other organizations, businesses, or people that may be better fit or would be good to rope in.

Engaging Cuyamans in event processes, especially early on, is imperative to get the most out of this beautiful valley while supporting its people and culture. The Cuyama Valley has many wonderful organizations, businesses, and people that would gladly contribute to events that celebrate the beauty of the high desert and respect the land and culture of this rich valley.



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By building models for resilient, thriving, and inclusive rural economies, Blue Sky Center is working to strengthen our rural communities by supporting entrepreneurs and building our regional creative and economic resources. Visit blueskycenter.org for more info.

Quail Springs' collective of educators, farmers, ecologists, natural builders, chefs, artists, and other talented team members are dedicated to furthering the region's social and ecological well being through education, outreach, advocacy and demonstration. Visit quailsprings.org for more info.

This report was designed by Mary Welcome. More at bangbangboomerang.com.

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