



RST17

RURAL SUMMIT

REPORT TO STAKEHOLDERS



BLUE SKY CENTER

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**PROSPERITY
THROUGH
EQUITABLE
PARTNERSHIPS**

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

We could not have organized and hosted the Rural Summit without the generous financial support, in-kind contributions, and volunteerism we experienced. We at the Blue Sky Center extend our sincere thank you to the following organizations and businesses for their commitment to the Cuyama Valley and developing equitable partnerships.



Hairless Harvest

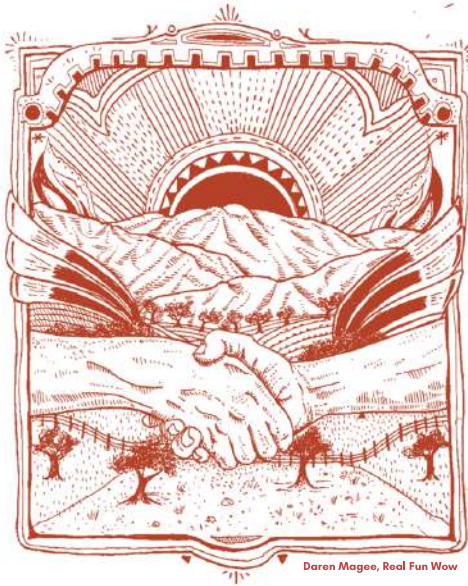


we are enso



PURPOSE

TO PROMOTE A SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION AND BRIDGE THE DIVIDE BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN TOWARDS A MORE EQUITABLE FUTURE FOR ALL.



After two years of directing a legacy impact investment, we gathered to introduce our unique rural place in the Cuyama Valley. At this juncture, we recognize our greatest need is both coalition and capacity building for the future.

Our principle objective for the first Rural Summit was to bring together a multi-disciplinary group of participants ranging all sectors to listen, engage, and collaborate on strategies that bridge our communities together.

Our overarching intention was to facilitate an open platform for private-public partnerships to form and to introduce design thinking as an exercise to build trust and to include all viewpoints.

From careful planning and coordination, we presented our four core verticals- food systems & agriculture, creative placemaking, rural hospitality, and resilient housing.

Our focus is to reframe rural communities from areas of scarcity and extraction to investment and opportunity.

Find your place in the solution. We the have land, space, and resources.

post rural summit action

Join or help form a coalition

Help us become a self-sustaining organization

Make an impact investment

Come to our place and contribute

OUR STORY

Established in 2015, the Blue Sky Center is a 501c3 rural impact center encompassing 330 acres of agricultural land and repurposed industrial-commercial space.

Blue Sky Center began with a legacy impact investment in 2013 from a small family foundation. The idea was to invest in physical space to foster local action on large global issues, principally poverty and climate change. Our capacity to achieve our mission relies on equitable, sustained partnerships across all sectors and a willingness to collaborate and innovate together.

[Learn more at www.blueskycenter.org](http://www.blueskycenter.org)

OUR PURPOSE

Our Mission is to regenerate the land, economy, and communities in the Cuyama Valley through equitable partnerships and share scalable models with other communities.

Our Vision is prosperity through equitable relationships.



NEW CUYAMA, CA

HISTORY

In 1948 wildcatters discovered oil in the Cuyama Valley. The discovery yielded a large investment in the Cuyama Valley by Richfield Oil Company - later ARCO. The company built the entire townsite of New Cuyama and an industrial headquarters that is now the Blue Sky Center. The community experienced a high-standard of living until ARCO left the Valley for the North Slope of Alaska. The departure of ARCO in 1978 resulted in the steady economic decline of the community from a period of prosperity to now, high rates of poverty and lack of new investment. The town of New Cuyama still has a future to make. With the community and our partners, we're working to adaptively repurpose this unique space for a vibrant and equitable future in the Cuyama Valley.

BUILDINGS & ASSETS

We're busy designing the Blue Sky Center campus and adjoining land for the future. Through our emerging partnerships, we've already demonstrated the ability to adaptively repurpose vacant and non-productive rural infrastructure into a regional civic hub. We envision working across all sectors to continue this build out and development over time.



Flagship | 5700 sf | dorms & offices



Khalil Cantina | 400 sf | reception



Warehouse | 7200 sf | workshops



Camp | 5 Shelton Huts | residencies



Runway | 4,000 feet | FAA approved



Agricultural land + housing | 300 acres



Theatre + Cold Storage | 900 sf



Live + Work | 2500 sf



Garage + shops | 5400 sf

BLUE SKY CENTER

1000 Perkins Road | PO Box 271 New Cuyama, CA 93254

ESTABLISHED 2015 | 501C3 PUBLIC BENEFIT CORPORATION | TAX ID 46-1239650

OUR MISSION

regenerate the land, economy, and communities of the Cuyama Valley through equitable partnerships and share scalable models with other communities



OUR VISION

prosperity through equitable relationships

Blue Sky By the Numbers

Originally built 1950 by Atlantic Richfield Oil Company
22,000 square feet Industrial-commercial buildings
4,000 privately owned runway open to the public
300 Acres of alluvial farmland
As Built Development Plan approved 2015



New Cuyama CA

Population 1,100
Santa Barbara County Unincorporated 1st District
Very Rural 60 miles from Santa Maria, CA and Bakersfield, CA
State Recognized Economically Disadvantaged Community

WE VIEW RURAL COMMUNITIES AS AREAS OF INVESTMENT AND OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS OUR MOST VEXING CHALLENGES

SHELTER

FOOD

LIVELIHOOD

CULTURE

OUR TEAM

Staff

Philip Jankoski, Executive Director | Emily Johnson, Development Director | Chris Budny, Facilities Management

Americorps VISTAs

Matthew Simeone & Julia Warner, Rural Community Designers

Elise Dixon, Food Action Coordinator, Ryan Flanagan, Development Coordinator

Board of Directors

Chris Cohen, Cecilia Sullivan, Eric Junker, Joanna Kaufman, Dr. Paul Chounet, Ben Werner

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR WORK

#1 Financially support us

We are seeking diverse support to help us become a self-sufficient, vibrant non-profit organization.

#2 Partner with us

We're seeking equitable partnerships across all sectors to channel investment and resources into scalable solutions for our community.

#3 Donate needed equipment or supplies

Support our wishlist of equipment and supplies that will aid in our growth and development of our land and physical assets

#4 Serve

We're always seeking aligned, talented, and creative advisors, board members, volunteers, fellows, collaborators & more

www.blueskycenter.org | [@blueskycenter](https://twitter.com/blueskycenter)

A message to policy makers

Dear Valued Representative-

We are facing enormous challenges in our communities. Faith and trust in our institutions are at an all time low and we require solid governance and sound leadership to navigate turbulent and polarized times.

Our rural community - like so many others- is challenged by a lack of awareness from lawmakers and agencies to address systemic unmet needs such as affordable housing, access to healthy, affordable food, essential infrastructure, and economic development opportunities. As a result, our citizens have become increasingly frustrated and alienated from those who represent them and less civically engaged.

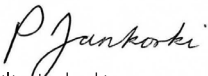
Today, many place-based non-profits are making up the gap unfilled by government and business. Our non-profit is uniquely positioned with significant assets, land, and resources, to impact our community. We're seeking to build the necessary partnerships to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century our rural community faces.

What we are missing are innovative policies and incentives that promote public-private partnerships. Now more than ever we need new approaches to tackle our most vexing issues like poverty and climate change. Policy-makers should invest their time and capital in rural communities, bridging the geopolitical divide that has opened in our community through adequately listening and including all perspectives.

If we are to truly realize healthy, vibrant, and resilient communities we must have the tools and license to create the impact at the local level. I ask your offices to engage directly with our organization, community partners, and residents to realize a prosperous future for our rural community that takes into account our unique place and issues we face. Despite our geographic isolation, we're seeking assistance in reducing governmental barriers limiting innovation and growth. We must, at the same time in reducing these barriers, foster the development of a resilient community that embraces environmental, social, and financial equity.

We look forward to working with your offices in this important work and achieving our mission and vision together.

Onward,



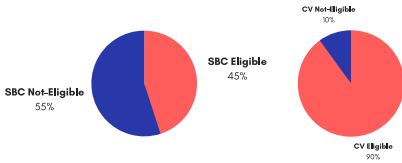
Philip Jankoski
Executive Director
Blue Sky Center



BY THE NUMBERS

LOCAL

School data suggest Cuyama has highest poverty rate in the county



Roughly **90%** of Cuyama Valley Joint Unified School District students are eligible for free or reduced meals compared with the **45%** average for Santa Barbara County

Source: CJUSD, SBC Food Action Plan

State recognized Economic Disadvantaged Community (DAC)



The three unincorporated communities of the Cuyama Valley are recognized by the State of California as economically disadvantaged and require additional support in planning for critical infrastructure through state law SB244.

No accurate and reliable government data on the Cuyama Valley



The 2010 census is not accurate and representative. One of the poorest and underresourced - if not the poorest - Cuyama has been further disadvantaged from such important studies as the Santa Barbara County Poverty Study.

Regulatory Barriers keep Cuyama at a disadvantage



The isolated Cuyama Valley communities are tied to the same stringent county building and zoning regulations as affluent urban communities such as Montecito - one of the wealthiest zip codes in the United States - further restricting any economic progress and investment.

Despite agricultural abundance, the Cuyama Valley is classified as a food desert



Despite the presence of large, resourced organic operations, the communities of the Cuyama Valley are classified as food deserts, lacking access to fresh and affordable foodstuff.

The nearest grocery stores are thirty-five and sixty miles outside the valley.

BY THE NUMBERS

NATIONAL

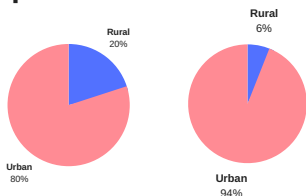
Poverty disparity in Rural and Urban communities

+ 6 POINTS

Using census figures, the Agriculture Department found that in each region of the country, poverty rates were higher in non-metro areas than in metro areas. On average, the poverty rate in rural areas is 21%, six points higher than in cities. Many rural communities have low census reporting and these figures may be significantly higher.

Source: US Department of Agriculture, US Census, Chronicle of Philanthropy

Population Breakdown v. Proportion of Philanthropic Giving



While nearly a fifth of the U.S. population lives in rural areas, a Department of Agriculture study last year found that about 6% of grants from the nation's largest 1,200 foundations went to rural health, development, and agriculture programs.

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Chronicle of Philanthropy

Rural Housing Crisis

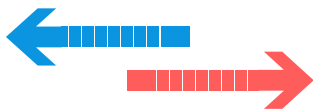
\$1.3B

Funds for rural housing provided by the USDA via the 502 Direct Loan program—one of the government-aid programs for purchasing or rehabilitating homes in rural areas, cited by several people as a resource for very-low-income residents—have decreased over the past few years, dropping from about \$2.1 billion in 2010 to around \$828 million in 2013. Some still say that there isn't enough money, and some even point to the current administration.

Source: USDA, The Atlantic

Widening Geographic Divide

The widening political divergence between cities and small-town America also reflect a growing alienation between the two groups, and a sense that their fates are not connected.

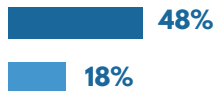
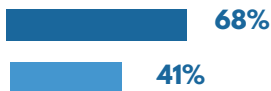


Rural Americans who say values of people in big cities are...

Urban Americans who say values of people in rural areas and small towns are...

very different

somewhat different



Source: Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll April 13-May 1, 2017



PROGRAM

Real Fun Wow High Desert Print Co.

Live muraling and designer of original Rural Summit artwork

Noé Montes

DIY screen printing at community arts + cultural destination in Cuyama

Noé Montes

Storyteller and photographer on his work documenting farmworkers in Eastern Coachella Valley

Cuyama Youth

Cuyama teens present on life in the high-desert exposing the harshness and beauty of rural living.

Jack Forinash

How Epicenter was formed to impact Green River, UT - population 952- through housing and the arts.



Expert Panel Discussions

Creative Placemaking

Jack Forinash, Co-Founder, Epicenter
Eric Junker, Eric Junker Designs
Tom Gottler, Designers on Holiday
Rachel Leyland, Principal Cuyama Elementary
Noé Montes, Photographer & Storyteller
Mary Welcome, Citizen Artist

Food Systems & Ag

Byron Albano, CEO, Cuyama Orchards
Derek Yurosek, VP Real Estate, Bolthouse Properties
Juan Calderon, Ranch Manager, Duncan Family Farms
Jon Hammond, Farmer, Tehachapi Grain Project
Melissa Cohen, Manager, IV Food Cooperative
Emily Miller, Food Action Plan Coordinator, CEC

Rural Tourism

Ryan Miller, VP Marketing, Autocamp
Alyssa Ravasio, CEO/Co-Founder, HipCamp
Jacqueline Guevara, Marketing & Outreach, MDLT
Garrett Gerstenberger, High Desert Print Co.
Dr. Paul Chounet, Superintendent Cuyama Unified School District



Breakouts / exercise in design-thinking powered by ENSO

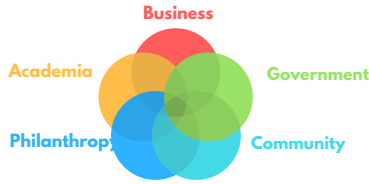
Following our expert panel discussions we convened our diverse participants to engage in design-thinking breakouts around shared missions. This process was meant to establish a framework for effective multi-sector ideation and coalition building. We framed the breakouts in our three verticals - food systems & agriculture, placemaking, and tourism.



www.enso.co

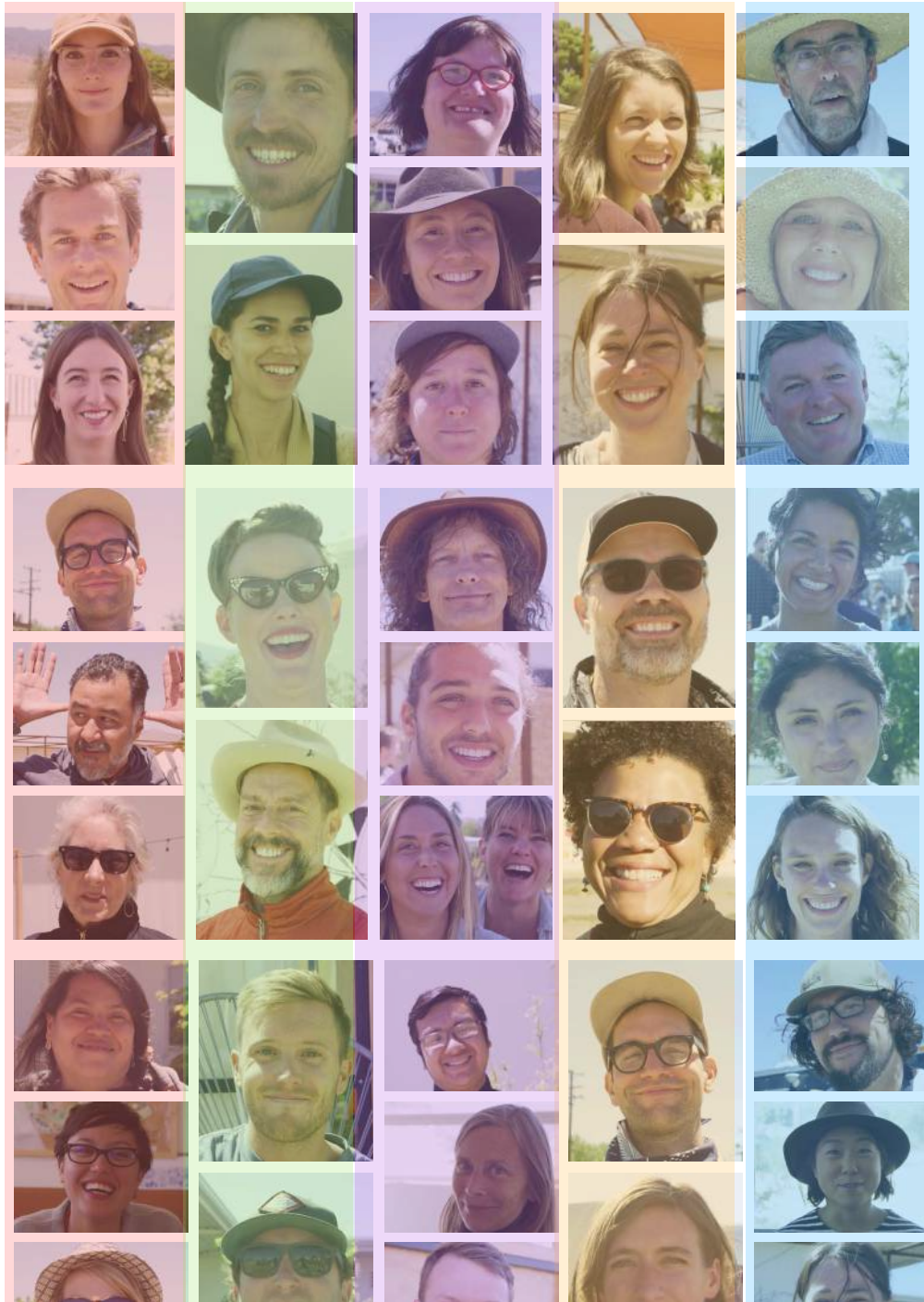


PARTICIPANTS



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 Claudia Armann, Executive Director, Miller McCune Foundation
 Steve Brown, Editor, Edible Magazine, Santa Barbara
 Ellen Burke, PLA LEED, AP Professor of Landscape Architecture, Cal Poly SLO
 Margie Bushman, Santa Barbara Permaculture Network
 Wesley Roe, Santa Barbara Permaculture Network
 Sarah Cain, Outreach and Events Coordinator, California Institute for Rural Studies
 Joel Martinez, Student, Cuyama Future Leaders
 Hector Jimenez, Student, Cuyama Future Leaders
 Matt Galindo, Student, Cuyama Future Leaders
 Byron Albano, Owner/CEO, Cuyama Organic Orchards
 Kathryn Barnes, Producer, KCRW
 Juan Calderon, Ranch Manager, Duncan Family Farms
 Darcel Elliott, Chief of Staff for SBC First District Supervisor, Das Williams
 Sarah Englehart, Film, Kiss the Ground
 Das Williams, Santa Barbara County 1st District Supervisor
 Mattie Shelton, Owner/Founder, Shelton Huts
 Daren Magee, Artist/Designer, Real Fun Wow
 Garrett Gerstenberger, Founder/Owner High Desert Print Co
 Thomas Gottelier, Co-Founder, Designers on Holiday
 Lori Marmolejo, Associate Principal, Montalba Architects, Inc.
 Jacqueline Guevara, Director of Education and Community Engagement, Mojave Desert Land Trust
 Krista Harris, Co-Publisher, Edible Magazine
 Rachel Hommel, Writer, Edible Magazine
 Chris Cohen, Attorney/Co-Owner, Sustainable Law Group
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 Jack Forinash, Principal of Housing, Epicenter
 Emily Johnson, Development Director, Blue Sky Center
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 Alice Pang, Brand Impact and Marketing Manager, ENSO
 Erica Schlaikjer, Digital + Brand strategist, ENSO
 Elena Richardson, Director of Grantmaking, Fund for Santa Barbara
 Mary Welcome, Citizen Artist
 Jesse Carmichael, Director, Biocitizen LA
 Melissa Cohen, General Manager, Isla Vista Food Cooperative
 Alyssa Rvasio, Founder/CEO, Hip Camp
 Julian Bialowas, Creative and Production Direction, Hip Camp
 Lisse Lundin, Creative, Hip Camp
 Elizabeth Opholt, Planner, EPG
 Robin Mounts, Librarian/Instructor, Cuyama Elementary School
 Jack Dyer, Owner/Co-Founder, Topa Topa Brewing Co.
 Ryan Jacobs, Deputy Editor, Pacific Standard Magazine

Rachel Leyland, Principal, Cuyama Elementary School
 Jefferson Litten, Chief of Staff for SBC Third District Supervisor Joan Hartman
 Hunter Francis, Director, Cal Poly Center for Sustainability
 Philip Jankaski, Executive Director, Blue Sky Center
 Guido Lois, Film, Kiss the Ground
 Noe Montes, Photographer and Storyteller
 James Ontiveros, Principal, Grapevine Capital
 Hannah Beth-Jackson, California State Senator, 19th District
 Brad Hudson, Chief of Staff for Sen. Hannah Beth-Jackson
 Derek Yurosek, Vice-President of Real Estate, Bolthouse Properties
 Dawn Ortiz-Legg, Public Affairs-Construction Liaison, First Solar
 Erik Talkin, CEO, Santa Barbara County Food Bank
 Mari Talkin, Artist & Writer
 Sherry Mandell, Principal, Tehachapi Grain Project
 John Hammond Farmer, Tehachapi Grain Project
 Ryan Mandell, Writer, SB Independent
 Allegra Roth, Field Representative, Office of CA Asm Monique Limón
 Lauren Tucker, Executive Director, Kiss the Ground
 Casey Walsh, Professor of Anthropology, UC Santa Barbara
 Charles Barth, Slow Food Ventura County
 Corbin LaMont, Artist/Designer, Office of Venture
 Tate Larrick, Founder/Owner, 805 Bread and Butter Productions
 Pamela Nears, Slow Food Ventura County
 Karen Rodriguez, Operations Manager, Kiss the Ground
 Andrew Sieger, Architect, General Office
 Joel Stein, Designer, Cascadia Works
 Lisa Valencia Sherratt, Co-Executive Director, Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center
 Emily Miller, Food Action Plan Coordinator, CEC
 Eric Junker, Artist, and Designer/ Board Member, Blue Sky Center
 Dr. F. Paul Chounet, Superintendent, Cuyama Joint Unified School District, Board Member, Blue Sky Center
 Georgia Junker, Instructor, Feldenkrais Method
 Eddie Fetterman, Manager E&B Resources
 Kendy Fetterman, Cuyama resident
 Shayrn Main, Senior Director of Community Investments, Santa Barbara Foundation
 Gene Zannon, Santa Barbara Organic Pistachio Company
 Gail Zannon, Santa Barbara Organic Pistachio Company
 Joan Hartmann, Santa Barbara County 3rd District Supervisor
 Joanna Powell, Attorney
 Jack Thrift, Rangelands Manager, Quail Springs Permaculture
 Jenya Schneider, Quail Springs Permaculture
 Alma Hernandez, District Representative for SBC 3rd District Supervisor Joan Hartman
 Joanna Kaufman, Director, C.O.A.S.T./ Board Member, Blue Sky Center
 Ben Werner, Engineer/Board Member, Blue Sky Center
 Carl Sonny Leyland, Resident/Musician, Cuyama



Future Headlines a vision for success



Small California town pioneers new affordable, sustainable housing designs - NY Times

Carrizo Plains National Monument attains National Park status
-HuffPost

New Cuyama Shows the Way - how one rural community leveraged a tourism boon to create new economic growth.-The Atlantic

In a CA high-desert town, clean energy and storage technologies take residents off the grid.
-NY Times

Rural town sees youth returning to seize new job opportunities and stimulates new cultural vitality.
-Washington Post

Why millennials are turning to rural places for arts, culture, and lifestyle
-VICENews

Cuyama Valley farmworkers are the new landowners -Washington Post

New Cuyama hosts new Shakespeare Festival in the high-desert.
-The Bakersfield Californian

Cuyama Valley opens up new trails system to showcase natural beauty.
- Cuyama Daily

New rural housing development spurred by innovative community land trust in the Cuyama Valley
-Pacific Business Times

Cuyama sees investment in new healthy food options at small, local grocery store.
-Santa Maria Times

In the Cuyama Valley a 300-acre regenerative farm revives the local economy and land.
-LA Times

DESIGN SPRINT IDEAS

These ideas were generated during 2 hour breakout sessions and were part of a design-thinking exercise facilitated by ENSO.



Food Systems, Agriculture & Climate

Link big agricultural resources, local youth, and academic institutions to create an educational pipeline

Develop a space where local youth and community members can experiment with tools and assets to become local food entrepreneurs.

Seed a local farm with profits and products that remain in the community - emphasis on value-added.

Creative Rural Placemaking

Exchange resources with other businesses in the region to become a hub of activity.

Host a monthly farmer's market or swap to provide food, music, artmaking, daycare and community building

Create a visual census to photograph and interview everyone in the community about what they need or want.

Rural Tourism & Hospitality

Create a rural community land trust for affordable housing development.

Grow a community festival or event with an educational benefit or focus.

Build on 'Made in Cuyama' - an innovative small business incubator and expand economic opportunities for women

CONTACT

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Elise Dixon, Food Action Coordinator, elise@blueskycenter.org
Ryan Flanagan, Development Coordinator, ryan@blueskycenter.org

Board of Directors

Chris Cohen, Attorney & Co-owner SLG
Ben Werner, Co-founder Sama-Group
Cecilia Sullivan, CFO bPost International
Joanna Kaufman, Urban Planner
Dr. Paul F. Chounet, Superintendent
Eric Junker, Artist, Designer & Entrepreneur

Emeritus

Gene Zannon, Founder
Matthew Gradias, AIA
Riley Hubbell, LoCom



WE ARE THE PLACE



