

Central Valley: Building Power for Housing Justice and Community Resilience

The Fund for an Inclusive California (F4ICA) is a funding initiative co-designed and co-governed with grassroots leaders to advance community-driven housing justice efforts. Now in its eighth and final year, we have aligned funders to build and sustain a pooled fund that has moved \$17 million to support four regions and statewide formations since 2018.

The Fund is a unique force in the ecosystem. Our long-standing support for organizing proves what's possible in the Central Valley with sustained, agile funding: a movement of strong cross-issue coalitions, narrative power to shape the public discourse, and growing community owned solutions, rippling across cities and counties as they learn from each other's wins.

These successes are not by chance, they are precisely what organizations have named as possibilities if we fund them collectively to win. With sustained support, there is so much more that can be done. This brief highlights their impact during the second phase of our work together, beginning in 2022. It underscores why bold, coordinated, and long-term investment is essential to achieving a thriving and just California for all.



LEADERSHIP COUNSEL FOR JUSTICE AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Central Valley: A Landscape of Resilience and Opportunity

The Central Valley is the heart of California's agricultural industry and is a region defined by its growing community organizing power. Home to nearly four million Californians, it is an impressive hub of grassroots innovation and leadership, which has emerged out of necessity.

Life in the region is heavily shaped by powerful agricultural and private prison industries that hold outsized influence over local decision-making, creating housing, environmental, and economic injustices that hit low-income, immigrant, and farmworker communities the hardest. In this context, trusted local organizations have become essential first responders, addressing landlord harassment, unsafe living conditions, and hazardous work situations like pollution and extreme heat. The Central Valley is a battleground for political issues like redistricting, health care, and immigrant and worker rights. With 44% of households, or 1.72 million people, renting their homes, housing affordability is an acute issue. The pandemic and rise in remote work played a part in driving up rents by as much as 40% in Bakersfield, Fresno, Merced and Riverside, meaning a home that was rented for \$2,000 a month is now \$2,800, deepening long-standing inequities.

In the face of these mounting challenges, community-led coalitions are building power, mobilizing across issues to realize a more just, resilient future for the region.



FOR A DEEPER DIVE LOOK AT THE [CENTRAL VALLEY LEARNING BRIEF](#).

About Our
Phase II
Central Valley
Partners



For eight years the Fund for an Inclusive California has supported six community-rooted organizations in eight Central Valley counties. These partners have leveraged flexible, multi-year funding to advance housing justice in one of the most asset rich, but under-resourced regions in the state.

\$1.4M in grants in Phase II, for a total of **\$3.67M** since 2018.

8 Counties:

Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare

6 Community Partners:

California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc (CRLA)
Central Valley Empowerment Alliance (CVEA)*

Faith in the Valley

Fresno Building Healthy Communities (BHC)*

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

Power California

100% serving communities living on low-incomes

100% serving immigrants

7 Phase II Funders Include:

Amplify Fund
The California Endowment
Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
Heising-Simons Foundation
The James Irvine Foundation
San Francisco Foundation
Weingart Foundation

*Received one-time funding.

Phase II Impact:
Building Power Across the
Central Valley

F4ICA's investments in the Central Valley have helped build more than individual campaigns or isolated wins. They have strengthened the organizing infrastructure needed to drive housing justice from rural communities to city halls to the state capitol. Across the region, partners are aligning across issues, building durable coalitions, and turning local fights into broader shifts in policy, public narrative, and community power.

From legal advocacy in mobile home parks to youth-led narrative campaigns, from tenant protections to faith-land housing strategies, these efforts show what sustained, flexible investment makes possible in one of California's most under-resourced regions. Together, they reflect a housing justice ecosystem that is growing stronger, more connected, and more capable of meeting the full realities people face in the Central Valley.

Breaking Through Political Blockages
with Narrative Power

In the Central Valley, organizing for housing justice has always had to contend with deeply entrenched political and economic power. Agriculture, oil, private prisons, and longstanding local power brokers shape public decisions in ways that routinely sideline tenants, farmworker communities, immigrants, and low-income residents. In that context, narrative power is an essential method for organizing to breakthrough. F4ICA's partners are reshaping the public conversation about housing, challenging the myth that the region is broadly affordable, exposing the forces driving displacement, and ensuring those most affected shape the public discourse. Through grassroots storytelling, media strategy, and youth-led campaigns, they have made bold housing policy harder to ignore.



POWER CALIFORNIA

POWER CALIFORNIA'S youth-led campaigns, including Housing the Homies and Take Back the Block, generated 20+ media hits across outlets including The Fresno Bee, Fresno Land, ABC30, CBS47, Univision, and Telemundo.



FAITH IN THE VALLEY

LEADERSHIP COUNSEL and **FAITH IN THE VALLEY** have used media and storytelling to amplify tenant voices and shape public understanding of housing justice.

Anchoring Community Ownership as a Growing Regional Strategy

In the Central Valley, community ownership is emerging not just as a vision, but as a practical strategy for stability, dignity, and resident power. In communities where tenants face harassment, unsafe conditions and health hazards, and chronic underinvestment, ownership models offer the possibility of lasting control over land and housing. With F4ICA's support, communities are building the legal, technical, and organizing infrastructure residents need to defend their homes, acquire property, and govern it collectively, with a special emphasis on mobile home parks. A regional model is taking shape as single successes add up to real momentum, illustrating how communities are growing power and building realistic, innovative strategies for ownership.

CALIFORNIA RURAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE, INC (CRLA) supported the successful purchase and cooperative conversion of Comunidad Nuevo Lago, a mobile home park in Fresno County. Residents secured the \$7.6 million purchase of the park after years of organizing and legal advocacy. Today, 52 families govern Comunidad Nuevo Lago through a resident-led Board of Directors. Their work has sparked interest from communities in Arvin, Modesto, and Chico exploring ownership pathways and defend against exploitation.

CENTRAL VALLEY EMPOWERMENT ALLIANCE is developing a pipeline of community controlled housing. With the Gilbert Padilla Village, CVEA is working towards developing 127 multi-family rental units and 80 single-family homeownership units for farmworker families. Secondly, CVEA is beginning to advance the Senior Farmworker Housing Project, which pairs rural adaptive reuse of existing structures with a Community Land Trust (CLT) — Tulare County's first — to create 24+ permanently affordable rental units for aging farmworkers and their families.

In San Joaquin County, **FAITH IN THE VALLEY** helped launch a community land trust project on faith land, laying groundwork for permanently affordable housing and community-led development.



CALIFORNIA RURAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE, INC (CRLA)

“Power California’s earned media, spokesperson preparation, and consistent presence have been so effective that the mayor now references housing efforts even when we are not in the room. When budget cycles come up at city council, our leaders are ready to show up and advocate.”

Honoring People's Realities and Building the Infrastructure for Long-Term Power

The strongest housing justice organizing in the Central Valley begins with people's lived realities and builds power from there. Central Valley residents navigate rising rents alongside immigration threats, environmental hazards, extreme heat, exploitative labor practices, and deep institutional neglect. With F4ICA's support, partners are building the infrastructure the region needs: trusted organizations that respond to urgent crises, provide legal and civic tools, develop local leadership, and connect immediate survival to long-term systems change. This community infrastructure is foundational, in a place where formal support systems are thin and residents turn to community organizations first for help.



LEADERSHIP COUNSEL FOR JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- ✱ Collaborations between CRLA, Leadership Counsel, and the California Center for Movement Legal Services provide Know Your Rights workshops and legal training for tenants. Rapid response efforts such as the Valley Watch Network support immigrant and undocumented residents facing displacement and related crises.
- ✱ Leadership Counsel has built deep partnerships across housing, land use, and climate justice. At the state level, Leadership Counsel helped shape and pass SB 567, expanding eviction safeguards and rent control enforcement. Partners also helped secure a 25% rural set-aside in the state eviction prevention fund through AB 1487.
- ✱ In Bakersfield, sustained organizing helped secure \$350,000 for a new Right to Counsel program, a significant tenant-centered budget win in a politically resistant county.
- ✱ In Merced County, tenant leaders trained by Faith in the Valley stopped illegal rent increases that threatened low-income seniors and families affected by flooding.

✱ A Call to Build What's Next

Together, we have proven what is possible when funders listen, co-create, and trust community partners and their solutions. In the current political and funding context these lessons matter all the more.

As we step into the concluding year of an 8-year initiative, in a challenging funding landscape, we recommit to serving as an advocate for and partner to the housing justice movement. Common Counsel Foundation is committed to supporting communities to build trust, relational infrastructure, and grow their power and influence for housing justice.

For funders committed to a just and vibrant California, this is a moment to learn from what has worked and help carry it forward. We invite funders to join us in conversation and action on how we can sustain this vital movement infrastructure.

Reach out: F4ICA@CommonCounsel.org



POWER CALIFORNIA