REPORT ON THE 16TH ANNUAL GRASSROOTS GRANTEE CONVENING
of the California Environmental Grassroots Fund
California Wildlands Grassroots Fund
Grassroots Leadership Fund

A 4 Part Virtual Series
Held via Zoom
Friday’s November 5 - December 3, 2021

2021 Virtual Convening Theme: Make Politics Work for You!

The annual Convening of California Wildlands Grassroots Fund and California Environmental Grassroots Fund grantees remained virtual in 2021 as we continued to navigate the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual format allowed us to include grantees from our Grassroots Leadership Fund and other Rose Foundation grants programs and partner organizations across the country. Altogether, 73 attendees (57 of whom were grantees) participated in 4 free 2-hour online training workshops exploring strategies for grassroots political advocacy and influencing decision makers. Workshops were held every Friday from November 5- December 3, 2021.

The series focused on the role grassroots organizations can play in guiding policy, influencing decision-makers, and holding political leaders accountable. Training sessions explored how to influence policy decisions at the state and local level, cultivate relationships with lawmakers, strengthen a group's organizing power, and build the tools to scale impact through government action. Training topics included:

1. Understanding Power for Your Mission [This covered the basics of power-mapping and analyzing the landscape of stakeholders for an issue]
2. State Policy, Lobbying & Influencing Legislators
3. Local Policy & Accountability
4. Campaign and Strategy Planning to Win

We partnered with California Environmental Voters (formerly CLCV) to lead the 4 webinar training sessions. Please see below for a list of the Convening instructors.
Highlights
Altogether, 73 attendees (57 of whom were grantees) participated in the 4 virtual
workshops. This is equivalent to the in-person
attendance of our last several convenings. On
average we had about 28 grantee attendees per
session. Of the grantee attendees, 30% were
grantees of our California Environmental Grassroots
Fund, 28% were Cal Wildlands Grassroot Fund
grantees, 10% were from our Grassroots Leadership
Fund, and another 30% were from other Rose
Foundation grantmaking programs (mostly grassroots
grantees from our watershed funds and Rapid
Response Fund).

We were encouraged by grantee enthusiasm for the
series, particularly the number of grantees who
attended multiple workshops; 49% of grantees attended 2 or more sessions. The topics
and presentations themselves seem to have attracted greater interest than last year, as we
saw a larger number of participants at individual sessions than with our first online
convening in 2020.

Benefits of a Virtual Convening
Although we would have preferred the connectivity of an in-person event, the online
format provided flexibility for our grantees to plug into the trainings where and when
desired and greatly expanded the geographical reach of the event, removing travel barriers
and allowing grassroots grantees from across California, and the country, to participate in
the workshops together. We had grantees from New York conversing with groups from
Washington state and activists from every corner of California. It was inspiring to see their
common struggles reflected in the conversation, despite their geographic and issue area
diversity.

An additional benefit of the virtual
format is that all session recordings
are available on our website for
grantees to return to and explore at
their convenience. We hope this will
provide a valuable tool for future

Each session was clearly focused and I found the
information very helpful.

- Gabriella Velardi-Ward,
Coalition for Wetlands and Forests
grantees, and allow us to expand our store of available capacity building resources to share with all our grassroots grantees.

The webinar recordings, slides, and additional resources can be found on our Resources and Recordings page: https://rosefdn.org/2021conveningrecordings

Spanish Language Accessibility
For many years, the Rose Foundation has offered simultaneous Spanish translation during the Convening to make the event accessible to grassroots groups led by Spanish-speaking community members. This year, our webpage about the event, email outreach and registration for the Convening were offered in both English and Spanish. Every session had simultaneous Spanish interpretation with workshop materials in both English and Spanish. Our interpreters did an excellent job incorporating spanish interpretation into the flow of the training and directly engaging spanish speaking participants during the workshops. We were pleased to see 8 registrants and at least 2-5 people per session who utilized the simultaneous translation.

Evaluation
Attendees were asked to complete a short evaluation survey at the end of each session. In total, over the 4 sessions, we received 52 completed evaluations with an average response rate of about 47%. This is much lower than our response rate at in-person convenings, but it does give us some valuable feedback to work with. Overall, 96% of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that the session topics were relevant to their work. 94% somewhat or strongly agreed that there was a good balance between presentation and
activities in the sessions. 93% strongly agreed that the presenters were effective. This area in particular saw consistently high ratings, which mirror our own high impressions of the EnviroVoters team and their skillful facilitation.

Unfortunately, the low response rate seems to be a consequence of the virtual format. We were able to improve the response rate by designating time at the end of each session to allow people to fill out the survey, but this continues to be an area where a virtual event can’t quite match up to an in-person one.

Even so, we are happy to report that the 2021 Convening was a success. Attendance and participation rivaled our in-person convenings of the past; the topics and discussion proved relevant and valuable to grantees; and the virtual format unlocked geographical diversity that we couldn’t have dreamed of before. We look forward to continuing to explore online and in-person opportunities for networking and training with our grassroots grantees in the coming year.

What I liked most was talking about how to build power with legislators and the explanations of lobbying and the various rules/guidelines around that.

- Sean, Cascade Forest Conservancy
Meet the Trainers

Matt Abularach-Macias (he/him), Campaigns and Organizing Manager. Originally focused in San Bernardino and Riverside, Matt has expanded his role to lead our statewide organizing efforts and coordinated electoral campaigns, including our endorsements process. Outside of California Environmental Voters, he chairs the Board of the Inland Region Equality Network (IREN) and is a board member for IE United. Before joining Enviro Voters, Matt graduated from UCLA with a degree in Chicana/o Studies and was a regional field director for Congressman Pete Aguilar’s winning campaign in 2014.

Melissa Romero, Legislative Affairs Manager. Melissa represents the organization in the state’s capitol, lobbying state lawmakers to pass climate, environmental, and elections policy in partnership with organizations and coalitions working together to advance priority legislation. Her work includes tracking and prioritizing legislation, representing California Environmental Voters on a variety of coalitions and networks, working with state legislators and their staff to advance policy solutions, informing the annual Environmental Scorecard, facilitating the Green California network, and being the organization’s voice in the State Capitol. Prior to California Environmental Voters, Melissa worked at Californians Against Waste on advancing waste reduction and recycling legislation and at Cal State Long Beach where she worked in the Student Government to advocate for and implement sustainability and zero waste policies and programs on campus. Melissa graduated from Cal State Long Beach with a degree in Environmental Science & Policy.

Andrew Escamilla is EnviroVoters’ Regional Organizer. Andrew supports EnviroVoters’ Organizing work in Fresno and other parts of the Central Valley. Originally focused on building equity and organizing students and families in California K-12 schools, Andrew will continue to Organize marginalized communities, ensuring their voices are centered and uplifted in the climate crisis movement. In his role as the Regional Organizer, Andrew will help shape the public narrative,
educate lawmakers, cultivate environmental and environmental justice leaders, drive policy change, and expand regional partnerships and action in the Central Valley. He graduated from Fresno State University with an M.A. in Education with the option in Higher Education Leadership. He is passionate about higher education access and equity for all, making sure front line communities are at the forefront of solutions when it comes to climate change, and the solutions put forth.

Resa Barillas is EnviroVoters’ Inland Empire Regional Organizer. Resa is a former digital marketer, graphic designer, and musician. When she moved to the High Desert, she found herself in a community whose voice was unheard and saw a need for change. She utilized her mixed background and experience in organizational leadership to advocate & organize around youth issues, health equity, and environmental justice. She is a proud queer woman and a first-generation Salvadoran-American living in the city of Adelanto.