

# Reflections on Cross-Strategy Activities and Progress Notes for Strategy 3 Grantee Partners

## CCHE OUTCOME EVALUATION, LEARNING CYCLE 1

JANUARY – JUNE 2022

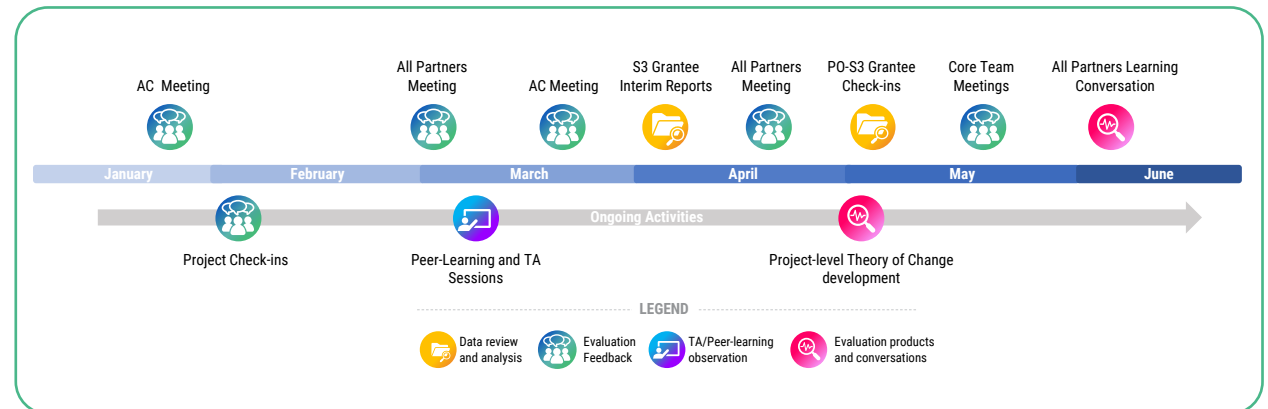
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Learning Cycle memos periodically bring forward learning and insight for consideration and use by the Climate Change, Health, and Equity (CCHE) initiative staff. This Learning Cycle memo includes baseline information for all CCHE grantee partners and reflections on the progress of Strategy 3 grantee partners (Community Based Organizations, or CBOs) based on meeting observation and secondary data from January - May 2022 (see Figure 1). Given the rich secondary data on CBO activities during this Learning Cycle (i.e., interim progress reports and transcribed notes from Program Officer (PO)-Grantee partner calls), the initiative evaluation team (Ross Strategic, or “we”) explored at a deeper level the progress of CBOs. We investigated how CBOs are implementing their work plans, facilitators and barriers to the work, and signals of progress. Future Learning Cycles will address similar topics for Strategy 1 (Hospitals, Health Care Systems and Public Health Institutions, or “Institutions”) and

Strategy 2 (Health Care and Public Health Practitioners, or “Practitioners”), and dig deeper into these areas across all three Strategies through primary data collection. Relevant evaluation questions from the Outcome Evaluation Plan are highlighted in call-out boxes in respective sections of the memo. Topics covered in this memo include: CCHE grantee partners’ key activities; the CCHE network and grantee partnerships; and signals of progress from CBOs. More detail on initiative activities and data sources can be found in Appendix A.



FIGURE 1. CADENCE OF CCHE INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES THAT INFORMED THIS LEARNING CYCLE



# TAKEAWAYS

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## Across grantee partners, we found:

- There are six key activity areas in which grantee partners across the three Strategy cohorts are engaged.
- Initiative-level outcomes are supported by key grantee partner activities and across all three Strategies.
- Key activity areas describe the ways in which grantee partners are mobilizing for climate action.
- Grantee partners are working to improve a wide range of public health outcomes including reducing health disparities; exposure to environmental hazards; heat-related illness; respiratory illness; cardiovascular disease and increasing climate resilience; heat and flood safety; physical and mental health and well-being.
- Partnership is an essential ingredient for conducting community-led research, engaging with local and state government agencies in policy development and implementation, and raising awareness of climate change-related health impacts.

## For CBOs, we found:

- CBOs are building community leadership and empowering resident leaders to act on their capacity to push for systems change. CBOs described 4 primary ways they are building resident capacity for policy advocacy, 1. Providing training to residents on the how-to of leadership and policy advocacy, 2. Deliberate engagement and activation of cohorts of resident leaders, 3. Coalition building and engagement, and 4. Leveraging existing networks of residents to advance climate justice.
- Grantee partners are playing multiple roles in pursuit of community leadership and resident voice in the policy making and adoption process. Roles include decoding complicated policy ideas, engaging in targeted and strategic community capacity building, and translating community driven ideas into policy or legislative language and vice versa.
- CBOs are partnering with residents, health practitioners, government agencies, institutions, and other CBOs to share space, break down silos, and work in ways that complement one another's capabilities and strengths.
- By leveraging their role as facilitators, CBOs are brokering constructive conversations between residents and local government officials.

- CBOs are working with city equity officers and newly elected local officials to inform various policy targets or strategies, finding new state and federal government funding opportunities, and improving government engagement in community-based activities to address climate and health concerns.
- Cultivation of partnerships with local government is contributing to strengthened collaboration between government, health practitioners, and/or communities.
- Partnerships with academic institutions and health practitioners provide CBOs with critical tools, expertise, and platforms to initiate or expand community-led research.
- Health practitioners are using insights from CBOs to change how medical students engage in community-based climate and health activities.
- There are several signals of progress across the CBOs, related to building capacity for policy advocacy and broadening and deepening partnerships and collaboration.

# WHAT WE ARE LEARNING AT THE INITIATIVE LEVEL

## Key Activity Areas Across CCHE Grantee Partners

Grantee partner materials were used to develop project-level theories of change for every CCHE initiative grantee partner. Through the development and refinement of the [project-level theories of change](#), we gained a sense of key activity areas and intended impacts at the project-level. This assessment helps us understand how the activities of grantee partners across the three Strategies advance and support a cohesive CCHE initiative.

### Relevant Evaluation Questions

- ? What types of activities are grantees undertaking to advance equity/reduce inequitable health outcomes?
- ? What are the explicit health outcomes grantees are targeting with their CCHE investments and what are the distal/longer-term health improvement gains their activities aim to realize?

### Grantee partners across the three strategy cohorts are engaged in six key activity areas.

Based on an analysis of project-level theories of change, we grouped grantee partner activities across the three Strategy cohorts into six key activity areas as seen in Table 1. These key activity areas describe the ways in which grantee partners are “mobilizing for climate action in ways that center justice and equity,” per the Initiative-level hypothesis outlined in the CCHE theory of change. For CBOs, there are several robust examples of building capacity for policy advocacy, broadening and deepening partnerships and collaboration, promoting implementation of and/or funding for CCHE-related solutions, and advocating for equitable climate resilience policies described in “Activities and Signals of Progress from CBO Grantee Partners.” As seen in that section, and the “Spotlight: WE ACT’s Heat, Health, and Equity Initiative,” these activities often occur concurrently and are mutually reinforcing.

### Activities across all three strategies support Initiative-level outcomes and grantees are working to improve a wide range of health outcomes.




This is an important finding because the three strategies were onboarded at different times—strategies 1 and 2 had already been engaged

for one or more years before the advent of the initiative—and the staggered timing for braiding the strategies together under one initiative did not guarantee a robust configuration for advancing initiative-level outcomes.

The development and refinement of project-level theories of change for all grantee partners demonstrates that current grant-making is likely sufficient to advance the initiative-level theory of change.




### Two activity areas, “Building capacity for policy advocacy” and “Broadening and deepening partnerships and collaboration,” are discussed in detail for Strategy 3 CBO grantee partners in the section “Activities and Signals of Progress from CBO Grantee Partners.”

TABLE 1. CROSS-STRATEGY ACTIVITY AREAS AND EXAMPLES

CROSS-STRATEGY ACTIVITY AREA	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES BY STRATEGY
 <p><b>Increasing knowledge/ understanding of climate change, health, and equity issues</b></p>	<p>Building awareness of the relationship between climate change, health, and equity issues among community members, government representatives, institutions, practitioners, funders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Institutions:</b> Engage stakeholders in understanding and adopting equity-focused resilience strategies (Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative)</li> <li>• <b>Practitioners:</b> Advocate for Climate Change to be included as a social determinant of health (Michigan Community Health Workers Alliance)</li> <li>• <b>CBOs:</b> Improve understanding of current climate, health, and equity issues in the community (UPROSE)</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Building capacity for policy advocacy</b></p> <p><i>This activity area is described in more detail below – see “Activities and Signals of Progress from CBO Grantee Partners”</i></p>	<p>Growing skills and know-how for legislative policy advocacy at multiple levels: residents, institutions, practitioners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Institutions:</b> Support activation and advocacy of health care systems and practitioners through leadership bodies and clinician networks (Health Care Without Harm)</li> <li>• <b>Practitioners:</b> Conduct advocacy training webinars for nurse fellows (Alliance of Nurses for Health Environments)</li> <li>• <b>CBOs:</b> Educate, engage, and build the leadership, capacity, power, and networks of residents to advance policy change in support of positive climate, health, and equity outcomes via Change Champions training program (Homewood Children’s Village)</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Promoting implementation of and/or funding for CCHE-related solutions</b></p>	<p>Increasing awareness of and technical capacity to implement equitable climate mitigation and resilience solutions other than legislation, i.e., increased investments and funding, changes in organizational policies, operations, or programs. This activity is different than policy advocacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Institutions:</b> Translate learnings in climate resilience, decarbonization, and the return on investment resulting from these efforts from members’ projects and motivate action across Association membership (Essential Hospitals Institute)</li> <li>• <b>Practitioners:</b> Support advocates and private/public funders to collaborate for investments in disproportionately impacted communities (Health and Environmental Funders Network)</li> <li>• <b>CBOs:</b> Advocate for the Climate Emergency Mobilization Office to maintain funding among competing City budget priorities, including other climate related initiatives (Physicians for Social Responsibility – Los Angeles)</li> </ul>

### Improving Health Outcomes

The activity areas listed above collectively contribute to improved health outcomes; some grantee partners specified long-term health improvements they expect to see as a result of the work: reduced health disparities; exposure to environmental hazards; heat-related illness; respiratory illness; cardiovascular disease and increased climate resilience; heat and flood safety; physical and mental health and well-being.

CROSS-STRATEGY ACTIVITY AREA	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES BY STRATEGY
 <p><b>Advocating for adoption and implementation of equitable climate resilience policies</b></p>	<p>Direct action to advocate and campaign for specific equitable climate resilient policies (legislation or government policy) at the local, state, or federal level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Institutions:</b> Advocate for equity and justice provisions in legislation at the federal and state level (Health Care Without Harm)</li> <li>• <b>Practitioners:</b> Promote policies and practices that address climate change, environmental justice, and health equity (American Public Health Association)</li> <li>• <b>CBOs:</b> Launch public campaign and advocacy related to extreme heat to keep pressure on policymakers and develop communications tools (WE ACT)</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Improving data availability, translation, dissemination</b></p>	<p>Utilizing existing data and/or gathering new data and sharing with relevant stakeholders to support data-informed equitable policies, solutions, interventions. Includes both qualitative data such as story-telling and quantitative data such as community or member surveys.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Institutions:</b> Leverage health needs assessments to advance community climate resilience (Emerald Cities Collaborative)</li> <li>• <b>Practitioners:</b> Amplify trusted voices of members and advocates through strategic communications (The Medical Society Consortium)</li> <li>• <b>CBOs:</b> Leverage academic partnerships to create data sets that show direct connection between climate shocks and stressors and population health (Go Austin, Va'amos Austin)</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Broadening/deepening partnerships and collaboration</b></p> <p><i>This activity area is described in more detail below – see “Activities and Signals of Progress from CBO Grantee Partners”</i></p>	<p>Building new relationships and deepening existing relationships with entities or individuals from different sectors and orientations; including partnerships with residents, CBOs, government entities and staff, elected officials, institutions, practitioners.</p>	<p><i>See sections below “The CCHE Network and External Partnerships” and “Broadening and Deepening Partnerships and Collaboration” for details on the diverse cross-sectoral partnerships that CCHE grantee partners have formed.</i></p>

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# The CCHE Network and External Partnerships

## Relevant Evaluation Questions

- ? What does the CCHE ecosystem of organizations and people look like?
- ? In what ways has collaboration at the intersection of CCHE changed?

According to the CCHE initiative theory of the change, the initiative aims both to foster a stronger cadre of organizations with increased capacity, skills, and resources and to strengthen cross-sector collaboration at the intersection of climate change, health, and equity. Cross-sector collaboration is intended to provide grantee partners with support to mobilize for climate action in ways that center justice and equity and to advocate for equitable policies and solutions that benefit low-wealth communities and communities of color.

As part of the baseline assessment for this Learning Cycle, we confirmed that all grantee partners have partnerships with government agencies, community-based organizations, health and environmental organizations, and institutions outside of the initiative. These external partnerships provide grantee partners with knowledge of climate impacts on health, funding opportunities, support from health care practitioners, resources for community-led research, and opportunities for policy development with local and state government agencies.

FIGURE 2. A SNAPSHOT OF BASELINE CCHE NETWORK AND PARTNERSHIPS

[Interactive map available here »](#)

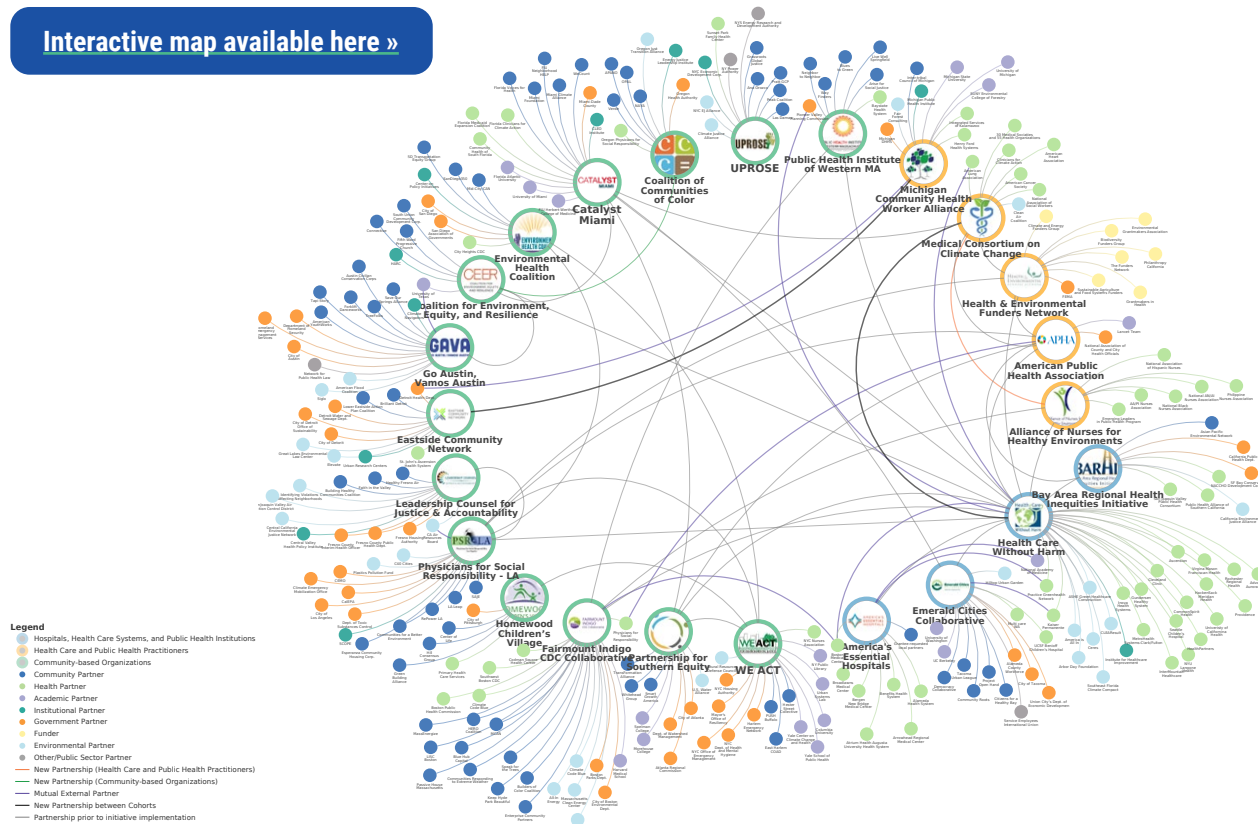


Figure 2 shows a baseline map of the CCHE network and partners, in which grantee partners are color-coded by CCHE cohort. This baseline map will be used to track changes in the CCHE network over time. Several CCHE grantee partners worked together prior to initiative implementation, shown with gray lines in the baseline network map. New partnerships between grantee partners are highlighted in the map with different colors (e.g., green for partnerships between CBOs, orange for partnerships between Practitioners, and black for

partnerships between grantee partners in different CCHE cohorts). Purple lines in the map represent mutual external partners between CCHE grantee partners. The outer part of the map shows external partners that are supporting grantee partners with policy advocacy, research, and education at the intersection of climate change, health, and equity.

For specific examples on how external partnerships are contributing to CCHE grantee partners' progress, see the section below "Broadening and Deepening Partnerships and Collaboration."

## SPOTLIGHT: WE ACT's Heat, Health, and Equity Initiative

Through its Heat, Health, and Equity Initiative (HHEI), WE ACT is taking a multi-pronged approach to reducing health impacts

of extreme heat for New York City's most vulnerable residents. HHEI has two key components operating at the state and local levels: improving New York State's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and NYC's Cooling Center Program, both of which are vital for ensuring low-income residents have access to cool spaces on hot days.



**Climate justice is racial justice:** WE ACT has leaned into the data to help policy makers see the undeniable connections between race and extreme heat. More Americans die from extreme heat every year than from any other extreme weather event, and low-income communities and communities of color experience the most harm caused by extreme heat events. WE ACT cites these and other key studies showing how approximately 50 percent of heat-related deaths were Black/African American and that formerly redlined neighborhoods, including those served by WE ACT, are on average five degrees warmer than non-redlined neighborhoods. Addressing extreme heat as a major concern in Northern Manhattan and New York City is a matter of racial and climate justice, and WE ACT has seen success with this messaging during a number of recent Mayoral candidate forums. To further focus

attention in the media and to key city power players on the injustice of extreme heat, WE ACT published their Extreme Heat Policy Agenda.

**Partnerships to advance policy objectives:** In an advisory role to a state congressman, WE ACT helped inform new federal legislation – the Heating and Cooling Relief Act – which expands LIHEAP by allocating more funding to the state, eliminating medical attestation, adding weatherization options, and protecting residents from utility shut-offs. In May 2022, Governor Hochul announced a \$15 million expansion of the program, which is estimated to benefit 20,000 low-income households that meet eligibility criteria and income thresholds. To make progress on the cooling center program so that more at-risk community members may be served, WE ACT is working with partners to increase community usage and secure funding for facility improvements. Working with the Yale Center on Climate Change and Health and the Yale School of Public Health, WE ACT conducted a survey of residents to inform a series of policy recommendations. WE ACT is also partnering with the NYC Department of Health, Mayor's Office of Resiliency, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, and NYC Housing Authority to assess the effectiveness of the GetCool campaign and is hoping to publish their results for broader field understanding. Spurred by this successful collaboration, WE ACT is now advising on the development of a second study focusing on energy insecurity and impacts on health and wellbeing. See WE ACT's partners in the CCHE network map here.

**Mobilizing for change through leadership development:** Through its Climate Justice Working Group, WE ACT has built a new program that brings

members into leadership roles for policy advocacy. This year, members will work on state-level policy targets aimed at expanding energy efficiency for low-income housing and large-scale funding for climate investments. The leadership program develops skillsets for speaking with legislators and creating public education tools. A new sub-group will focus specifically on extreme heat advocacy.

Narrative shift to prioritize environmental justice: WE ACT's consistent drum beat on the need for environmental justice to be core to all climate and resiliency work in the City, and their participation as co-chairs of the Climate and Resiliency Committee during the recent mayoral transition contributed to the renaming of the City's climate office to the Office of Climate and Environmental Justice in early 2022. The current Executive Director of the new Office is a former WE ACT policy lead.

"It is evident to anyone who opens their eyes that we are in the midst of a climate crisis in this city and around the world, so it's time to think outside the box and determine how we can handle the crisis before it's too late...my administration is committed to transforming the city's quality of life and fighting for environmental justice for all New Yorkers..."  
– Mayor Eric Adams

**Challenges:** WE ACT anticipates the need to keep the pressure on for community-resilience planning during citywide budget cuts. With a new Mayoral administration, the CBO is maintaining a nimble stance, aligning their goals with the opportunities of a new administration even as those priorities are not yet clear.

# ACTIVITIES AND SIGNALS OF PROGRESS FROM CBO GRANTEE PARTNERS

## Relevant Evaluation Questions

- ? How and to what extent have grantees mobilized for equitable climate and health policies, programs, or investments?
- ? What progress has been made in the advancement of equitable climate and health policies, programs, or investments?
- ? What role is cross-sector collaboration playing in advancing CCHE initiative outcomes?

As described in Table 1, there are six primary ways grantee partners are advancing change through CCHE. In this section we share insights on how CBOs are working in several of these key activity areas. This section also explores notable progress regarding CBO advancement of equitable climate and health policies, programs, or investments that are driven by communities and responsive and accountable to the priorities of low-wealth communities and communities of color. This section is organized around two key activity areas, **“Building capacity for policy advocacy”** and **“Broadening and deepening partnerships and collaboration,”** and related signals of progress, though these signals of

progress overlap with additional key activity areas identified in Table 1.

## Understanding a Signal of Progress

A signal of progress, for the purposes of this evaluation, is any indication of forward movement on a key priority or objective described in grantee work plans or theories of change. Our analysis erred on the side of sensitivity to better understand the broad constellation of factors contributing to strategy- and initiative-level outcomes. As a result, we uncovered many signals ranging from the precursors of nascent developments to the tangible, newsworthy “slam dunk” wins. In this Learning Cycle, we catalogued several CBO signals of progress which relate to core CCHE grantee activity areas (Table 1); signals of progress are organized around the two activities Building Capacity for Policy Advocacy and Broadening and Deepening Partnerships and Collaboration. Although we can identify the activities CBOs are pursuing and early signals of progress, we are not able to assess the full extent to which these activities are having an impact in terms of advancing the initiative theory of change, which is a notable limitation of secondary data review. This subject will be explored in more depth in future learning cycles throughout the outcome evaluation.



## Building Capacity for Policy Advocacy

One of the ways CCHE grantee partners are mobilizing for equitable climate and health policies, programs, or investments is by building capacity for policy advocacy (see Table 1). Secondary data sources contain robust examples of how CBOs are building resident capacity for policy advocacy by building community leadership and empowering resident leaders for systems change. In the June 2021 [Developmental Evaluation Report](#), we described how CBOs are advancing change by building community leadership pathways to achieve community power, justice, and liberation.

The Emergent Community Power Spectrum (Figure 3) has its roots in the experience of grantee partners in an earlier Kresge initiative that aimed to advance equitable climate resilience, the Climate Resilience and Urban Opportunity Initiative (CRUO).<sup>1</sup> Based on CRUO work and engagement with community-based grantee partners in Phase 1 of the CCHE initiative, we created the Emergent Community Power Spectrum to depict what community-driven change looks like in practice. This is an emergent framework for understanding the work on the ground. The spectrum includes eight types of activity that range from programmatic to transformative efforts. PO progress reports and transcripts from

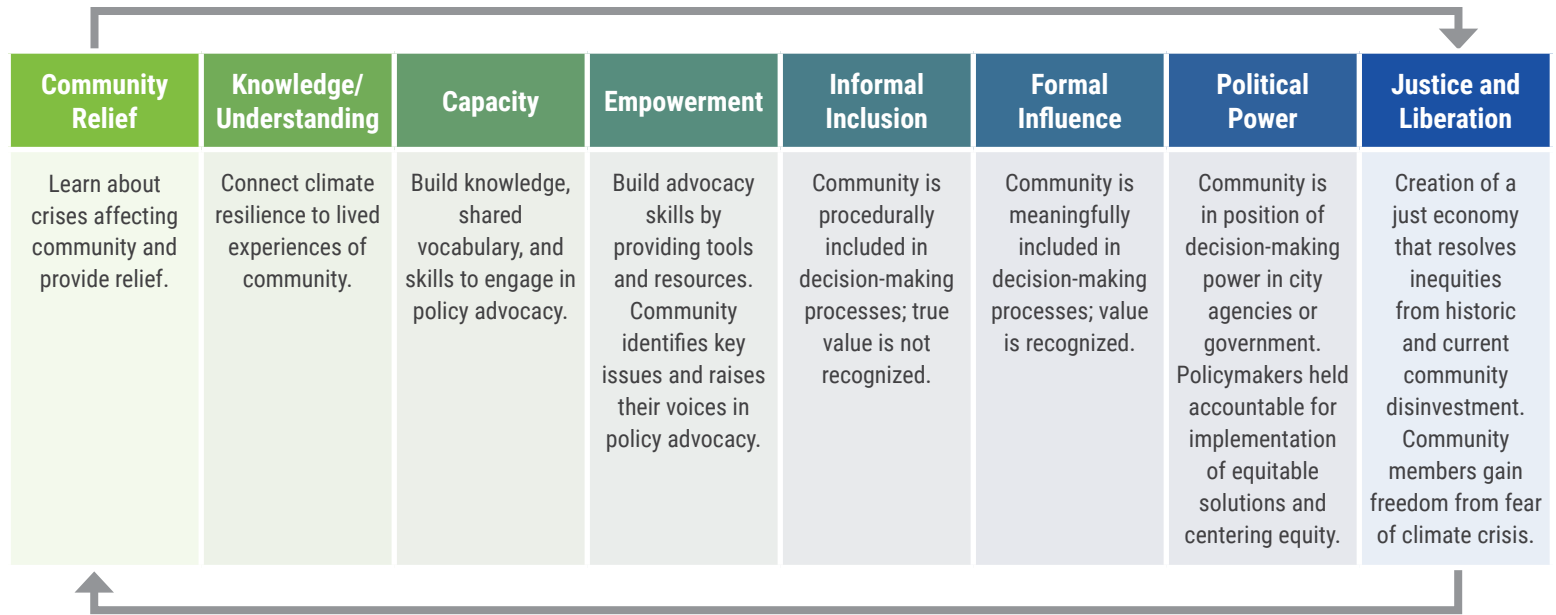


CCHE staff check-ins with CBOs reveal that grantee partners are mobilizing residents in ways that correspond primarily to the second quarter of the Emergent Community Power Spectrum – capacity and empowerment. Grantee partners are working in other areas of the spectrum, as well, but secondary data in Learning Cycle 1 primarily focused on capacity building and empowerment.

Grantee partners are playing multiple roles in pursuit of community leadership and resident voice in the policy making and adoption process. Roles include decoding complicated policy ideas, engaging in targeted and strategic community capacity building, and translating community-driven ideas into policy or legislative language and vice versa. See box.

**CBOs are providing training to residents on the how-to of leadership and policy advocacy through workshops, trainings, and specific curriculum.** The Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience (CEER) recruits and trains residents to work as Climate Ambassadors and engage their networks to educate and advocate about climate change.

FIGURE 3. EMERGENT COMMUNITY POWER SPECTRUM



**Several grantee partners are convening and mobilizing specific cohorts of residents long-term to act on their leadership to advance equitable climate systems change.** Physicians for Social Responsibility – Los Angeles (PSR-LA) is planning a special cadre of Climate Resilience Promotores through the organization’s annual Promotora Training program.

**CBOs are uniting groups and individuals in coalitions to advance common community-driven climate justice agendas.** CEER’s Northeast Community Platform engages 60 people monthly to advance a shared strategy and the Environmental Health Coalition’s (EHC) San Diego Transportation Equity Working Group convenes organizations that are deeply rooted in environmental justice

communities, communities of color, and other communities of concern to influence local governments and public agencies.

**Several grantees are leveraging existing networks of residents to advance climate justice and improve climate resilience.** Fairmont Indigo CDC Collaborative (FICC) staff are participating in a leadership training opportunity led by another organization, Leadership & Development Institute, and inviting participants in that effort to engage in FICC’s climate and health advocacy activities.

## Signals of Progress

### **New resident leaders trained for policy advocacy and engagement in equitable policy processes.**

Several CBOs are mobilizing for action by training residents to build their capacity for policy advocacy. Mobilization is a critical component of the CCHE initiative theory of change and most directly supports outcomes related to equitable climate and health policies that are community-driven and responsive to communities' priorities. Through the Change Champions Community Partnership initiative, Homewood Children's Village and the Green Building Alliance aims to create an engaged citizenry with the agency to advance policy change at the local, regional, and state levels. Residents are learning to leverage the power of neighborhood comprehensive plans to ensure that policy for the community is revised into policy by the community; about the role social determinants of health in proposed policy and development projects; and what it takes to reinforce the role and work of Registered Community Organizations to ensure that proposed development projects involve meaningful community engagement. Another CBO, UPROSE, is working to advance policy by building grassroots frontline power that is intergenerationally-led and engaged. They established a Climate Justice Youth Leadership to grow new leaders, 40 of whom recently organized and conducted outreach for a virtual, multi-lingual Climate Justice Town Hall addressing Just Transition and adoption of planning tool called the [Green Resilient Industrial District](#). EHC staff conducted two SALTA (Salud Ambiental Lideres Tomando Accion – Environmental Health, Leaders Taking Action) leadership development trainings to provide community leaders with

## INSIGHTS FROM CBOS

**Decode complicated policy ideas.** Some grantee partners noted that the policy targets they are pursuing are complicated and technically complex which at times necessitates grantee partners to build up their own or resident capacity to understand the details of the policy change. Grantee partners are playing the role of interpreter by helping residents to understand the particulars of the policy and motivate resident leadership to mobilize for the changes the complex policy seeks.

**“Part of the challenge of building leadership capacity in residents around these issues is how complicated and expansive the issues can be. There are so many specific topics, technical aspects to them, and things to pay attention to that it can be overwhelming, including for staff.”** – Eastside Community Network

**Engage in targeted and strategic community capacity building.** Some grantee partners described the challenges of engaging in coalition and grassroots organizing work in ways that keep residents informed but also foster resident leadership in the policy and advocacy space. Grantee partners are considering ways to connect residents to the specific issues they care the most about instead of covering the full suite of policy targets in coalition and grassroots organizing venues.

**“I was feeling like we weren't getting deep enough in the engagement that I wanted to see. And so, we really homed in on one or two policies for members to become experts and actually take on leadership roles within WE ACT advocacy work so that they're not only gaining a deep expertise in this topic, but also we're building agency in their ability to do that advocacy work.”** – WE ACT

**Translate community-driven ideas into policy or legislative language and vice versa.** Some grantee partners described how they are bridging the language or perspective gap between residents and policymakers by serving as translators. In this role, they are helping residents see the connection between their interest areas and policy opportunities and helping policymakers see the value of community engagement.

**“Making a difference to the city is not necessarily that easy because we have to make sure that we put it in a way that it's in their language, not necessarily the residents, we have to translate it from resident to city language in order for them to, and of course we have to put it in order that they have something to gain. So, if they have something to gain, they're more willing to help in the community....”** – GAVA

skill-building training in community organizing, policy advocacy, building power, community health, environmental justice and effective communication. 42 people graduated from SALTA with a greater understanding of their own leadership skills and capacity. EHC also hosted a 4-session SALTA training specifically to prepare residents for action on transportation justice.

**Increasing resident voice, pressure, and participation during policy adoption and implementation processes.**

Community engagement to equip residents with the tools and skillsets that make it difficult for state and local officials and decision-makers to advance policy without community input is proving to be a powerful change mechanism for many CBOs. Empowered and vocal residents help increase public support and political will for equitable policy adoption and implementation. For example, in partnership with a community base-building group, Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education, PSR-LA has been engaging South LA residents on the impacts of environmental threats on vulnerable communities. Resident groups are participating in learning spaces, grassroots leadership committees, policy discussions, and community-led outreach.

**“This base of Black and Brown grassroots leaders and activists has engaged with local municipal utility representatives to elevate the need for immediate emergency utility relief and long-term systemic change that ensure energy justice.” – PSR-LA**

Another California-based CBO, EHC, recently sent group members and residents to provide

testimony at the Port of San Diego to advocate for the successful passage of the Maritime Clean Air Strategy. Specific engagement activities during this reporting period included: testimony by six community members, public comments on the draft legislation by 196 community members, 135 emails to the Board of Port Commissioners, and 255 signatures supporting passage of the clean air strategy. CCC, CEER, the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability (Leadership Counsel), FICC, and Catalyst Miami also shared noteworthy examples of resident empowerment and engagement in their interim reports.

**Narrative shift to prioritize environmental justice communities.** Since the new administration stepped into power, and throughout the racial justice movement and COVID-19 “syndemic” beginning in 2020, it has become easier, necessary, and mainstream to name environmental justice communities as the focus of important legislation, programs, and initiatives. By centering racial justice prominently, the national field of practice at the intersection of climate, health, and equity grows and strengthens; in that vein, we found many examples of a narrative shift in CBOs’ work and local contexts. This shift prioritizes environmental justice communities, emphasizes the racial justice frame of climate change, and validate peoples’ lived experiences. One clear example comes from Catalyst Miami, who reported that “it feels like, in the past few months, all the work we’ve been doing to push for action on extreme heat and health is picking up exponential speed.”

In May 2021, Miami-Dade County appointed a Chief Heat Officer, the first of its kind in the U.S. and the

first in the world. One important ripple effect is that Catalyst Miami now has a direct government liaison, having worked with Gilbert in her previous role, and as such, the CBO has been able to present to key federal audiences including NASA, NOAA, HHS, and the White House. UPROSE offers another compelling example of narrative shift. With the passage of the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), the state of New York agreed with CLCPA’s requirement that 35-40 percent of the benefits from clean energy investments must go to disadvantaged communities and these benefits should be defined as financial investments. Examples from WE ACT demonstrate how using a racial justice frame, backed by scientific evidence, is a powerful tool during policy and election processes (see WE ACT case example above). And in Houston, CEER is bringing health partners knowledgeable of climate-related health impacts into the homes of affected residents to hear directly from community members and understand what it truly feels like to live in a non-weatherized home in 100-degree heat. In conversations with CCHE POs, CEER representatives said they saw a productive rewiring of these experts’ understanding; this reality-based orientation can no doubt contribute to more effective advocacy on the part of health partners who previously may have relied on a strictly academic foundation for promoting climate, health, and equity.

**Improved resident preparation and response to climate disasters.** A key component of community resilience is the ability to better prepare for and respond to disasters. If programs are community-driven and responsive to the needs of low-income communities and communities of color, then it is reasonable to expect that these programs will

contribute to improved health outcomes and harm reduction. Several CBOs made progress with improved resident preparation and response to climate disasters as described above. For example, GAVA carried out its Climate Navigators training to 45 Parent Support Specialists where Austin residents learned how to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to climate disasters. PHIWM held similar trainings as part of its Resilient Springfield program. Resident preparedness also means knowing how to navigate bureaucratic systems and complicated processes to apply for and receive aid in the wake of a disaster, and this is what CEER is accomplishing through its Northeast Community Platform.

Two CBOs—ECN and the Leadership Counsel—are building, supporting, and expanding climate resilience hubs that provide a place for education and learning about climate preparedness, community needs and vulnerabilities, and bring community together to strengthen the social fabric that is the DNA of resilience. The Coalition for Communities of Color focused on more upstream preparedness by helping to get a series of bills passed in the Oregon legislature that include provisions for discounted rate structures for low-income households and funding to support home energy efficiency upgrades and repair of home structural defects.



## Broadening and Deepening Partnerships and Collaboration

CBOs are increasingly being recognized for their unique understanding and ability to share residents' experiences through storytelling and community-led research. Additionally, CBOs are increasingly recognizing opportunities to develop policy recommendations and pursue implementation of policies and programs to advance their work.

**CBOs are partnering with residents, health practitioners, government agencies, institutions, and other CBOs to break down silos, and work in ways that complement one another's capabilities and strengths.** The Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) worked with various partners on the Oregon Water Futures project which resulted in partnerships with the University of Oregon, Willamette Partnership, Oregon Environmental Council, and community organizations across the state. Through the project, CCC engaged Oregon tribes and residents in data collection activities to develop an Oregon Water Justice Framework that connects community concerns to potential policy solutions. CCC presented their draft Framework for feedback from academic, environmental, and state government partners. CCC's efforts to develop the Framework for the 2023 legislative session showcase how they strategically built and utilized partnerships between communities and different sectors.

**By leveraging their role as facilitators, CBOs are brokering constructive conversations between residents and local government officials.** For

### Common Challenges

Despite signals of progress, CBOs are facing an array of challenges when it comes to mobilizing for equitable climate action and strengthening community-based leadership. Common challenges included **adequate staff capacity; changing policy and political contexts; and the ongoing impacts of COVID-19.** Several grantee partners also shared some of their approaches to addressing these obstacles. To help combat these challenges, grantee partners suggest having more structured opportunities for peer-to-peer connections to learn from other grantee partners' strategies to manage these common challenges.

For example, GAVA has built communication pathways with government partners to hold them accountable for responding to residents' climate change concerns. GAVA learned to strategically translate residents' concerns to show city officials how they would benefit from both communicating with residents and implementing policies to improve disaster preparedness and climate resiliency among Austin's vulnerable communities. In another example, the Leadership Counsel worked with the Fresno County Transportation Authority and joined one of the Authority's committees to share residents' concerns regarding a transportation sales tax measure on the November 2022 ballot. The measure raised resident concerns about how tax revenue would be used for transportation and air quality improvements. Despite challenges with initially

joining the committee and having concerns heard and addressed, the Leadership Counsel is working to communicate those concerns to the committee to ensure that tax revenue from the measure will be used to address residents' air pollution exposure and transportation needs.

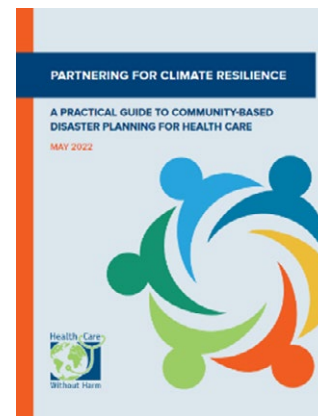
**CBOs are working with city equity officers and newly elected local officials to inform various policy targets or strategies, and improve government engagement in community-based activities to address climate and health concerns.** For example, PHIWM engaged the City of Springfield's Race and Health Equity Officer on a PHIWM committee to improve alignment with the City's goals for racial equity. CEER engaged the Equity Coordinator from the City of Houston's Office of Resilience & Sustainability in CEER's climate justice tours to show the need for a home retrofit program. UPROSE's Executive Director was appointed co-chair to the New York City Offshore Wind Advisory Council under the city's Economic Development Corporation (EDC). In this role, UPROSE will help ensure the EDC's compliance with its own stated policy of centering this new industry in equity.

**Cultivation of partnerships with local government is contributing to strengthened collaboration between government, health practitioners, and/or communities.** For example, PHIWM supported development of an Extreme Heat Tabletop Exercise with funding from Health Care Without Harm (HCWH). PHIWM's CCHE committee members participated in the exercise and brought municipal government staff, health care workers, residents, and community organizations together to understand the impacts and resilience efforts during

extreme weather days. The learnings from the exercise were then incorporated into [the Practical Guide to Community-based Disaster Planning for Health Care](#), which HCWH disseminated to hospitals and communities

across the country to address climate change resilience. Another example from the Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE) resulted from their ongoing partnership with the City of Atlanta and PSE's launch of the Justice40 Accelerator. The Justice40 Accelerator is a network of organizations working to provide local organizations in Black and historically marginalized communities of color with support to pursue government funding opportunities. Given PSE's expertise with government funding from building the [Justice40 Accelerator](#), the City of Atlanta requested that PSE audit the City's Contracting and Procurement Department. City officials were eager for PSE evaluate the City's deployment of federal funding and identify beneficiaries of federal funding resources.

**Partnerships with academic institutions and health practitioners are providing CBOs with critical tools, expertise, and platforms to initiate or expand community-led research.** In 2021, WE ACT launched their second Cooling Center Audit project in partnership with the Yale Center on Climate Change and



Health and the Yale School of Public Health, who developed a more robust survey tool for WE ACT. WE ACT used the tool to evaluate cooling centers in their region and gained intricate knowledge about New York City's Cooling Center Program and local resources for heat safety. WE ACT used the project's findings to inform their policy recommendations for heat safety.

**Health practitioners are using insights from CBO partners to change how medical students engage in community-based climate and health activities.** In partnership with Climate Code Blue, FICC gained critical medical expertise from physicians at Harvard Medical School to build FICC's understanding and communications around climate change and health. These physicians also addressed questions among FICC's residents, provided impactful testimony in support of FICC's bills, and secured practitioner support for initiatives and sign-on letters involving FICC. CEER worked with their health partners to research climate change impacts on mental health and develop curriculum for health care providers. The curriculum also incorporates emerging concerns around extreme cold weather systems and how Texas' power grid could not withstand freezing temperatures in the face of increased energy demands. In Detroit, ECN engaged with the Black Medical Student Association at a local university to uplift voices of Black clinicians and other clinicians of color around health disparities and environmental justice. ECN hosted the Black Medical Student Association at several events to provide medical students with a platform and opportunities to build partnerships between residents and practitioners. CBOs' relationships

with practitioners are raising the needs of communities among health care institutions and they are informing practitioners' advocacy efforts for climate change resilience and health policies.

## Signals of Progress

**New and evolved partnerships to identify strategies and policy targets that center vulnerable communities. CBOs are partnering with agencies in new ways to advance equitable climate resilience programs and policies.** These partnerships are essential for strengthening cross-sector collaboration at the intersection of climate, health, and equity, and contribute to a stronger cadre of organizations with increased capacity, skills, and resources to drive systems-level change. For example, in collaboration with utility representatives, CCC provided input on the recently passed bill, 100% Clean Energy Standard, and strategically negotiated to ensure that the new policy would result in greenhouse gas emissions reductions and provide the community benefits described in the bill. Similarly, state agencies (e.g., the Attorney General's office, Strategic

Growth Council, and Air Resources Board) and a Fresno city council member now regularly consult with the Leadership Counsel for strategic input on any new projects affecting low-income communities. This dynamic likely developed from a successful campaign to block permitting for new industrial sites that sought to operate without informing or meeting with impacted communities, which also led to the development of a community benefits fund.

**Growing momentum and interest in funding for climate justice solutions.** Grantee partners mentioned funding opportunities at every level – federal, state, and local – that they were able to leverage, attract, or advocate for in support of their CCHE-related goals. At the federal level, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) present unprecedented opportunities to direct funds for climate and health projects to low-income communities and communities of color. ECN was successful in securing \$1.7 million in ARPA funds to further build out climate resilience hubs in Detroit, and WE ACT

strongly advocated for the awarding of a \$15 million expansion of the federal Home Energy Assistance Program (see WE ACT case example below). CBOs also note success in securing funds from state level budget appropriations. The Coalition for Communities of Color leaned into the new \$10 million Healthy Homes Repair Fund to advance their work on home energy upgrades for low-income Oregon households. After the adoption of one of their primary policy targets, FICC is a "persistent voice" advocating that at least 50 percent of \$12M that will be annually allocated to the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center go to environmental justice communities for high-paying career-track green jobs. FICC is also working to tap into funding at the local level with the successful acquisition of \$4M in funding to pilot the PowerCorpsBOS program, a learn-and-earn program that brings members of environmental justice communities good-paying career opportunities in green sectors while also making significant progress towards Boston's climate goals.

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## APPENDIX A: INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES AND DATA SOURCES

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During this Learning Cycle, the Kresge Foundation (Kresge) supported capacity building, peer learning, and network building opportunities among the grantee partners in service of the overall CCHE initiative outcomes outlined in the [theory of change](#). Technical assistance providers supported capacity development for evaluation and metrics (Jael Solutions), narrative and messaging (Metropolitan Group), and public health law and legal analysis (Network for Public Health Law). Providers supported grantee partners through one-on-one sessions and group sessions, such as the [Shifting the Narrative session](#) hosted by Metropolitan Group to share findings developed for the CCHE narrative and messaging guide. A peer learning session in May 2022 focused on [federal policy and investment driving community impact](#). Kresge also facilitated and supported CCHE grantee partners to present their work at various conferences, such as Climate and Energy Funders Group and Grantmakers in Health. Kresge requested feedback from grantee partners to understand what tools and resources would be most useful for grantee partners through formal mechanisms (e.g., a Kresge-hosted communications survey) and informal mechanisms (e.g., during check-in calls) and worked to address these requests through technical assistance, peer learning opportunities, and resources shared through the CCHE listserv or online through the [CCHE Peer Learning Resources webpage](#). Using grantee partners materials, and incorporating grantee partner

feedback when available, we developed [project-level theories of change](#) which provide a snapshot of the key strategies, signals of progress, and impacts of each grantee partners' work under the CCHE initiative.<sup>2</sup>

Data sources for this Learning Cycle included meeting observation and review of grantee partner materials, as seen in Figure 1. Meeting observations included technical assistance and peer learning calls and webinars noted above, as well as quarterly All Partners calls and Advisory Committee (AC) calls. Grantee partner materials included CBOs' implementation plans, CBOs' progress reports on year one of implementation (February 2021 – 2022), and Institutions and Practitioners' interim and final reports and grant proposals (2019-2021), depending on the grantee partner. We also analyzed transcripts of PO calls with CBOs; assessed results of a Kresge communications survey; and tracked email announcements and media coverage of grantee partner activities for signals of progress. The project-level theories of change were both a product and a data source for this Learning Cycle. In May and June, we hosted learning conversations during which we shared early reflections and gathered feedback and questions from the CCHE Core Team (Kresge and Institute for Sustainable Communities) and All Partners.

## Endnotes

- 1 The spectrum was originally developed through the evaluation of the CRUO initiative, see Kresge Foundation CRUO Evaluation Report, 2019
- 2 Most grantee partners reviewed their project-level theories of change for accuracy, though some theories of change were developed based exclusively on secondary data.