



Funders Alliance
of San Bernardino & Riverside Counties



IECC
Inland Empire Community Collaborative
Impacting Lives Together



**THE INLAND EMPIRE -
A LAND OF OPPORTUNITY**

**CHANGING THE
NARRATIVE**

(CTN)

SUMMARY REPORT



“A compelling narrative fosters an illusion of inevitability.”

— Daniel Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow

The Funders Alliance of San Bernardino & Riverside Counties (Funders Alliance) contracted The Inland Empire Community Collaborative (IECC) to prepare and conduct an education series for the Inland Empire. This Summary Report provides an overview of the project's objectives, the individual workshops, and what we learned from each, and our thoughts and recommendations for taking this project to the next level.

Summary Report

Changing the Narrative Overview, Objectives, and Approach

The Funders Alliance requested IECC provide seven community outreach events specifically, to the six census sub-regions throughout San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. Four of the outreach sessions were hosted in San Bernardino County and three hosted in Riverside County. The workshops were to highlight the Changing the Narrative toolkits developed by the 2020 Network consulting firm.

The funder and The Funders Alliance's objectives were that the workshops would help nonprofits communicate differently. Specifically, participants would learn how to:



- Start framing their conversations in a more positive light.
- Tell the story of their excellent work and results (strengths-focused), and show they are good stewards of dollars.
- Reduce conversations that center solely on the challenges of being under-funded or under-capacity, even though those are authentic concerns.
- Know and use talking points about what was right about the nonprofit sector in the region.
- Use the CTN toolkit as a basis for having similar conversations throughout the region.

The IECC developed two curricula for these workshops, an extended version (90 minutes to 2 hours) and a shorter, 1-hour workshop. Initially, the project funders wanted to address a leadership audience, e.g., executive directors, board chairs, with a separate curriculum for staff, direct care staff who might be the primary curriculum users. However, after conversations with the Funders Alliance, the IECC recommended and then developed a general curriculum, customizable to the group size and length of time specific to each audience.

IECC added value beyond the workshops. We created a facilitator guide and participant workbook to allow nonprofit staff and leaders, as well as business and civic leaders, to share the content with others.

The design of the workshop and support materials advanced the IECC's mission, vision, and organization purposes.

Individual Workshops and Lessons Learned

Workshop 1: Riverside County

Inland So Cal Housing Collective, at Springboard Nonprofit, a housing and homeless coalition meeting, comprised a unique combination of participants representing nonprofits, banks, funders, and housing developers. We presented to approximately 37 attendees, using the extended version of the curriculum.

The best outcome for the IECC from the first workshop was the feedback on the content and participants expressing confidence in their ability to present the information using our curriculum. We encouraged them to do this and told them to consider it open source. They were free to use their own brand identity and share it with their networks and constituents.

We were encouraged that the approach and materials were on the right track when The Wells Fargo Foundation notified us that they were going to be utilizing the curriculum for training amongst their employees and other stakeholders.

Workshop 2: Big Bear

We held the second training in Big Bear, a small, rural, mountain community. Approximately 24 people attended from a collaborative group for the City of Big Bear, including the school district, nonprofits, local businesses, and hospital staff.

The smaller Big Bear community answered questions differently from the first group (Riverside). For instance, when talking about the "bright spots" for the community, Big Bear, they were resilient in looking amongst themselves for resources. There was a sense of community identity not demonstrated in the first workshop. The Big Bear participants focused on their rich connections amongst community members and the idea that they were stronger together (i.e., as the school district was helping the church, was helping the hospital, and that they all knew one another). This response contrasted with participants' insights in Riverside, where the big ideas about changing the narrative applied to the whole region.

Workshop 3: Coachella Valley

The fourth meeting convened the Regional Access Project (RAP) and the Center for Nonprofit Advancement (CNA). Held in the Coachella Valley, 67 individuals attended, 95% from nonprofits, and more than 70% of those representing small, grassroots organizations. Most in attendance provided basic needs and social services.

This group's insight and feedback, including that provided through evaluations, noted the benefit of having this particular workshop. Like the other, smaller or more distant communities, they stressed a personal identity associated with the Coachella Valley, an identity distinct from the rest of the Inland Empire. They expressed a sense of pride in how they work with one another and the uniqueness of the Coachella Valley.

Along with their geographic uniqueness came unique funding opportunities and challenges tied to the Coachella Valley name. For instance, they called out the misperception that solely because they were in the Coachella Valley, that the large foundations were already highly involved, and money was plentiful.

Different from the previous workshops, these participants were most interested in knowing more about the IECC's collaborative work. At least 50% of the questions asked during the session were about how the IECC works together (structure and process). They were extraordinarily interested in the work that the IECC was doing in

San Bernardino County and whether something similar might become available to them within the Coachella Valley

Workshop 4: Victorville

The third training occurred in Victorville, attended by 39 attendees from foster agencies, and the nonprofits working in and around the foster care system. Participants were executive directors and direct care staff. Again, the unique flavor of the community emerged through Changing the Narrative conversations. The leaders and staff of the organizations in the High Desert didn't consider themselves part of the Inland Empire (IE). They thought of themselves as autonomous in terms of the IE. Their remoteness, lack of access and services, required them to be more resilient and more creative about what was available. They felt their strength was in finding solutions in unusual partnerships and collectives, and that that was the "bright spot" for the High Desert.

Workshop 5: First 5 Capacity Building Academy

Other IECC members joined the nine nonprofits comprising the eighth cohort of the Capacity Building Academy (CBA 8) funded by First 5 San Bernardino. The IECC CTN team delivered the curriculum and provided additional opportunities for the participants to offer feedback for strengthening the content.

The IECC had already incorporated feedback from previous evaluations, including edits related to the content of the videos, making them a little bit shorter and the audio that we were providing. Participants wanted to have more content and time for us to go over certain areas, specifically around storytelling, and how to frame their stories more effectively. They wanted more time to talk about those concepts. So, we modified the presentation to remove some slides and allow more in-depth discussion and conversation to engage participants and increase their confidence in using the content. This approach proved useful and engaging.

Workshop 6: IECC Membership

This session was delivered to the IECC membership during the standing members' meeting. We had an additional objective to get feedback about the IECC CTN project team's facilitation skills. We wanted critical feedback on any areas that they felt were not clear or needed improvements. This particular group has a keen eye for content delivery as each person has participated in a yearlong capacity building academy and knows what types of content and delivery methods work effectively. We found this group was most helpful for us as facilitators, recognizing that the curriculum was

stronger every time that we had delivered it. There were minimal suggestions for edits after this workshop.

Workshop 7: THRIVE Conference

The final CTN training occurred as a breakout session during the 2019 THRIVE Conference on October the 4th. This session was attended by approximately 23 individuals from all nonprofit organizations, including two capacity builders, and two funders (First 5 San Bernardino, AcademyGO, the staff from Regional Access Project (RAP). The allotted time for the workshop was slightly shorter than planned due to the previous session (plenary) running a bit long. The compressed timing was beneficial; we learned we could quickly adapt the agenda and facilitation approach to fit within the available time frame. (This flexibility was the intent of the two workshops and support documentation.) The session evaluations were positive. We shared the contents of the curriculum to all the attendees at the THRIVE conference, reaching all of the 157 attendees, nonprofits, funders, speakers, and capacity builders who attended this year's conference.

Opportunities and Recommendations

“People need a narrative, and if there isn't one on offer, they make one up.”

— Jean Hanff Korelitz

Opportunities for Next Steps

The CTN project's charge was to prepare the curriculum and deliver seven workshops within a three-month timeframe. As a pilot project, this created a manageable scope.

The IECC created two curricula, a workbook, and a facilitator's guide so that the work could live beyond this project and allow others to customize it to their needs. We also used a simple process evaluation form to gather input on the workshop itself.

Moving forward, we would suggest four opportunities to increase the impact of CTN work.

Evaluation. adding a more structured type of evaluation component related to the workshop impact over time. This could be an opportunity to discover whether:

- Does anybody actually use the curriculum?
- How was it used and what kind of success they had in changing the narrative?

- What recommendations they had after attending the workshop?
- How many of those referred (through the presentation) actually posted stories of successes on the Changing the Narrative social media platforms?
- What level of engagement did those posts generate?

Compelling Infographics. Another opportunity would be developing one or more standalone infographics with data and findings from the CTN toolkit, such as:

- Existing/emerging positive language that can be used (terms and framing) to tell strengths and positive attributes of the IE nonprofits.
- What's best about the IE nonprofits in terms of the economy, education, the workforce (i.e., the work of Causes Count and CalNonprofits).
- One-page talking points to help nonprofits consistently tell the story. For example, if we all know and can confidently use the toolkit's examples, e.g., that 135 people every day move to the Inland Empire, we could elevate the conversation and tell the positive things that are happening.

Business Engagement. Some of the best CTN workshop feedback was from the business members attending the first workshop. They expressed they knew very little about nonprofits and the history of the sector being under-funded. They were surprised and a bit in disbelief, about the comparative lack of funding. Educating this sector would go a long way to Changing the Narrative.

Align Elected Officials. There is confusion right now in the IE region about multiple projects, with similar intentions on changing the narrative, but not necessarily the same objectives. Additionally, Inland Rising is prominent, and many nonprofits are asking, "Is this the same project? Is this different?" There needs to be communication and explanation about the different efforts, so the community understands the distinctions. This would include work of IE GO and the esteemed Karthick Ramakrishnan at UC Riverside, as well as The Community Foundation, and The Funders Alliance. The benefit of this recommendation is to provide continuity between what messages are being told and who's telling them. As the community becomes clear, opportunities to leverage efforts and encourage partnerships would emerge.

Final Thoughts

The IECC appreciates the funder and The Funders Alliance and the confidence expressed by selecting us for this project. We valued working in partnership with the 2020 Network, specifically Steve Lambert and Diana Lambert for their curriculum's

content. Their research created a foundation for us to begin expanding opportunities for the IE nonprofits.

This project also allowed us an opportunity to demonstrate our experience and expertise as capacity builders who are capable, willing, and able to step up to a request made of us and deliver high-quality workshops in a short period. As a relatively young nonprofit, the IECC was proud to demonstrate the strength, initiative, and commitment of IE nonprofits and what we can accomplish. Our network and relationships across 74 nonprofit members helped us deliver on budget, on time, and create tools that let the work live beyond our involvement.

