

Organizing for Community Health: The Poder Popular Promotores Comunitarios de Salud Strategy 2005-2008



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Organizing for Community Health:
The Poder Popular Promotores Comunitarios de Salud
Strategy 2005-2008
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“Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political and economic change... What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Foreword

This report is the culmination of a long-term evaluation of the *Poder Popular Promotores Comunitarios de Salud* program funded by The California Endowment. The evaluation was conducted by the California Institute for Rural Studies in collaboration with Harder & Company Community Research.

The current report presents a synthesis of lessons learned from the evaluation, which covered three years of program implementation by 15 grantees in seven sites, encompassing 20 communities. The aim of this focus is to contribute to future program design, implementation and organizational self-assessment.

Chapter 1 provides background information on the *Poder Popular* initiative, and presents an overview of program design and strategies, followed by key challenges and successes.

Chapters 2 through 6 guide us through the unfolding process of implementing this effort: leadership development and empowerment, building citizenship, forming alliances and networks, negotiating and advocating for change, and laying the foundation for sustainability. Chapter 7 presents highlights of external stakeholder interviews conducted in early 2008.

The methods used to evaluate the *Poder Popular* initiative appear in Chapter 8. The evaluation was designed and implemented from a highly participatory approach. It included the development of instruments and techniques for eliciting participation, as well as unique indicators for measuring intangibles such as empowerment, community organization and improved living conditions. The diverse and complementary evaluation methods achieved in-depth participation from both internal and external stakeholders.

It is our hope that in synthesizing program outcomes, evaluation methods and lessons learned, the report may serve other grassroots groups, community-based organizations and grant makers who might consider the implementation of similar efforts in the future.

Ron Storchlic
Executive Director
California Institute for Rural Studies
June 2009

Chapter 1

In Search of Healthy Communities: *Poder Popular* and the *Promotores Comunitarios de Salud* Strategy

Background

Agricultural workers are among the most vulnerable and disenfranchised residents of California and the United States. Low wages, unsafe working conditions, substandard housing, social isolation, underemployment, and lack of legal residency in the United States are just a few of the factors that have resulted in poor behavioral and physical health for those that bring food to our tables daily.

In order to address these disparities, The California Endowment (TCE) implemented the Agricultural Worker Health Initiative (AWHI), a multi-year, \$50 million place-based effort seeking to improve the health and well-being of agricultural workers throughout California. A key component of the Agricultural Worker Health Initiative is «*Poder Popular para la Salud del Pueblo*,» an innovative and ambitious undertaking implemented in California's principal agricultural regions.

Taking a «grassroots to treetops» approach, this effort is based on the premise that improved health will come about by providing an informed and empowered group of residents with the tools to identify and address the underlying, *community-level* conditions causing poor health. Rather than promoting individual behavior change, *Poder Popular* seeks to achieve long-lasting change through resident engagement and advocacy to address the *root causes* of poor health.

Poder Popular draws on the experiences gained in Mexico and other Latin American countries with health promoters or *promotores de salud*. Although *promotores* originally were envisioned as providers of information and primary-level health care — particularly in rural areas — their role has evolved over time to become an

California Farmworkers: An Overview

An estimated 1.6 million agricultural workers and family members live and work in California.

Agriculture is one of the lowest paying and most dangerous occupations in the United States.

Median farmworker income is \$7,500–\$9,999 annually.

96% of farmworkers were born in Mexico.

53% speak little or no English.

33% are migrants.

57% are undocumented in the United States.

Farmworkers exhibit poor health conditions, including high cholesterol, hypertension and obesity.



important link between private and public health institutions and the communities they serve. In addition to promoting individual behavior change, *promotores* recently have become political actors who organize communities and spearhead change processes.

Overview of Poder Popular

Poder Popular consists of two separate but related efforts. A somewhat more «top down» approach was implemented in Monterey and Tulare counties. This approach consists of lead agencies (Local Coordinating Partners, or LCPs), which engage in relationship-building with diverse sectors, including local policy makers, public health institutions and health-care providers, agricultural growers and employers, and local businesses.¹

The second effort, which is the focus of this report, is the *Promotores Comunitarios de Salud* strategy, a grassroots approach implemented in seven of California's principal agricultural regions between November 2005 and October 2008. The regions encompassed in this effort include the counties of San Diego, Kern, Ventura, Fresno, Merced and Riverside, the Napa-Sonoma region and the Coachella Valley.

The *Promotores Comunitarios de Salud* effort was spearheaded by a community-based organization at each site. Grantee agencies had a broad range of experience in diverse fields including health care; employment services; community organizing; community, family and farmworker services; and research. Collaboratives or partnerships were formed among local organizations in some sites to facilitate program implementation. Two to three communities of fewer than 10,000 residents were chosen for implementation at each site.

The program relied on both paid and volunteer staff. Paid staff members included a program manager and two or three field coordinators. The field coordinators were responsible for identifying and recruiting volunteer *promotores*² interested in working to create healthier communities.

The goal of the *Promotores Comunitarios de Salud* strategy is to improve community health by providing farmworkers and other residents of agricultural communities with the skills to identify the root causes of poor health and the tools to advocate for policy and systems change and create the change they want to see.

Core components of the *Poder Popular Promotores Comunitarios de Salud* strategy:

Selection, recruitment and training of farmworkers and other community residents, to become *promotores* or *líderes*

Community survey and health needs assessment

Community asset mapping

Recruitment of local *comités*, composed of *promotores* and/or other residents

Identification of priority health needs

Action plans to advocate for change with local and regional authorities and decision makers

Ongoing training and technical assistance for grantee staff, *promotores* and *comité* members

¹ See <http://www.poderpopularca.org/> for findings from an evaluation of this approach.

² Throughout this document, the term *promotor* or *promotora* is used to refer to *promotores comunitarios*, *líderes*, *líderes comunitarios* and community organizers, as they are known in the various sites.

The *promotores* received six to eight weeks of training and capacity-building on topics including community organizing strategies, self-esteem, civic education, public speaking, and organizational skills, among others. A new cohort of approximately 18 *promotores* was recruited each year. Training was ongoing and, in many communities, more experienced *promotores* helped train new *promotores* as they were recruited, which benefited both groups. Local *comités* formed as part of the program also received training and technical assistance, particularly in advocacy strategies.

Key Challenges

The *Promotores Comunitarios de Salud* effort experienced a number of challenges and setbacks. One of the principal obstacles was associated with persuading undocumented residents to engage in political processes. While their reticence was an impediment in all regions, it was particularly difficult in San Diego and other locales where local residents engage in immigration raids and vigilantism more commonly than in other areas.

One of the most significant complications affecting *Poder Popular* was a very short implementation time frame. Community organizing efforts typically require between five and six years of intensive work before seeing any significant impact. The relative inexperience of some grantees in community organizing activities portended a potentially longer timeline still. Despite the multiplicity of obstacles, this effort has accomplished much in a relatively short time — a testament to the integrity of the program and the community members' strong desire to create positive change.

One stumbling point that initially affected program design and communication between the grant maker and grantees was misunderstanding about the «grassroots to treetops» approach underlying this effort, and the role of residents in bringing about change. Much of the confusion appeared to stem from the use of the term «*promotores de salud*,» interpreted by many participants to mean traditional health promotion activities. That perception was exacerbated by the program's focus on improving health and the use of health-related concerns as a means of engaging community members. In contrast, *promotores* were envisioned in *Poder Popular* as community organizers, responsible for recruiting, training and organizing *comité* members and other residents to advocate for policy and systems change.

Even though initial confusion slowed down implementation



considerably in an already tight time frame, the misunderstanding was effectively resolved. Over the course of program implementation, agency staff and volunteers gained a much clearer understanding of the community organizing nature of this initiative and the role of the *promotores*. As one agency staff member explained, «It would have helped to state from the beginning that *Poder Popular* is about community organizing.»

Program organizers also became aware of emerging frustration among some *promotores* who were anxious to begin advocacy as soon as possible and felt held back by the time spent in formal trainings and needs assessments. Many *promotores* believed that these activities slowed the process down unnecessarily and dampened their initial enthusiasm.

Development of a mechanism to furnish technical assistance was an intricate undertaking. A large, community development nonprofit organization was contracted to provide technical assistance. Despite an extremely successful track record in housing, water, infrastructure and other «bricks and mortar» aspects of rural development, the contractor had little experience in community organizing. While some agencies found the technical assistance helpful, others sought technical assistance elsewhere or applied their own community organizing models.

The technical assistance contractor also experienced some initial confusion regarding contract monitoring. The TA provider attempted to compel grantees to remain in compliance with grant objectives, which created considerable confusion and made some grantees reluctant to seek technical assistance because they did not want to reveal problems or inadequacies. Despite these problems, several agencies — particularly those with less experience in community organizing — reported high levels of satisfaction with the provision of technical assistance, especially during the third year of this initiative, when the process was mature enough to incorporate assistance on topics in which the technical assistance provider had more expertise.

Other Challenges

Agencies with prior community organizing experience seemed to gain an understanding of the *Poder Popular* model more readily than others. Prior experience was not necessarily a prerequisite for success, however, as some agencies new to community organizing or advocacy proved effective, most likely as a result of other factors, such as team cohesion and roots in the communities.



Initially, health agencies appeared to have easier access in the communities, and they were able to establish trust more readily than other agencies could. However, in some cases health agencies had more difficulty in making the transition to community organizing activities, in which they needed more in-depth training. Staff turnover tended to discourage *promotores* and raise doubts among them about institutional commitment to the program. Nonetheless, agencies in which *promotores* interacted with several staff members were able to overcome the problem, as *promotores* could make the transition to new staff more easily.

Collaboratives formed for program implementation provided ongoing and mutual support, complementary visions and strategies, and greater negotiating capacity for resources and technical assistance. Some collaboratives, however, suffered from a lack of transparency about budget allocations or a lack of clarity about each partner's responsibility. Some *promotores* rarely saw lead agency staff, and field coordinators from sister agencies felt isolated from decision-making. Regular meetings and free-flowing information at all levels, in addition to mutual respect, seem to be keys to successful collaboratives.

Key Successes

The *Promotores Comunitarios de Salud* strategy made impressive strides in a relatively short, three-year time frame. Approximately 250 community-based *promotores*, 70 percent of them women, were recruited and trained, priority issues affecting community health and well-being were identified, resident-led *comités* were formed at all sites, and advocacy plans were developed and implemented. The *comités* have brought about a number of policy and systems changes that will result in improved community health.

At an individual level, the *promotores* report significantly higher levels of personal empowerment and improved self-esteem. While this was not itself a target goal of *Poder Popular*, it was an essential step to the *promotores*' ability to organize residents and help them advocate for change.

Perhaps the most important success of this effort has been its ability to engage and mobilize a predominantly low-income, immigrant and largely undocumented population of individuals with low English proficiency who have much to lose by stepping forward and making their voices heard. As the tables in Chapter 8, pages 37-41 document, the program achieved many specific outcomes and successes, summarized here:

- City and advisory councils as well as elected water and school boards now have established lines of communication and representation — through the *promotores* and *comités* — for farmworkers, Latinos and other traditionally underrepresented groups. Together, all parties are working toward improving the community and raising awareness of farmworker and health issues. *Promotores* now regularly attend and participate in council meetings. Some now hold positions on city councils or advisory boards, and participate in municipal strategic planning and community development plans.
- An informal structure has been developed to respond to community needs. When a need is identified, *promotores* and *comités* help residents navigate the public and nonprofit systems to advocate on the community's behalf. Since *promotores* and *comité* members tend to participate in several community

groups and structures, communication networks are being created within and across communities. In addition, one community reported that thanks to *Poder Popular*, people from the surrounding towns now get along with each other much better than they previously did, attending each other's events and supporting each other's advocacy activities.

- Community members have gained greater access to services and resources. As a result of *Poder Popular* efforts, cities, counties or other agencies have responded to farmworker or underserved communities by creating or improving public safety measures; support for immigration issues; new or enhanced bus routes; sanitation infrastructure; housing and housing services; and health information and services.

Other policy and systems change successes have manifested themselves in many ways:

- *Comité* members convinced the California Department of Food and Agriculture to hold one of its «Agricultural Vision» sessions in the evening and with Spanish interpretation, to enable farmworker participation.
- Trailer park owners have entered into discussions with *Poder Popular* about improving housing conditions, resulting in significant upgrades in several trailer parks.
- *Poder Popular* has drawn the attention of education and nonprofit organizations in some regions, which have increased services upon realizing the significant presence of farmworkers. For example, a health group opened a clinic, and a church-based group began offering support to victims of domestic violence.
- *Comités* successfully negotiated with local authorities for the establishment of weekly flea markets in some sites. These markets enable farmworkers to obtain fresh and affordable food more easily, reduce their transportation costs associated with shopping in other towns, and provide a form of healthy entertainment for families.
- *Comités* gained the support of local authorities to establish community gardens in some sites. Such gardens enable farm workers to raise fresh produce for themselves and others, and educate children about food production and nutrition.

***Promotores, comités* and staff members express enthusiasm over these outcomes, as the culmination of three years of *Poder Popular* program implementation. They feel they are now positioned to make inroads in systems change.**

Chapter 2

Leadership Development and Individual Empowerment

The term empowerment is widely used in many contexts, and definitions vary accordingly. In community development and social promotion, empowerment generally refers to a *process* through which people increase their access to knowledge and resources and gain control over the decisions that affect their lives.

The main goal of *Poder Popular* was to empower residents to advocate for policy and systems change that would result in healthier communities. To discover that power, *promotores* received training and technical assistance from a rights-based approach, which developed critical thinking. Training topics included self-esteem and self-confidence, leadership development, communication skills, health promotion and education, tenants' and housing rights, labor rights, and civic education, among others. Technical assistance contributed to translating individual skills to the collective strength to advocate for change.

Focusing on the individual proved effective in implementing the *Poder Popular* strategy, particularly in the early stages when agency staff and first cohort *promotores* were still trying to understand program goals and objectives, as well as how to bridge the gap between residents and public policies and systems. Agency staff at one site found it most effective to «start from the person up, rather than from policy down,» adding that empowering individuals leads to a strong group that can promote the program.

In that regard, several external stakeholders commented that *Poder Popular* has empowered participants to learn how to make a change in their community. Once participants start believing they can change their community for the better, they start becoming more active and make a difference in the community. «I have seen how people and communities have been positively transformed with this program and how proud and powerful they feel being part of the process, instead of just observers of change,» one stakeholder said.

Key elements of empowerment

Control of personal and family assets: work, housing, health, financial and social resources

Access to information: gaining knowledge about individual and collective rights and the institutions that provide services

Education: competency and skills development through formal and non-formal opportunities

Inclusive leadership: ensuring autonomy in decision-making, and sharing power

Participation: sense of belonging, identifying with the community, ownership of the process, ability to influence public processes, gender equity

Accountability: taking responsibility for decisions made, holding institutions that affect one's life accountable



Quotes from *promotores* who best express their process of empowerment through *Poder Popular*

«*Poder Popular is more than addressing specific issues such as health. It's about the transformation that occurs in people.*»

«*Poder Popular is basically teaching us how to be leaders.*»

«*First of all you improve personally; you communicate with people who are more educated, higher up than you.... You're not embarrassed to talk — you can speak about different subjects and you learn many things.*»

«*I've learned to be a better speaker, without embarrassment. Before, I was very embarrassed about speaking in public, now I'm communicating better.*»

«*I struggle to express my thoughts, I struggle convincing people to be interested.... I think a leader, besides having the will to join *Poder Popular*, has to have the will to progress in expressing ideas and sharing them with others.*»

«*If you're going to be a leader you need to want to act. You don't need to know how to write, be rich or poor or anything. You have to want to do the work. You have to want to make that change.*»

«*The needs of the community and the will to fight go hand in hand. Wherever you go there will be needs, but if you don't want to see the needs of your community, you're not ready.*»

The role of the agency in developing skills, leadership and individual empowerment cannot be overstated. Since an individual is not empowered *by someone*, but rather *becomes* empowered through a series of experiences, the agency is responsible for enabling those experiences to take place, and for encouraging the reflection necessary for a *promotor/a* to become aware and take ownership of his or her development. As one field coordinator said, «The real work begins at 5,» referring to the kind of mentoring required of agency staff, beyond workshops and meetings. Beginning with the process of recruiting and selecting *promotores*, *Poder Popular* agency staff selected candidates on the basis not only of age and gender diversity, skills, and leadership potential, but also on aspects such as respect, a spirit of cooperation and community awareness. Staff sought cohesion and team building, even beyond individual skills or prior experience. Such unification occurred more readily where agency staff lived in the communities or had close ties to them. Likewise, where program managers got involved in recruitment along with their field coordinators, a broader vision was maintained about the kind of team they were seeking. Over time, staff members learned that recruitment was more effective if they emphasized the personal empowerment and educational aspects of the program, in addition to the community organizing process.

Leadership development in *promotores* seemed to be more successful where ongoing dialogue and open communication existed at all levels — between agency managers and field coordinators, between field coordinators and *promotores*, between *promotores* and community residents, and among agencies of the collaboratives that were established for program implementation. Agencies with more open communication seemed to be more successful at building *promotores'* trust and setting the tone for respect among the *promotores*, *comité* members and community residents. Open communication considered the diversity among people in age, gender, skills, and experience. It also enabled emergence of diverse types of leadership, for example, among youth or people with disabilities.

Staff availability to *promotores* was an essential component of leadership development and establishment of trust. Training was

most effective when supervisors or field coordinators worked alongside the *promotores* — for example in conducting asset mapping and community surveys, as well as in mobilization activities including knocking on doors with the *promotores*, who at first lacked confidence. Constant guidance was vital because it instilled loyalty to the program. *Promotores* exhibited the greatest loyalty where coordinators were always available. With loyalty comes retention.

Retention of *promotores* remained an important consideration throughout the grant period, as the departure of already trained *promotores* detracted from momentum. A certain drop-out rate is to be expected in any voluntary, community organizing initiative, and especially where residents live under precarious conditions, as in this case. Consequently, continual motivation of the people who *can* participate is of critical importance. Specific motivational training or technical assistance for agency staff must become an integral component of any *promotores* program to ensure its longevity.

Another important lesson learned was the need for clarity about the desired results of training. Program leaders can easily become sidetracked on training that will not contribute to developing skills and leadership. Training in health promotion, for example, proved to be inadequate for advocacy work. *Promotores* weren't prepared or motivated and didn't have sufficient leadership skills to conduct advocacy work.

According to participants and staff, the training activities that proved to have the most impact were those that were interactive and experiential. Participants need to understand the purpose of the training, and how the training folds into every aspect of not only the program but also of their reality. Once *promotores* acted on the basis of their training when conducting community surveys and asset mapping or attending city council meetings, they began to understand its contextual meaning. Such understanding helps individuals take ownership early on.

One of the main questions that *promotores* raised as a result of rights training was how to act on it. Capacity-building and training

**More quotes from
promotores who best
express their process of
empowerment through
*Poder Popular***

«I've learned many things. Before I wouldn't go out, I just stayed in my room and that's it. Then I began to notice the needs I had there in the housing complex. Now I see the needs of the whole community.»

«I was very depressed and Poder Popular helped relieve all the stress I had. My life has changed because I have learned to say «I can do this, I can achieve this.» I want to learn more about people, and help others who feel depressed.»

«My life has changed. I had never spoken to the mayor about our problems. . . . Sometimes you just spend all your days working in the fields. My main goals right now are to continue attending meetings and getting to know my fellow teammates.»

«I spoke with about 40 people in the church, which I had never done before. I was like, 'Oh, I'm not so scared anymore.' I was impressed with myself, for how brave I was to talk about this program that has helped me so much . . . and to help people and provide information.»

See Chapter 8, the tables on Evidence of Change and Outcomes by Level of Change, pages 37-41, for more examples of empowerment.

are tools, but they are not enough to create change. Leadership skills are necessary to be able to make the transition from rights awareness to addressing questions such as «Where does my community want to go, and how do I help it get there? What role do I play in that?»

Agency staff can lend perspective by illustrating with concrete examples how leadership can lead to empowering the community. In *Poder Popular*, this came about as a result of deliberate and conscious agency facilitation, not only of the link between the individual and the community, but also of the political content of civic engagement and community organization. Staff members need to be knowledgeable, skillful and committed to these kinds of facilitation processes, either through prior experience or specific training and capacity-building for themselves.

Individual empowerment leads to collective empowerment and ownership only when the collective can agree on its common goals and group members' relationship to the goals, and when grantees carefully and strategically position and align program activities with the needs identified by the community.

Along these lines, allowing individuals to grow their capacity for leadership at their own pace is essential. Agency personnel must be perceptive in recognizing and accepting where people are in their development, and in allowing them to decide where they want to go and how they want to get there. This approach applies not only to the program timeline, but also to expected outputs. Participants at some sites felt they were being held back after six months by additional training. For others the time frame was too fast, and both staff and *promotores* said that they needed more training and technical assistance before they could feel comfortable moving into action planning and advocacy.

Poder Popular grantees encouraged *promotores* to set the pace and take the lead; they listened carefully to discern consensus and commitment to specific issues and activities, and enabled them to move forward. Agency staff continually aimed to strike a balance between the grant timeline and the pace of the *promotores*, in order to create favorable conditions for success and ultimately empowerment.

With empowerment came ownership of the process, and again, it was important for grantees to understand what that meant and implied, even for the agency itself. Some grantees were suddenly faced with *promotor*



and resident criticism of their services, and had to rethink some of their positions and policies. At one site, a group of staff members along with *promotores* moved the entire *Poder Popular* operation to another agency. Other grantees re-discovered their strengths and unique capabilities as a result of critiques and suggestions from a newly empowered and engaged constituency.

Chapter 3

Building Citizenship

The Center for Democracy and Citizenship defines citizenship as «the ongoing contribution of citizens to solving community and public problems and creating the world around us.»¹

The previous chapter explained that a large part of the *promotores*' training focused on awareness of their rights and on becoming leaders. As *promotores* developed their capacities, they became motivated to educate others and to participate in civic and political activities.²

An important first step in building citizenship came in recruiting and forming resident *comités* in each community. In some sites, *promotores* became part of the *comité*, given their prior training and experience, as well as their commitment to the community. In others, *promotores* served the *comités* in advisory or auxiliary roles. Some *comités* formalized their structure by electing officers, while others maintained a looser structure. Some *comités* kept the *Poder Popular* name, while others began to develop their own identity through new names.

Program staff in all sites mentioned the continued challenge of motivating residents to participate in community activities. In some cases the lack of engagement was due to lack of interest. In others it came from fear: worry about repercussions from individuals such as trailer park managers or owners, or anxiety about deportation of undocumented residents. In many instances, farmworkers with precarious immigration status felt they were too vulnerable to advocate for improved conditions, and did not have a sense of power regarding their rights. Some agencies and *promotores* held meetings in people's homes as part of a strategy to build constituent support. That approach contributed to trust and credibility in the program, as well as to resident commitment.

As traditional forms of political representation are being re-examined, direct democratic mechanisms are increasingly being drawn upon to enable citizens to play a more active part in decisions which affect their lives. In this context, the questions of how citizens – especially the poor – express voice and how institutional responsiveness and accountability can be ensured, have become paramount.

**Andrea Cornwall and
John Gaventa**

*Bridging the Gap: Citizenship,
Participation and Accountability*

³ Boyte, Harry C. (2004): Reinventing Citizenship. The Practice of Public Work. Center for Democracy and Citizenship. University of Minnesota. (www.extension.unm.edu/distribution/citizenship/DH6586.htm).

⁴ «Civic engagement is one of the underpinnings of the *Poder Popular* initiative. It is a means by which farmworkers can become visible to the community, including public authorities, and can advocate for improved conditions.» (*Promotores Comunitarios de Salud Strategy, Interim Evaluation Report, December 2008*).

Promotores and comité members offered some of their ideas on civic engagement:

«Poder Popular means to have a voice and the strength to unite my community.»

«Poder Popular is the power to help people, the community and the entire town.»

«Poder Popular is uniting the community to make improvements for everyone. But it can only be achieved with people who have knowledge of the community and who focus on others and share their knowledge.»

«A promotor is someone who must be very interested in being an organizer of his own town, and who has a good focus, knocking on every door and telling people about their rights and getting them to attend a comité meeting. I felt the responsibility to do it, and I was happy for having done it, because the people showed up at the meeting and spoke about what they wanted and needed.»

«It's very difficult to be a promotor. You need to have the resources to do everything that needs to be done in the community. You need people's help, because you can't do it alone. That's why we need to unite as a people and help each other to go forward. That is the only way we can do it.»

«People are afraid and need líderes. I see the program Poder Popular, and that it is creating líderes in a population that is completely forgotten. The líderes are talking to the people, and they're coming out and taking part in issues that are very important to them.»

A city manager observed:

«The promotoras are asking authorities about the 'how' and 'why' of the way things work.... They're influencing our work, they make decision-makers listen because they're active and meet their commitments.... They're starting to climb to higher levels; they can move beyond the civic area into labor and political areas.»

Building citizenship in the sense of civic engagement and civic participation is the first step to bridging the differences between people. An awareness of citizenship leads to each person understanding how he or she can contribute to the community. Here again, grantees played a crucial role in facilitating conversations on the meaning of citizenship. For example, *promotores* and *líderes* worked to persuade people to vote in the 2008 elections, put together entire forums, and encouraged people to think and talk about the issues, even though they themselves could not vote because they weren't citizens in the legal sense. *Promotores* and *comités* also participated in town hall meetings with local candidates, and were active in information campaigns regarding issues that affected them, such as water and school board decisions and the impact they have on health and on children.

Other examples of civic engagement through *Poder Popular* included organizing informational events on consular services or housing issues, participating in or organizing health fairs, co-convening community-wide cultural events, census- and survey-taking for grant proposals, distributing flyers on program alerts, organizing neighborhood clean-ups, providing safety support to school crossings and community markets, volunteering at other organizations, and joining the boards of local non-profits and clinics.

In order to conduct appropriate facilitation and provide the necessary support to *comité* initiatives, the agency has to be clear about its role and about what risks it is willing to take. Early in the program, some agencies had to reconsider their position regarding service provision to undocumented residents, and refocused or resumed a commitment to their mission. Some agencies put themselves at great risk in transporting undocumented people to program events at times when people in the surrounding region were being deported. But the agencies were willing to take these risks and others, because they believed in the mobilization that was taking place.

In recruiting and forming *comités*, and in seeking community participation in general, agencies must prepare *promotores* to be very persistent in overcoming apathy and fear. Recruits need special training or technical assistance to confront community rejection.

Training at all staff levels, including field coordinators, is important to be able to pass the learning on to *promotores* and show how to handle community rejection.

Some grantees found value in contracting with outside experts to help them learn how to engage residents. Several people said training had been life changing. It helped staff members develop their own leadership skills and taught them how to engage others, challenging people into action, through role-playing and questions such as, «What are you going to do about this? How are you going to do it?» The training also taught staff how to highlight the win-win aspect of getting involved. People who underwent this training were much more confident in organizing community members.

Culturally and gender appropriate training and facilitation contributed to citizenship-building, in that they enabled *promotores* and *comités* to implement activities based on traditional Latino values, such as family and inter-generational participation. While Female *promotoras* and residents generally support and defend other's rights, they face resistance to their participation; effective training and facilitation in *Poder Popular* helped to resolve their reticence and emboldened them to participate.

Promotores and *comités* found that motivation was proportional to the size of the turnout at community activities. One grantee compiled a database of contact information for residents. Many people cannot or are unwilling to participate regularly on a *comité*, but can commit to showing up at community events and advocacy efforts if they are contacted personally. This is one way for the community to participate without a long-term commitment. Another grantee, during planning meetings, persuaded *promotores* and *comité* members to commit to bringing a certain number of people to an event. As a result, the numbers of participants at events swelled.

Regularly attending city council meetings greatly contributed to *promotores'* and *comités'* knowledge of how government processes work and how decisions are made. Because few residents attend these meetings, except when an item on the agenda directly affects them, the continual presence of *promotores* and *comité* members won them the respect of city authorities. The recurrent presence of *promotores'* and *comités'* in civic activities opened the door for them to engage in direct dialogue with city managers and to brainstorm solutions together. It also prepared them to present their own proposals or support other grassroots proposals (see Chapter 5). As a result, even with limited legal rights, *promotores* and *comités* positioned themselves as new kinds of actors and political change agents in their community.



Chapter 4

Forming Networks and Alliances

In general, strategic alliances are formed when organizations combine their strengths to achieve a common goal. The networks and alliances formed throughout the grant period were a crucial factor in the success of *Poder Popular* and a testament to the empowerment and citizenship gained by residents. This chapter addresses both types of networks and alliances: those formed by *promotores* and *comités* with other organizations and institutions, and those formed at an inter-agency level.

Poder Popular groups and agencies created a wide range of collaborative relationships that supported their work. These alliances included the news media, schools, clinics, community-based organizations, city and county officials (including city managers and law enforcement personnel), city councils, state assembly commissions, foundations and other nonprofits, local businesses and growers (agribusiness), churches, libraries, Mexican consulates, and other groups and institutions.

At the start of program activities, the majority of alliances were developed or reinforced directly by staff. With time, however, the *promotores* and *comités* were given an increasingly active role in forming their own alliances at health fairs, via word-of-mouth, or through individual connections. This approach proved so successful that when agencies or authorities needed support, they often contacted the *promotores* directly. As one *promotora* said, “They see the work we’re doing, so they take us into consideration when they plan things, and we do the same with them; they also send us people directly and we’re building our base of support.”

In some sites, staff and *promotores* set goals — for example, three appointments per week — to explore potential collaboration arenas. *Promotores* first had to develop analytical skills preparatory



to goal-setting. They held one-on-one interviews and openly discussed how to create win-win situations by working together.

The networks and alliances benefited community groups in a variety of ways, including assistance with outreach; increased visibility; ensuring large turnouts and hence greater negotiating capacity; access to resources, including facilities and training; and problem-solving by brainstorming strategies together.

Obstacles that must be overcome in order to establish networks and alliances between agencies include competition for funds and differences in identity, mission, organizational culture and levels of experience, particularly in community organizing. The key elements for maintaining positive relationships were maintenance of open communication, respect for each other's turf and staffing, demonstration that the program is not a threat but rather a community asset, and evidence of the benefits of collaboration. The latter was important in gaining the trust of individuals who were at times initially uncomfortable with *Poder Popular*, such as some political figures or business owners.

It's important for staff, *promotores* and *comités* to talk about the meaning of the collaboration or alliance in terms of each member's expectations and respective power — in other words, what each one brings to the partnership. Participants must make a specific plan for the networks and alliances that need to be developed, and then must strategize ways to achieve goals. The balance of power may be tipped, but if both members understand that, they can work together on issues or strategies of common concern.

Participants also may benefit from examination of the roots of existing relationships in order to understand their limitations and potential, and in order to manage them appropriately. If a partnership was formed because of an old friendship between two people, for example, everyone has to know



that, so the partnership isn't strained by other issues that might be inappropriate or beyond its scope. Alliances formed for reasons such as political expediency over a specific issue, for example, tend to exclude grassroots level *promotores* from the policy and systems changes that are appropriate for them.

Alliances and networks formed through *Poder Popular* tended to be more solid when the parties recognized each other's contributions beyond existing asymmetries, and when all the parties contributed to their mutual success. Staff, *promotores* and *comités* reflected on the meaning of an alliance in day-to-day terms or specific actions, beyond good intentions. Staff also helped *promotores* and *comités* develop a more strategic approach to aspects such as the best timing for soliciting involvement of the news media.

It's important to look for unlikely partners — not just other social service providers, but also employers, private businesses, trade associations and other organizations. Some agro-businesses agreed to support *Poder Popular* because they understood that improvements in the contentment and health of workers can result in greater productivity and harmony with the work force community. Partners like these will not always agree on all the issues, but they can sit at the same table and find common goals.

The civic engagement aspect of *Poder Popular*'s work attracted many potential collaborators. Some *Poder Popular* groups gained credibility and visibility by forming alliances with city or county officials. However, they found they were beginning to burn out on outreach activities, acting as the volunteer force for getting the word out to people, without a clear sense of direction regarding their own agenda.

Promotores and *comités* need to maintain a clear vision and strategies for moving their agenda forward; as previously noted in this report, grantees play a key role in enabling that to happen through

appropriate facilitation on the strengths and weaknesses of an alliance. As one city manager commented, “The *promotoras* and *comité* are so enthusiastic about their new power, but they need to learn what they can do and not try to do too much. Other people have to help them understand that.”



Chapter 5

Negotiating and Advocating for Change

A key aspect in the design of the *Promotores Comunitarios de Salud* strategy was the move beyond training and leadership development to advocating for change at the community and policy level. The transition varied from site to site, depending on contextual factors such as the local political climate and the *comité's* level of preparation. Agency staff played a major role in enabling *promotores* and *comités* to identify needs and produce the kinds of community-level outcomes that could lead to improved health.

Several sites reported that assigning *promotores* to conduct health surveys and compose asset maps were important preliminary steps to advocacy, because they led to understanding of existing resources, to identifying gaps in services, and to prioritizing needs. People at some sites, however, struggled to grasp the asset mapping concept and how it was tied to the bigger picture of preparing for action. The training in governance proved to be a useful link, and eventually all *promotores* gained an understanding of “how the system works” and which entities to approach in their advocacy work.

In year two of the initiative, program staff requested and received additional advocacy training, both for themselves and for *promotores* and *comités*, as well as more information on human rights and discrimination. Among the most effective training, as reported by program staff, were the workshops given by other grantees, and visits to other sites that had demonstrated success in mobilizing residents.

The development and implementation of an action plan in the third year of the program married prior learning and outreach to public action. *Comités* identified the most important issues, where the resources and power were held, and potential allies; then they developed an advocacy strategy and found new ways to approach an issue when nothing seemed to work. *Promotores* were intimately connected to their action plan, whether they followed the template provided by the grant maker or moved forward on activities begun earlier as a result of community surveys, outreach activities, and encounters with authorities.

In keeping with the program's flexibility among sites, advocacy efforts focused on a wide range of topics: traffic safety, security and gangs, housing, immigration issues, and various aspects of health, including occupational health in the fields, HIV/AIDS prevention, and environmental health, particularly related to water or to pesticide exposure. Several grantees commented that people more readily advocated for change regarding issues of importance to them. For best results, either the *promotores* should participate in the process of selecting issues, such as saving their trailer park, or at the very least should really understand how they can be affected by an issue, such as pesticide contamination. Understanding is essential for motivation to advocate for an issue.

The various grantees and *Poder Popular* groups also adopted a variety of styles. Some took a “soft” approach that began with providing support to community events and outreach activities, in an attempt to create win-win situations. As they attended council meetings, learned how things worked in the public arena that is the source for grants and other funding, and what the authorities needed from them, *promotores* and *comités* gained a stronger foothold from which to negotiate and advocate for the needs they had identified. Others groups preferred a more “hard-hitting” approach, at times around a crisis situation such as a traffic accident or the closing of a facility; they agitated for large turnouts at public events, demanded Spanish translation, and brought the news media in, among other actions.

This variety in approaches was directly linked to the contextual factors in each community, such as the openness and receptivity of local authorities, businesses and residents, as well as prevailing economic and political conditions. It was also linked to prior agency experience in community organizing and advocacy, and to their networks of support.

In presenting their needs at city council meetings or water or school boards, *promotores* should be encouraged to take the lead, which gains them respect from the authorities. Agency support is crucial to preparing *promotores* or *comité* members to make public presentations, not only in the presentation itself, but also in aspects such as awareness of who’s who on the council or board and identifying their various positions on the issue; determining who should attend the meeting, or how to respond to resident questions or challenges; and determining with whom to follow up and extend the conversation.

Negotiating and advocacy are about managing power. Where is the power in the community? What is the community’s negotiating power? What relationship do people want to have with that power? The extent and distribution of distribution of power should be discussed and understood by all participants. One way to achieve consensus about allocation of power might be through a reflection on the power that different family members have, including the consideration of those who are documented and undocumented. Women *promotoras* and *comité* members discovered they were

establishing new pacts with their families, particularly husbands or partners, as they participated in public issues. Staff members need to facilitate a conversation about the ramifications of negotiating new pacts with those who have power.



Negotiating and advocacy also require clarity about values, along with determination of what is most important to the group and what the group is willing to concede. Establishment of those parameters in advance yields an advantage in



negotiating capacity. For example, members of one group very clearly indicated that they wanted water filters in the school district, but other actors at the same table wanted to add a pool to the request. *Promotores* were better prepared to give up the pool in order to get the filters. Agency guidance in determination of values and priorities prepares community members for negotiations with authorities and other stakeholders.

If a community is not ready for these conversations, grantees need to find other ways to engage the community and create a series of successful experiences in the public arena. Agencies may need to conduct training to help participants move from one phase to the next, not necessarily in a linear fashion, but according to each group's dynamics and possibilities. The transition to advocacy takes time and experience, as people discover their power, as issues emerge from residents themselves, and as people feel the need for action.

A program schedule should encompass sufficient time to develop the consciousness and the skills to be able to advocate for change. Likewise, the design of a community organizing program must accommodate these phases and should be sufficiently flexible to allow some communities to move forward quickly, while others take more time.

The goal of *Poder Popular* was to bring about policy and systems change for improved health through grassroots empowerment and mobilization, which were based on rights. The health of participants began to improve as they recognized and understood their rights and as they developed political know-how. *Promotores*, *comités* and resident participants began to see that health is not just about access to clinics, but rather has to do with access to economic, social and political systems that can result in improved health. *Poder Popular* gave them the tools to gain that access, which in turn gave them a sense of belonging and even entitlement, from which they could then advocate for better conditions.

The table on Outcomes by Level of Change in Chapter 8 identifies the kinds of policy and systems changes that occurred in the various sites as a result of *Poder Popular*.

Chapter 6

Laying the Foundation for Sustainability

The *Promotores Comunitarios de Salud* strategy was developed around a theory of change postulating that empowered and civically engaged residents could not only bring about policy and systems change, but that they also could sustain their momentum over time. Sustainability implies securing financial and material resources, along with retention of leaders, maintaining resident participation, enduring changes in the leadership, and accommodating changes in the political and economic forces that affect social dynamics.

As seen throughout this report, the *Poder Popular* program was built on training and capacity-building at the grassroots level, and on relationship-building at the community and regional levels. The aim was to enable *promotores* and *comité* members to take ownership of community change processes to and engage other residents like them to participate in bringing about that change.

Most agencies stated that the initiative's three-year timeline was too short for *comités* to become autonomous and self-sustaining. Nonetheless, success was achieved. Several sites that enacted strategies early in the grant period reported that *promotores* and *comités* learned how to work more independently and developed skills that will remain with them into the future. Many *promotores* learned facilitation skills and are capable of replicating the trainings they received, using the materials they collected.

A major impediment to sustainability is attrition and loss of momentum in motivation of *promotores* and *comités* over the long term. Factors affecting retention include the mobility of the *promotores* (many of whom migrate throughout California in search of seasonal work, or even return to their country of origin), long work schedules, transportation barriers, immigration status and fear of government sweeps of undocumented persons.

Because the concept of sustainability also implies working without support

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Frase de dos palabras con un gran significado y que también es el nombre de un grupo de personas como tú, apreciado lector, grupo que ha estado activo en forma organizada por más de dos años en las comunidades de Firebaugh, Mendota y San Joaquin. Este grupo es un programa auspiciado por Proteus Inc. Diseñado para guiar, enseñar y asistir a los residentes de las comunidades mencionadas, como mejorar su salud, trabajo y condiciones de vida. Promotores es el nombre con que se conoce a los miembros de este programa a los cuales se les proporciona entrenamientos y herramientas para capacitarlos a identificar necesidades en sus comunidades y juntos buscar las soluciones que son el objetivo del programa. Muchas de las veces que los promotores participan en las diferentes actividades que se presentan, lo hacen colaborando con otras organizaciones, oficiales de la ciudad y demás miembros de sus comunidades por ejemplo los promotores de Firebaugh han participado en la realización de eventos como el 4 de julio, día de la pascua y en su conocido farmers market cooperando con el departamento de policía y oficiales de la ciudad, por lo tanto han dado a conocer a esta comunidad su capacidad de ayudar. También tienen un plantío - jardín donde todo residente tienen acceso a plantar, enseñar y compartir con otros una más saludable forma de alimentación tratando de inspirar a sus residentes a unirse al programa pues beneficia a todos.

Además de esto colaboran también en evitar el aumento de los precios en el uso del agua y el embellecimiento de la ciudad. Los promotores de la ciudad de Mendota también poseen un plantío - jardín que ha permitido embellecer el puerto local de Mendota, en el cual estudiantes de preparatoria y residentes de la comunidad - comparten conocimientos enseñando unos a otros a como cultivar diferentes clases de vegetales. Estos promotores también van cooperando con otras organizaciones y oficiales de la ciudad en la realización de eventos cívicos y sociales como en la limpieza de la ciudad y en distribución de alimentos invitando a otros a que se unan al programa para el bienestar general de esta trabajadora comunidad. En la ciudad de San Joaquin el programa de promotores ha colaborado también con las autoridades locales y oficiales de la ciudad en diversos eventos como en el foro para la prevención de drogadicción y pandillerismo y en la distribución de alimentos. Además de participar en el tradicional Farmers Market donde todos pueden comprar o vender frutas y vegetales frescos. Y para esta temporada ya se tiene el objetivo de plantar árboles e iniciar un plantío - jardín para el embellecimiento de la ciudad. Así es que ya sabes estimado lector si una de estas comunidades es la tuya y tienes ese deseo de hacer algo diferente para ayudar a tu gente animate y lláma al: (559) 341-6533 con Angelina.

Revista Uniendo A La Familia te seguirá informando para estar al día en lo que El Poder Del Pueblo esta haciendo por tu comunidad.

from agency staff, *comités* and *promotores* will need to work on their own to facilitate meetings, resolve internal conflicts, ensure team-building (including reconciling disparate visions and priorities among *comité* members of different ages, family status and other variables), adopt a participatory and inclusive process for decision-making, and consolidate alliances.

Some *comités* are experimenting with fund-raising and community awareness activities, including weekly markets (*remates*), community gardens, applying for mini-grants or conducting surveys and other wage-earning activities for the city or county. Others are in the process of expanding to new areas, joining neighboring *comités*, or seeking sponsorship from different agencies. One community strategically negotiated with the city council to create a permanent liaison position on the council to address the needs of farmworkers and other marginalized groups. Furthermore, many *promotores* and *comité* members participate in several community and regional forums, which has proven useful in maintaining motivation and mobilizing resources.

Thinking beyond the grant life by considering the entire life cycle of the community and its leaders is important in laying the foundation for sustainability. What new issues are emerging? Under what circumstances should a group abandon an issue? Where can a group discover opportunity for injecting new life into a group or a movement? Where will new leaders come from? What new kinds of leadership will emerge over time? One agency is strategically working with youth, negotiating the use of a community center for after-school activities, not only in an effort to ward off gang infiltration, but also to develop new leaders. The *comité* there also has started to become actively involved in school issues; *comité* members are motivated not only by their own children's needs, but also by the possibility for their actions to exert a broad impact across the community.

Agencies may benefit from considering the sustainability of a social movement, as opposed to the sustainability of a project or program. Sustainability not only requires securing new funding, but also entails a mechanism for keeping participants engaged by helping them understand where they are in their development and where they want to be while knowing and remaining focused on their values and priorities.

While training in fund raising is important, agencies and technical assistance providers would do well to emphasize organizational development and accountability in preparing organized residents to work toward self-sustainability. That goal implies agency commitment to the transfer of ownership and to appropriate facilitation to achieve desired results.

One agency's strategy not only for sustainability but also for consolidation revolves around pooling the three *comités* in their region. They see they now have a new "social force" that previously didn't exist, with some 60 trained and organized residents. Their goal is to develop "regional thinking" around a strategic plan that includes economic issues and the "infiltration" of existing structures through grants and employment opportunities.

In this regard, the economic needs of grassroots groups need to be addressed to ensure sustained participation. A community organizing program cannot avoid the tension between community needs and personal needs for long, without risking participant burn-out and drop-out.

How far does volunteer work empower people and when do they become disempowered from lack of remuneration? This is particularly salient for women, who historically constitute the majority of volunteers and made up 70 percent of *Poder Popular promotores*; their domestic role is already undervalued, and their volunteer work is often challenged by husbands or partners who see it as insignificant or threatening. It also is particularly significant in working with Latinas, whose culture is largely based on service to others. If service is a cultural value on which to build civic engagement, care must be taken to enable participants to address these issues in a constructive and empowering way. Grant makers and agencies would do well to examine these tensions in program and training design with sustainability in mind.

Volunteerism poses a particular challenge to sustainability in times of economic crisis. These times call for a rethinking of funding structures, as well as innovations in the kinds of support that could be provided to volunteers; these might include communal savings programs, employer bonuses for community volunteers, or significant discounts at local establishments. There is much room for pioneering in this field — by innovative and creative grant makers, by agencies willing to raise awareness on social responsibility among local businesses, and by authorities to support trained community volunteers in a win-win sustainability strategy.

Despite these obstacles, *Poder Popular* participants appear to be committed as well as poised to continue their advocacy work. In response to a question, one promotor said that future funding and sustainability were not at issue because “*Poder Popular es la gente misma de la comunidad, somos nosotros, y eso no se acaba.*” (*Poder Popular* is us, the people in the community, and that doesn’t run out.)



Chapter 7

Community Perceptions of *Poder Popular*

The evaluation team conducted a survey and key informant interviews with policy makers and other external stakeholders in years two and three, in order to elicit their perceptions of *Poder Popular*, including its work in general, its impact on public policy, and recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the initiative.

Nearly all interviewees supported the work of *Poder Popular*. They offered praise in particular for the *promotores*' advocacy work and commitment to the community, as well as their ability to empower residents to speak out for change. As a nonprofit representative explained, "They are able to communicate and gain the trust of the underserved and are able to motivate and mobilize the people to action." An elected official noted, "This program has given them tools to participate at a civic level. They want to get involved in their communities and make a difference."

A number of stakeholders commented that *Poder Popular* has helped community members «find their voices» and speak out for the change they seek. A community activist noted that *Poder Popular* has «been excellent in giving tools to people to enable them to say who they are, to neutralize the fear and anger and to permit things to move forward.» A city manager commented that *Poder Popular* is «educating the community. They've corrected misconceptions people have,» referring both to city programs and policies and to farmworker contributions to the community.

Several stakeholders noted that the grassroots nature of *Poder Popular* has been a key component of its success. As one explained, «The

«The process of capacity building takes time and resources. The group has learned how to walk; now they need additional time and resources to enable them to scale higher mountains.»

Stakeholder

«There is no real appreciation of how this kind of program is changing lives and empowering people. It gives them permission to speak out.»

Staffer of California State Assembly



promotores live, work and mobilize in their own communities. They are part of their target population. This affinity allows for relationships of trust and understanding to be created and harnessed for positive change.»

Some stakeholders also commented on *Poder Popular*'s successes in terms of working with certain sectors. A community organizer in Southern California noted, «Nobody has dared do what *Poder Popular* did, which is to work with the trailer park manager. Before, he wouldn't let anyone in, but he lets *Poder Popular* in.»

Educating community members about their rights is also considered one of the keys to this model's success. A representative of a Southern California nonprofit agency commented, «This initiative helps improve people's health and living conditions. As a result of *Poder Popular*, people know about their rights. Before this they didn't even know they had any rights.»

One of the stakeholders summarized her observations about the effectiveness of *Poder Popular* by offering thanks «to the powers that be. I don't know who put that group (*Poder Popular*) together and put the time, effort and funds to make it happen. I see the difference in attitude when I work with people. They have a vision, and they know they can make a difference.»

External stakeholders also pointed out shortcomings, such as limited resources and *promotores*' limited English skills, in addition to the need for continued guidance. «It takes considerable staff time to build momentum, and even though leaders are 'created', a support system needs to be available for these leaders, once organizing funds run out. Otherwise, these leaders gradually fizzle out.»

External stakeholders were in a unique position to see potential pitfalls as well as potential growth. One commentator said, «Sustainability will depend on the leadership that is being developed. Is it going to be focused only on community outreach? How can the leadership take their action to another level with input from the community? In order to be sustainable, *Poder Popular* has to get involved in organizational

development along with leadership development. The organization does not have to be formal; it can be an association. But they need to learn how to run that organization, [and] how to be accountable for moving their issues forward.»

See Appendix 1 for results of the Web-based survey.



Chapter 8

Telling the Story Together: Evaluating *Poder Popular*

It takes at least two to tell the story of a grassroots process of empowerment: one to talk and one to listen. In this case, it was crucial to have the main actors talking, with evaluators listening, documenting, processing and offering feedback.

Contextual Factors

In evaluating any social program, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the contextual factors affecting participants' lives, as well as the social, political and economic factors affecting program implementation. This information was gathered through personal and collective interviews with program participants and other stakeholders.

Early in the process of evaluating this program, the evaluation team realized the difficulty of documenting and assessing the changes happening in the lives of people from 20 distinct communities throughout California. It was as interesting as it was challenging to involve the main actors in telling their story, building evidence not only about program implementation but also about its effects on people and communities.

The evaluation was complicated by the particular and changing circumstances of people's lives, especially the *promotores* and *comité* members, given the precariousness of their living conditions. The evaluation team thus tailored plans to the moment. As seen throughout this document, the story unfolded in different ways under various circumstances.

The Evaluation

The evaluation was long-term, taking place over three years, with two rounds of site visits per year to conduct interviews and gain an understanding of prevailing conditions in work

«Conversation ... is part of a journey to understand. Community conversations are a deliberate form of listening to the people in a community in an effort to learn to agree, to become committed and engaged, and to create a place in which discovering the obvious is possible.»

Paul Born

Conversations: Mobilizing the Ideas, Skills, and Passion of Community Organizations, Governments, Businesses, and People

«When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative; when the guests taste the soup, that's summative.»

Robert E. Stake

Evaluating Educational Programmes





places and communities. Between site visits, the evaluation team also reviewed agency progress reports and held regular conference calls with staff and *promotores*.

The evaluation was both formative and summative. Interim evaluation reports on problems and recommendations enabled appropriate attention to be directed to mid-course corrections, adaptation of the *Poder Popular* model, and appropriate technical assistance. By

sharing their experiences with the evaluation team, participants became more aware of their capacities and found ways to compensate for their shortcomings.

The summative evaluation included:

- Documenting the process (telling the story) and compiling the personal and collective steps that the various actors took
- Demonstrating the changes that took place among the main actors and communities (building the evidence)
- Identifying best practices and lessons learned



The focus of the evaluation was highly participatory and qualitative. Rather than designing and applying a series of closed questionnaires and conducting statistical analyses of participant responses, the evaluation team developed flexible, open-ended guides for interviewing small groups of people, from agency staff to key *promotores*, *comité* members and external stakeholders. Other methods were also mobilized to ensure open and frank participation, as described below.



Methods and Tools

Promotores and *comité* members were involved in telling the story as follows:

Individual and collective interviews.

A Photovoice workshop conducted with *promotores*.

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis carried out separately with agency staff and *promotores*.

A contest to which *comités* were invited to tell their story in any medium.

Below is a further description of the participatory methods mentioned above.

A. Interviews

During the first year of the project, the *promotores* were asked to prepare questions to interview each other, in order to further engage them in this assessment. All *promotores* participated actively in the exercise and were very motivated and engaged. This method allowed for deeper insights into differences between more experienced *promotores* and newer ones, as well as between sites.

Throughout the evaluation period, interviews were conducted with small groups of *promotores* and *comité* members. Instruments were designed with varying levels of complexity to enable everyone to participate, but also to foster reflection and insight into their own process.

B. Photovoice

Photovoice is a method used to enable people to conduct their own initial assessment of community problems and issues, in order to go on to develop action plans and projects. It involves initial guidance on the method itself, taking pictures, interviewing people and telling the story. The Photovoice method:

may be useful for developing flyers or exhibitions about the community's issues to help organize residents or engage external stakeholders

encourages analysis, because people need to explain the issues illustrated in the photos and why those issues are more important than others

is a useful way of evaluating grassroots efforts from the participants' own perspective

Promotores attended Photovoice workshops held in their communities. They were trained in photography and interviewing techniques, and each group received a digital camera and tape recorder.

⁵ Pictures were taken digitally by the people themselves, showing the main problems in the communities; others were selected from local newspapers.

Keys to Participatory Evaluation:

The evaluator fosters participant learning during the assessment process.

Evaluation is a facilitation process, not a value judgment.

The evaluator ensures that the evaluation is useful to participants.

The primary focus is on the participants as the main actors.

The workshops covered three main topics: **a)** defining the issues and people’s concerns; **b)** collecting and selecting the most significant pictures⁵ and preparing stories about them; and **c)** providing feedback to relevant stakeholders.

In *Poder Popular* communities, the pictures most chosen and therefore the most common issues discussed revolved around housing, lack of adequate facilities in the fields, pesticide exposure, labor conditions, women farmworkers, and child laborers.

In the *Poder Popular* experience, *promotores* thought the Photovoice would be an even stronger tool if supplemented with the information they obtained from the community surveys and interviews.

C. SWOT Analysis

The evaluation team experimented with the SWOT method, a technique that encourages in-depth analysis and can stimulate useful conversations about the present and future directions of an initiative. The SWOT analysis was first conducted with agency staff, and based on the initial success, it was replicated with *promotores* at each site and proved extremely fruitful.

It allowed staff and *promotores* to think critically about the factors – positive and negative – affecting *Poder Popular*’s success. It offered an opportunity to recognize and celebrate strengths and successes, while exploring ways to rectify internal weaknesses and external threats. The SWOT exercise also contributed to developing advocacy action plans later in the program.

The SWOT exercise served as an extremely useful tool from an evaluation perspective as well. By encouraging analysis and frank dialogue on the part of program participants, it offered numerous insights into the internal workings of the program at each site, as well as lessons learned about factors affecting program success, information that would have been much more difficult to gather via more traditional data collection methods.

The following is a synthesis of the issues most commonly discussed by *promotores* during the SWOT analyses:

Strengths (INTERNAL)

A united team that is determined to overcome fear and maintain confidence

Having the will to fight

Values: unity, love, self-esteem, communication, information, and courage

Support from organizations

Support from family (partner/husband)

Having the power or strength to work with others

Persistence in believing that change is possible

Promotores are members of the communities

Weaknesses (INTERNAL)

Fear due to a lack of information

Believing that we don't have the power to act

Believing that "it won't happen to me" (individualism)

Desperation due to lack of jobs

Gender issues: non-acceptance of women in leadership positions, related to the belief that they belong in the kitchen; lack of day care; feeling guilty about not spending enough time with family; depression

Large geographic areas, with few *promotores* to cover them

Lack of time to do everything

Lack of financial incentives, which affects participation

Limited English skills

Opportunities (EXTERNAL)

The ability to conduct outreach in the fields, schools, labor centers

Support from city and county authorities

Involvement in school and municipal activities

Attending city council meetings, which provides opportunities to meet authorities

Knowing the limits of each institution, as well as the limits of their jurisdiction

Relationships with local agencies

Support from peers and community organizations

Support from some businesses and growers

Threats (EXTERNAL)

Immigration raids

Residents' fear of speaking out, especially if they are not documented

Apathy: disillusionment of people who have little confidence in the possibility of change

Limited support or recognition from authorities in some areas

Violence (domestic and community)

Lack of information, and disinformation in the news

Self-exclusion of Latino/a community members from public meetings

Discrimination at work and sometimes by the police

Lack of security (gangs, drugs)

D. “Telling the Story”: A Contest

Another way to obtain a structured narrative of the *Poder Popular* experience and to gauge the level of appropriation by *promotores* and *comité* members was through a contest.

The invitation to the contest suggested telling the *comité*'s story using any medium (including skits, interviews, PowerPoint presentations, videos, stories, poems, songs or other media). The aim was to produce something they could use in the future to attract more residents to the *comité*, to demonstrate their achievements, to obtain support from other agencies, and to create a testimony of the victories and struggles in their communities.

All the entries showed a high level of creativity as well as understanding and commitment to *Poder Popular* principles and goals. The work involved in preparing an entry also contributed to the cohesion and consolidation of the *comités*.

Challenges to Participatory Evaluation

Participant turnover: In several sites, staff members within the agencies changed over time, some of them followed by *promotores* who were already trained. Participatory evaluations need to consider this factor in designing instruments and methods.

Gender: Gender awareness should have been part of the evaluation process, as a means of encouraging the active participation of women in the evaluation. That component would help ensure sensitivity to any positive and negative impacts that *Poder Popular* might exert on their lives as women, such as increased violence in private or public spaces; overload from too many responsibilities at home, at work and in the community; or attempts by husbands or other family members to discourage women from participating.

Specificity of the population: Immigration policy, fear of deportation and fear of job loss prevent farmworkers from speaking out or participating in public, including evaluation sessions. Long work hours followed by unemployment and the need to look for work in other places make participation and continuity difficult.

Ethics: Confidentiality needs to be respected when requested by participants and when topics are especially sensitive.

Systematization: A qualitative and participatory evaluation must move beyond the anecdotal or individual experience of participants in order to ascertain real levels of change. The *Poder Popular* evaluation analyzed emerging patterns in participant interviews and tested preliminary findings in other sites, in subsequent visits, and with complementary methods. Indicators need to be developed or drawn from similar experiences, to structure or systematize findings (see «Indicators» below).

Indicators: Collecting the Evidence of Change

Because of the qualitative nature of the evaluation, evidence of change had to be developed through indicators unique to this initiative. In addition to final outcomes to date of policy and systems change for healthier communities, the evaluation tracked intermediate outcomes, including individual and collective empowerment, because these are essential stepping stones in the process of organizing and advocating for change at a community level.

The following chart present a synthesis of key indicators supporting the evidence of change in the lives of the people and communities associated with *Poder Popular*.

LEVELS OF CHANGE (PROGRAM GOALS)	EVIDENCE OF CHANGE (PROCESS AND IMPACT INDICATORS)
<p>INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT</p>	<p>Extent of change in negotiating capacity gained by <i>promotoras</i> and female <i>comité</i> members in their own homes (gender equity, respect).</p> <p>Extent of change in credibility and confidence gained by <i>promotores</i> and <i>comité</i> members with regard to the rest of the community.</p> <p>Extent of change in life skills acquired by <i>promotores</i> and their families (formal and non-formal education).</p> <p>Extent of change in <i>promotores</i>' skills, allowing them to develop and exercise their leadership at different levels (including outreach capacity, advocating, networking, and other criteria).</p>
<p>COLLECTIVE EMPOWERMENT</p>	<p>Extent of change in <i>promotores</i>' vision about their own rights as residents, farmworkers, and other aspects of their lives.</p> <p>Extent of change in understanding the roles played by public representatives, authorities, and policy makers in relation to community members.</p> <p>Extent of change in understanding how political decisions are made and how changes are achieved.</p> <p>Number and type of advocacy events organized by staff and <i>promotores</i> and <i>comités</i>.</p> <p>Number and type of advocacy events organized or conducted solely by <i>promotores</i> and <i>comités</i>.</p> <p>Number and type of successes identified by <i>promotores</i> and <i>comités</i>.</p>
<p>COMMUNICATION INFORMATION</p>	<p>Number and type of events organized for <i>promotores</i> or <i>comités</i> in the current year.</p> <p>Type of information delivered to residents by <i>promotores</i> or <i>comités</i>. Flow of information between residents about core issues affecting farmworkers in the area.</p> <p>Type of communication between “the main actors in play”: collaborative agencies, <i>promotores</i>, <i>comité</i> members.</p> <p>Amount and type of public discussion on the issues that are affecting organized residents (e.g., by means of radio, local news, handouts and other media).</p>

**SUSTAINABILITY
(STRUCTURES IN PLACE)**

Total number of *comité* members in each community.
Change in *promotores*' role in the *comité* (leader, active member, passive member, support, community outreach, and other variable factors).

Change in residents' attendance at meetings organized by *comités*.

Level of partnership with the media, by type: occasional, periodic and formal.

Comité members' participation in public forums (type and frequency).

**SUSTAINABILITY
(NETWORKS AND
ALLIANCES DEVELOPED)**

Comité members reaching out to other institutions or organizations to find allies in promoting migrant rights (no discriminative practices) in any area of interest (number and types of contacts).

Number and types of alliances developed by *promotores* and *comité* members (with partners or stakeholders) in order to resolve an issue or issues affecting them.

Extent of change in *promotoras*' ability to negotiate (with authorities, policy makers, landlords or service providers) in any area of interest.

Public dialogue established (on agenda) with the local/regional authorities in any area of interest.

**SUSTAINABILITY
(POLICY CHANGE)**

Public positions held by *promotores*, *líderes* or other organized residents.

Lobbying with policy makers to promote human rights for migrants (formal/regular, informal/occasional lobbying).

OUTCOMES BY LEVELS OF CHANGE

The following chart presents indicators and specific outcomes achieved in the various Poder Popular communities.

LEVELS OF CHANGE	TYPES OF OUTCOMES	SPECIFIC OUTCOMES
POLICY OR SYSTEMS CHANGE	<p>Promotores and comités positioned to advocate</p>	<p><i>Comité members met with their state assembly members to advocate for hearings associated with the Agricultural Vision process (Ventura and most Poder Popular sites).</i></p> <p><i>A promotora from Merced is the first Latina to hold a position on the Municipal Advisory Council.</i></p> <p><i>Three promotores in Sonoma and Healdsburg currently hold positions on the boards of local nonprofit institutions (La Luz Center and Clínica Alianza, respectively).</i></p>
	<p>Promotores understand and exercise their rights</p>	<p><i>Most promotores and comités have learned to navigate the public and nonprofit systems to address community needs (e.g., advocating for stop signs and streetlights, bus services and routes, new mailboxes, clean bathrooms, sidewalks, and other improvements).</i></p> <p><i>Farmworkers (Kern) ran for local office on water and school boards.</i></p> <p><i>Trailer park owners have entered into discussions and negotiations with the Coachella comité about improving housing conditions. Living conditions have improved in several trailer parks, as a result of these efforts.</i></p> <p><i>With support from the Planada comité, farmworkers from Camp 12 succeeded in keeping their homes (the camp was about to be closed by the authorities) and also negotiated the establishment of a day care center.</i></p>
	<p>Services, financial or in-kind resources obtained from the city or other organizations</p>	<p><i>The comité members in Merced negotiated with the school board to prevent the suspension of bus services for children K-8.</i></p> <p><i>Trailer park residents in Coachella have prevented a dirty park from closing, by cleaning up the streets where they are living.</i></p> <p><i>Poder Popular has drawn the attention of schools, clinics, Red Cross, churches and other institutions and organizations in underserved areas, as these groups realized the significant presence of farmworkers; a health group opened a clinic, and a church-based group began providing support to victims of domestic violence (Ventura, Merced, and San Diego).</i></p> <p><i>Issues of public safety have been ushered by promotores in San Diego, with a critical awareness of disparities in areas such as lighting and safety, by means of their participation in the local community redevelopment plan process. They are working to improve access to health services.</i></p> <p><i>As a result of Poder Popular, health services have become more accessible in Coachella and Ventura. New clinics have been constructed, fees for farmworkers have been reduced, and special services are available for diabetic patients.</i></p>

LEVELS OF CHANGE

TYPES OF OUTCOMES

SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Partnerships established with city, county and other authorities

Assemblyman Juan Arambula presented the 2008 Hispanic Heritage Award to the **Mendota** comité for its community work.

The **San Joaquin** comité gained the establishment of a weekly flea market (remate), to bring fresh and inexpensive products to town. This has increased access to healthy food, reduced transportation costs associated with shopping in other towns, and provided a form of healthy entertainment for local families.

The **Firebaugh** and **Mendota** comités successfully negotiated with local authorities for the establishment of community gardens, in order to have fresh produce on hand and raise some money as well.

The **St. Helena, Sonoma, Coachella** and **San Diego** comités successfully organized, in combination with the Mexican Consulate, a day of consular services for their respective communities, gaining strong recognition from both sides. Poder Popular has become an integral partner to Mexican Consulates in organizing this function each year.

Promotores and comités have knowledge of, and access to, local and regional authorities

Farmworkers and other residents are now represented at city council and municipal advisory committee meetings (**Ventura, Fresno, Merced, Healdsburg**).

Farmworkers and other residents are providing feedback on city strategic plans and community redevelopment plans (**San Diego, Fresno**).

As a result of Poder Popular, farmworkers' emergency preparedness is now an issue that national organizations (Red Cross) and county authorities (**San Diego**) have taken under discussion.

Farmworkers (**Kern**) were successful in collaborating on a local tax-increase measure that would increase funds for public safety (including sidewalks, lighting, and fire and police protection).

The **St. Helena** comité negotiated with the city for the removal of trees that were causing or exacerbating asthma and other respiratory diseases.

Trailer park residents have prevented a dirty park from closing, by cleaning up the neighboring streets (**Coachella**).

Poder Popular farmworkers are working on broad issues like public safety and on specific issues such as HIV/AIDS and access to health services (**San Diego**).

LEVELS OF CHANGE	TYPES OF OUTCOMES	SPECIFIC OUTCOMES
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ALLIANCES

Collaborations or alliances developed with other groups and organizations

Comité members have developed their own relationships with stakeholders and they have collaborated with key community players and with community organizations to advocate for their needs, and collaborate on solutions by means of networking with others.

*The Comité General (**Kern**) presents a forum for líderes, organizations, residents, and community members to provide updates and speak to community issues. Comités within a region have united. For example, the Concilio Regional de Vivienda addresses housing issues through education and advocacy (**Coachella**).*

*The Farmworker CARE Coalition in San Diego has provided a forum for new organizations to the coalition to learn about and collaborate with comités and with Poder Popular (**San Diego**).*

*The program has gained easy access to the news media (**Coachella, Merced** and other regions).*

Afterword

In three short years, the *Poder Popular Promotores Comunitarios de Salud* strategy has made impressive strides in promoting improved health for agricultural workers and other residents of rural communities. Through a network, 250 community-based *promotores* have organized approximately 20 resident-led *comités* to identify the root causes of poor health in their communities and advocate for policy and systems changes to rectify those inadequacies.

Poder Popular has tapped into a deep wellspring of desire on the part of community members to take control over their lives and come out of the shadows to make their voices heard. Despite a short time frame and the enormity of organizing a largely undocumented immigrant populace with low English proficiency, this effort has achieved many successes. At a personal level, *Poder Popular* has increased the self-esteem of many participating *promotores* and *comité* members, and in several cases has given them opportunities to seek more formal and better-paying employment and/or to continue their studies. Many women have reported improved conditions in their relationship with their husband or partner. Of additional significance is the fact that parents participating in this effort are serving as role models for civic engagement, thereby benefiting their children by encouraging them to develop into engaged citizens.

The initiative has faced significant hurdles as well. The evaluation findings reveal numerous lessons learned, including the importance of explicit description of the nature of organizing efforts such as this; a longer time frame for implementation; linking asset-mapping and needs assessment activities more closely to advocacy action plans; the need for good communication and organic partnerships; flexibility in adapting this model to different community contexts; and technical assistance, and the voluntary nature of utilizing technical assistance — particularly for groups with little prior community organizing experience.

Poder Popular continues its activities several months after initial grant funding has ended. Nearly all sites have obtained additional funding to continue their efforts, and staff and *promotores* have expressed a determination to perpetuate this program; some agencies will mainstream it into their operations, while others plan to create and staff a new area in their organization. Whether *Poder Popular* will evolve into a statewide movement of agricultural workers remains to be seen. While some *comités* clearly identify with *Poder Popular* as a broad statewide movement, other groups remain localized, with their own identity. Despite these differences, *Poder Popular* has increased awareness of the root causes of poor health and has developed a nascent cadre of organized and engaged community residents who are willing to stand up and make their voices heard for change. The future of these groups is heavily dependent on their own organizational development and consolidation, particularly in the sense of becoming accountable to their communities for moving their agendas forward.

Based on the evaluation findings, the replication of this model in other immigrant and low-income communities in both rural and urban areas likely would result in improved community health and more engaged and empowered communities.

Appendix 1

Highlights of Stakeholder Survey

A brief Internet-based survey was sent to over 100 local stakeholders who are familiar with *Poder Popular* in the various *Poder Popular* sites. The survey was intended to gauge stakeholder perceptions of *Poder Popular* in general, its effectiveness in specific areas, its main impacts, obstacles, factors contributing to its success and recommendations for increasing *Poder Popular*'s effectiveness. Names of stakeholders were furnished by *Poder Popular* grantees and *promotores* in each region, who were asked to compose a group balanced in various components, including public-sector agencies; partner agencies (e.g., health care providers and social service providers); the private sector; news media; representatives of groups with which *Poder Popular* had collaborated in advocacy activities; and representatives of groups that *Poder Popular* had helped or supported, including individuals who do not support the activities. This section presents preliminary findings based on 33 responses received.

As Table 1 indicates, *Poder Popular* enjoys wide support among the survey respondents, with nearly 90 percent in complete support of *Poder Popular*'s efforts in their community.

Table 1
Support for *Poder Popular*

To what extent do you support *Poder Popular*'s efforts in your community?

Answer Options	Percentage of Responses	Number of Responses
Completely	87%	26
Somewhat	7%	2
Not at all	7%	2
Total	100%	30

As seen in Table 2, the areas in which *Poder Popular* is seen as most effective are community organizing/civic engagement and public speaking, which around 63 percent of respondents ranked as very effective, followed by supporting public efforts. These findings are impressive, given the limited experience most *Poder Popular* *promotores* and *comité* members had in these areas prior to participating in this initiative.

As Table 3 indicates, two thirds of respondents rate *Poder Popular*'s overall impact on their community as "high". One respondent from Kern County (representing 3 percent of respondents) believes that *Poder Popular* has had no impact on the community.

Table 2
Poder Popular's Effectiveness

How would you rate *Poder Popular's* effectiveness in the following areas?

Answer Options	Very Effective		Somewhat Effective		Ineffective		Not Sure		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
Public speaking	18	62%	7	24%	2	7%	2	7%	29
Community organizing/ civic engagement	19	63%	9	30%	2	7%	0	0%	30
Community education	17	59%	8	28%	3	10%	1	3%	29
Working with partner agencies	15	50%	13	43%	1	3%	1	3%	30
Supporting public efforts	15	54%	10	36%	2	7%	1	3%	28

Table 3
Poder Popular's Impact

How would you rate *Poder Popular's* overall impact on your community?

Answer Options	Percentage of Responses	Number of Responses
High impact	63%	19
Medium impact	20%	6
Low impact	13%	4
No impact	3%	1
Total	100%	30

Table 4 shows that stakeholders believe that *Poder Popular* achieved its main impact on their community in increased community awareness of how to advocate for change, followed by greater engagement on the part of residents in political processes affecting them. Increased collaboration between agencies was ranked lower than other impacts.

Other impacts cited by stakeholders include:

- Increased communication between residents and city officials and staff (together, important information has been disseminated and explained to our residents)

- Beautification of the city

- Increased community pride.

Table 4

***Poder Popular's* Main Impact**

What do you consider *Poder Popular's* main impacts?

Answer Options	Percentage of Responses	Number of Responses
Community members are more aware of how to advocate for change	82%	23
Residents are more engaged in processes affecting them	46%	20
Residents are more confident about expressing needs to decision-makers	68%	19
Increased community awareness of issues affecting farmworkers and immigrants	71%	20
Increased collaboration or coordination between agencies	61%	17
Authorities are more aware of community needs	79%	22
Other (please specify)	11%	3

Table 5 indicates that 85 percent of respondents believe *Poder Popular* has “a place at the table” in some way as an agent of change in their communities, while 15 percent do not feel that is the case at all.

Table 5

***Poder Popular's* Role in the Community**

Do you think *Poder Popular* has a “place at the table” as an agent of change in your community?

Answer Options	Percentage of Responses	Number of Responses
Definitely	74%	20
Somewhat	11%	3
Not really	15%	4

The respondents provided a range of comments in response to the question “What do you consider are the main factors contributing to *Poder Popular's* success?” Key themes emerging from these responses include the trust and rapport *Poder Popular* has engendered with community members based on their status as community members themselves; empowerment of residents; positive communication; and team effort.

In response to the question “What do you consider the main factors limiting *Poder Popular*’s success?” respondents cited limited resources, such as funding and time; language barriers; anti-immigrant sentiment; and limited support from local authorities in some areas.

Two-thirds of the respondents provided general comments and recommendations regarding *Poder Popular*. These comments indicate an extremely high level of regard for *Poder Popular* and its efforts, along with a deep understanding of the program and its impacts.

Key recommendations include: expanding this model to other low-income communities, including Southeast Asians, Punjabis and African-Americans; greater involvement of youth and teens; partnerships with other programs to increase income-generating opportunities for community members; creation of databases of agencies and key people to call for information, assistance or collaborations; and increased outreach to and collaboration with the private sector.



Appendix 2

Participating Agencies

California Human Development Corporation

Catholic Charities

Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy

Desert Alliance for Community Empowerment

Dolores Huerta Foundation

Eastern Coachella Valley Social Change Collaborative

Golden Valley Health Centers

National Latino Research Center

Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project

Proteus Inc.

San Diego Farmworker CARE Coalition (Community Housing Works)

Santa Paula Family Resource Center

St. Joseph Health System

Vineyard Worker Services

Vista Community Clinic

Appendix 3

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