

Partnership for the Bay's Future

Challenge Grant: Cycle 2 Insights

The focus of Cycle 2, spanning the spring and fall of 2021, is to track sites' policy journeys and understand what practices, innovations, and partnerships had the greatest impact in moving policies forward. We learned that the policy journeys have been informed by each other's progress, enabling them to build on the lessons learned, leverage information, and refine their strategies. This collaborative approach across the cohort results in a more efficient learning curve. While each site is unique in its context and approach, their policy journey roughly tracks four distinct phases, often running concurrently:

- i. Stakeholder engagement:** Engagement with communities, primarily through CBOs, as well as stakeholders with opposing views.
- ii. Research & analysis:** Policy analysis and racial equity analysis.
- iii. Navigation & negotiation:** Engagement and negotiations with jurisdiction committees and legal departments.
- iv. Planning & implementation:** Planning for and implementing specific policies, which includes a close collaboration with government staff.

Site Policy Priority

Alameda: Anti-displacement policy package (tenant protection, code enforcement, rent stabilization)

Berkeley: TOPA; Preference Policy

East Palo Alto: Local preservation package (funding, CLT, ordinance)

Oakland: Racial equity impact analysis of housing programs

Palo Alto: Rental Protection Policy Package (nine policies)

Redwood City: Tenant Protection Ordinances, Unsubsidized affordable housing preservation

San Jose: COPA and tenant/nonprofit empowerment

CHALLENGE GRANT POLICY JOURNEYS BY PHASE

The following summaries are examples of the policy journeys taking place under the Challenge Grant. While the overall phases are similar, each site tailors its policy journey based on its policy priorities, prior community engagement, and political realities.

Berkeley

Preference Policy: Engaging a new partner, Healthy Black Families, with strong ties to the African-American community; community outreach and education, including two surveys; synthesizing community recommendations. TOPA: Engaging property owners; countering misinformation.

TOPA: Research funding sources. Preference policy: Legal research on policy provisions; demographic research and mapping to back up policy goals.

TOPA: Educating elected officials. Preference policy: Facilitate ongoing discussions with City Attorney's Office on innovative legal strategies.

TOPA: Preparing for implementation with draft materials for TOPA program

East Palo Alto

Community outreach, including focus groups, community input gathering and feedback sessions; education on Community Land Trusts (CLTs) and mobilization for city council meetings

Research and policy analysis, including other TOPA ordinances; gather insight from opposition; research best potential sources of city funding

Measure V campaign (for housing acquisition/rehabilitation funding); engaging City Council on funding for pilot preservation project

Agenda for City Council; successfully applied to additional grant funding

Palo Alto

Community outreach, educational events, webinars, renter resources

Research, local data collection, and policy analysis, including best practices in other jurisdictions

Presenting to city commissions (Planning and Transportation, and Human Relations); Initial discussions with city council and Housing Element Community Working Group

Develop workplan and strategy

Redwood City

Community outreach and education, including landlord engagement & workshops; website update

Research on CLT: developers, financial services; power mapping

Policy memo and city attorney feedback on Relocation Assistance Ordinance; Engagement of ad-hoc subcommittees of Housing and Human Concerns Committee

City support for Anti-Displacement Strategic Plan

A FOUNDATION OF COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

For many sites, a strong community engagement strategy is the foundation of their policy journey. With the pandemic forcing community engagement to be mostly virtual, there were some successes along with challenges. While many sites struggled during the initial transition to a digital setup, some sites were able to leverage technology to their advantage. San Jose found that the virtual setup allowed some people to participate because it was more convenient to connect remotely than attending an in-person meeting at City Hall in the evening.

While most sites were prepared to begin the community engagement process from the start of the grant, some sites, like Redwood City, found a benefit to doing research and data analysis first. The initial focus on policy research resulted in updates to their existing relocation assistance ordinance to ensure it was legally enforceable.

Because Challenge Grant jurisdictions are diverse and represent many different stakeholders, it is difficult to robustly engage a representative sample of communities impacted by sites' proposed policies. San Jose, for instance, has found it especially challenging to break down barriers across race/ethnicity and class, particularly with certain sectors that had been historically excluded from the policy development process. The core team has focused on engaging the Vietnamese community who, along with the Latinx and Black communities, are the most rent-burdened in the city. Perhaps anticipating challenges like this, Oakland and East Palo Alto entered the grant with collaboratives of organizations as their main CBO partner to reach a broad segment of their jurisdiction from the outset. Similarly, Berkeley and Palo Alto established new formal relationships with additional CBOs to expand the reach of their efforts.

Sites noted the need to engage landlord groups in this process. As Redwood City shared, they are aware that to move their policy priorities forward, they must also strategize ways to productively engage landlord and realtor groups if they want their policy to be successful.

Across all sites, the emphasis placed on generating robust and meaningful community engagement points to a need to carefully examine and understand the racial, economic, and power dynamics at play within their community. In addition to elevating the voices of those less heard, sites must also be cognizant of traditionally powerful groups in order to mitigate the potential roadblocks ahead.

ADDED CAPACITY CONTRIBUTES TO COMMUNITY-DRIVEN WORK

The structure of the core team—fellows, jurisdiction leads, and CBOs—continues to be a success of the Challenge Grant. The collaboration strengthens existing community-based partnerships with the city and forms new ones where they did not exist. Fellows also participate in meetings with elected officials and committees, which further allows the core team to hone its message and strategy. For CBOs, this partnership amplifies their presence with city officials and elevates community voices. As one jurisdiction lead puts it, “there's no way that we could have moved this work forward, period, if we didn't get [Fellow] on board and we didn't have this opportunity due to our resources and staffing”

“If you don't connect the issues to folks' everyday lives, we're not delivering the message effectively. So, I have no business talking about TOPA or COPA to a renter who doesn't even know if they'll get to stay in their home next month unless I'm making this connection.”

— CBO staff

“We were naïve that we could really focus on a tenant-focused process without anticipating how much we needed to engage the landlords in order to keep this from being an unsuccessful process.”

— Government staff

The Challenge Grant program will end in 2022. The Partnership for the Bay's Future will continue to iterate on this model of community-centered policy. For more information, visit baysfuture.org.