



Evaluation of the California Climate Investments Technical Assistance Program

Presented to the California Strategic Growth Council



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Technical assistance and capacity building have long been a priority strategy for the California Strategic Growth Council in increasing access to our funding programs. As this work evolved, we realized there increasingly is a need to focus on holistic community capacity building while also identifying structural barriers within our programs and greater State operations. In January 2022, SGC strengthened our commitment to this priority, passing a resolution to advance and integrate capacity building across the initiatives of our member agencies.

The release of these findings could not be timelier as SGC embarks on this commitment to enhance and expand the support provided to under-resourced communities and California Native American Tribes in accessing funds and implementing key policy initiatives. This report describes the strengths of the California Climate Investments Technical Assistance Program that we will continue to build upon, as well as provides actionable recommendations to improve technical assistance provisions. While this evaluation focused on the CCI TA Program, the lessons learned from this effort can inform technical assistance, capacity building, and removal of structural barriers across many State programs and initiatives.

It is with heartfelt appreciation that I thank our evaluation team for their work. I look forward to using these findings with my staff and our State agency partners to more effectively create the conditions that enable communities to benefit from State investments and achieve their equity and climate goals.

Sincerely,
Lynn von Koch-Liebert



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Executive Summary

California Climate Investments (CCI) is a statewide program that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment— particularly in under-resourced and low-income communities. The CCI Technical Assistance (CCI TA) Program helps under-resourced communities access these pivotal funds and implement projects to mitigate the effects of climate change. In 2020, Harder+Company Community Research partnered with the California Strategic Growth Council, a cabinet level interagency organization, to design and implement a statewide evaluation to assess if the CCI TA Program model is supporting the California Climate Investments program and the State’s equity goals. This report provides an overview of how the CCI TA Program model defines equity in the context of climate work, presents the logic model for creating sustained CCI TA Program impact, summarizes the evaluation findings, and provides actionable recommendations.

The report is organized by the following key evaluation findings:

Equitable TA provision requires adaptability and cultural competency.

- Adaptable TA providers with local knowledge are highly responsive to community needs.
- Cultural awareness fosters inclusivity in TA provision.
- Acknowledging TA Provider limitations saves time, resources, and leads to beneficial referrals.

Capacity building is a core driver of community change.

- Capacity building activities continue to benefit recipients beyond the application.
- TA provision is effective when the application process is broken down into manageable sections.
- GHG calculation support sets up TA recipients for success.

Community engagement sustains TA impacts beyond the application cycle.

- TA programs help sustain coordinated community action.
- TA recipients expressed satisfaction with local community-based organizations as TA providers.
- Integrating CBO engagement as early as possible in project design increases equity in the TA process.



Data-driven recommendations.

The report concludes with recommendations for using the CCI TA Program model as an approach for the State to reach its equity goals:

- Invest in subcontracted providers with local knowledge
- Increase number of TA providers with high levels of cultural awareness
- Expand TA supports for rural and Tribal communities
- Offer culturally appropriate materials and services
- Communicate systemic inequities identified during TA provision with State agencies to improve program engagement

Introduction

The California Strategic Growth Council’s (SGC) California Climate Investments Technical Assistance Program (CCI TA) was established in 2016 through an initial appropriation by the Legislature to provide technical assistance (TA) to applicants from under-resourced communities. This program was designed to provide access to California Climate Investments dollars to communities of color, low-income neighborhoods, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFRs) who are at a higher risk of harmful climate outcomes.

The evaluation provides a deeper understanding of CCI TA provision and the lived experiences of TA recipients and their communities to identify promising practices, areas for programmatic improvements, and recommendations for State level changes.



About this Report

In 2020, Harder+Company Community Research (Harder+Company) partnered with the SGC to design and implement a statewide evaluation of the CCI TA Program. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess if the CCI TA Program is structured and operating effectively to meet the California Climate Investment program and State equity goals—achieving racial equity in its operations, investments, and policy initiatives and to achieve its Vision for Racial Equity: *“All people in California live in healthy, thriving, and resilient communities regardless of race.”*

This report highlights key findings about TA efficacy and impacts related to social and racial equity, capacity building, and community engagement. Each chapter provides evidence for CCI TA Program strengths and opportunities for growth to meet its equity goals. Promising practices are included throughout as possible scaling opportunities for future CCI TA provision.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA CLIMATE INVESTMENTS PROGRAMS. California Climate Investments is a statewide program that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment— particularly in under-resourced and low-income communities. The Cap-and-Trade program also creates a financial incentive for industries to invest in clean technologies and develop innovative ways to reduce pollution. California Climate Investment projects provide affordable housing, renewable energy, public transportation, zero-emission vehicles, environmental restoration, sustainable agriculture, recycling, and much more. At least 35 percent of these investments are located within and benefit residents of under-resourced communities across California. For more information, including program Fact Sheets, a project map, and to sign up for the newsletter, please visit the [California Climate Investments website](#).



ABOUT THE CCI TA PROGRAM. The California Climate Investments Technical Assistance Program (CCI TA) supports communities in applying to the California Climate Investments (CCI) funding programs. Created in 2016, the program aims to level the playing field for applicants that lack the capacity to successfully access these funds, particularly those located in the State’s most under-resourced communities. The California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) works alongside several State agencies that implement California Climate Investments programs to provide application assistance, implementation assistance, and capacity-building activities to eligible applicants, enabling them to positively impact their communities.

TA providers are responsible for providing technical and capacity building support to under-resourced, low-income, and Tribal communities who are interested in applying for California Climate Investments grant programs. Their goal is to facilitate successful applications that deliver meaningful benefits in these under-resourced communities. TA providers work alongside SGC staff to solicit interest in TA and provide support in selecting TA recipients. TA providers are third-party consultants with expertise in each CCI TA Program. They may be individuals or teams with subcontractors and often have lived experiences or deep knowledge of the experiences of people of color in under-resourced communities.

TA recipients are potential California Climate Investments applicants from under-resourced, low-income, and Tribal Communities. These may include individuals from local governments, community-based organizations, or private businesses (housing developers, planning consultants, agriculture industry).

This evaluation focused on the experience of TA recipients for the following CCI TA programs:

- Build, Organize, Optimize, Strengthen, and Transform (BOOST)
- Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC)
- Climate Smart Agriculture
- Transformative Climate Communities (TCC)
- Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC)
- Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP)
- Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP)



Evaluation

Harder+Company designed the evaluation of the CCI TA Program to assess its efficacy and impact, and to provide recommendations that help ensure future iterations of the program model are equitably designed and implemented. This evaluation is in service of equity by applying culturally appropriate and valid methods, as well as using analytical approaches that reveal structural and systems-level drivers of inequities. To capture lessons learned from this evaluation, a mixed-methods approach was used to gather and analyze a variety of quantitative and qualitative data sources. The analytical approach allowed the evaluation team to examine early indicators of success driven by promising practices.

Harder+Company partnered with ChangeLab Solutions as a subcontractor for the evaluation of CCI TA Program. ChangeLab Solutions contributed substantial knowledge of climate policy and helped ensure draft materials aligned with the Strategic Growth Council’s stated climate goals. Further, to help ensure the evaluation produced relevant, actionable findings, Harder+Company assembled support from an evaluation advisory committee and key SGC staff. These entities provided feedback on draft data collection tools and reports and participated in learning sessions at key junctures during the evaluation.



Equity in the context of this evaluation design

This evaluation showcases evidence of equitable processes and outcomes. TA providers’ ability to include one measure of equity is not sufficient to demonstrate fair programming. Therefore, the evaluation assessed equity by compiling as many relevant process and outcome measures as possible.

- **An equitable process** prioritizes the provision of TA services to the most under-resourced communities in the State (e.g., developing thoughtful and easy-to use outreach materials in multiple languages, or hosting tailored TA sessions with local community advocates).
- **An equitable outcome** refers to the alleviation or mediation of some of the resulting harms associated with environmental and social injustices (e.g., successful grant applications and evidence of continued capacity building beyond the grant cycle for all California communities disproportionately impacted by climate change).

EQUITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CCI TA PROGRAM. “Some communities and individuals have suffered from historic injustices and continue to carry disproportionate burdens that others do not. Communities of color, low-income communities, Tribes, and communities that have experienced disproportionate environmental burdens do not benefit from the same opportunities as more privileged communities. As a result, they experience additional barriers to applying for State funding, which often keep the communities that most need funding in a vicious cycle of resource scarcity. Equity is distinct from equality in that it does not seek to offer the same services to everyone, but instead prioritizes the most under-resourced and disadvantaged communities in the state. By ensuring that equity is central to TA and capacity building efforts, the State gives under-resourced communities a fairer chance to compete for funds or to implement policies that not only benefit their residents, but also contribute to statewide goals.”

Source: <https://sgc.ca.gov/programs/cace/resources/guidelines/>

CALIFORNIA CLIMATE INVESTMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL. To facilitate SGC’s CCI TA program planning, implementation, management, evaluation, and reporting, a logic model was developed as part of this evaluation. This logic model serves as a representation of the relationship between the CCI TA program’s resources, activities, and intended effects. In this model, equity is the focus as a process and outcome for eliminating the climate disparities in California’s most vulnerable communities. The CCI TA Program is intended for a broad range of assistance efforts to increase the capacity of applicants in disadvantaged communities to successfully compete for California Climate Investment program funds.

Challenges

- Communities of color and low-income areas are disproportionately impacted by climate impacts and other environmental hazards.
- Under-resourced communities’ (URC) access to funding, institutions, and infrastructure is limited due to historic and ongoing inequities in investment and planning processes.

Target Populations

- Potential California Climate Investments Program applicants and community members
- Community partners
- TA providers
- State agency partners

Strategies and Activities



Capacity Building

- Outreach
- Partnership development
- Project design
- Community engagement

Application Assistance

- Grant writing
- Mapping
- Greenhouse gas quantification
- Application review

Implementation Assistance

- Project management
- Community engagement
- Reporting

Impact Assessment

- Data collection
- Mapping

Outcomes



Short Term

- Increased knowledge of state funding opportunities in under-resourced communities
- Increased California Climate Investment applications from URC
- Higher quality California Climate Investment applications from URC
- Increased community engagement on California Climate Investment projects
- Increased local and regional collaboration

Medium Term

- Increased investment in under-resourced communities
- Greater capacity in under-resourced communities to apply for state grants
- Greater capacity in under-resourced communities to employ community climate mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency strategies
- Long-standing partnership between public agencies and stakeholders
- Increased collaboration and decreased silos within public agencies

Long-Term Impact

Increased ability and equity across California communities in accessing resources to plan for and create healthy and sustainable communities

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Semi-structured interviews (n=27) conducted with TA providers and recipients elicited general trends in their perceptions about capacity building supports, community engagement, impact, sustainability, and experiences with TA provision. Semi-structured interviews were analyzed using both deductive and inductive thematic content analysis.



CalEnviroScreen (CES) 4.0¹ provided geographic information system (GIS) data that the evaluation team used to establish a base map of disadvantaged communities according to CES and low-income communities according to AB 1550. Administrative TA recipient location data was then overlaid onto the CES base map. Additional maps were created utilizing the percentile of linguistic isolation, population density, and race/ethnicity that make up a majority of the region.



Statewide TA Recipient Survey (n=84 recipients representing 72 organizations): In June 2021, the evaluation team distributed an electronic survey to over 200 TA recipient organizations to capture data on TA recipient characteristics, recipient populations, strategies and services offered by TA providers, and pressing capacity building and application assistance needs of recipient organizations.

Analysis of Survey Data. In recognition of the importance of TA as an approach to help reach equitable outcomes, the valuation analysis ensured the assessment of equitable practices in the TA process and outcomes. There is no one single indicator to measure effectiveness or systems-level change, therefore the analysis used several proxy indicators. Quantitative analyses elevated the following indicators to measure progress towards creating a more equitable TA provision to effectively support TA recipients and their communities. Indicators are measured on a 1-to-4-point scale where higher scores indicate higher satisfaction or stronger agreement.



Satisfaction with the quality of TA

1

4



TA facilitated collaborative opportunities

1

4



Recipient capacity changes due to TA

1

4



Satisfaction of TA provider knowledge

1

4



Promoting change and advancement

1

4

¹ CalEnviroScreen 4.0. Oehha.ca.gov. (2021). Retrieved February 11, 2022 from <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen-40>.

Equitable TA Provision Requires Cultural Competency

This section presents a data-driven examination of equity in TA provision process and outcomes as measured by the number of successful grant applications.

California is home to many different communities and geographic areas that present their own unique history, assets, and challenges. Given this complexity, it is critical to understand that some communities have suffered from historic injustices and continue to carry disproportionate burdens. As defined in the introduction, an equitable process prioritizes the provision of their services to the most under-resourced in the State. In comparison, an equitable outcome refers to the alleviation or mediation of some of the resulting impacts associated with environmental and social injustices. While receiving TA does not guarantee a funding award, the CCI TA program provides a useful tool that increases the likelihood of the applicant's success by making grant programs more accessible to communities that lack the resources and capacity needed to engage in complex funding processes.

ADAPTABLE TA PROVIDERS WITH LOCAL KNOWLEDGE ARE HIGHLY RESPONSIVE TO COMMUNITY NEEDS.

Tailored TA is a crucial component of an equitable process, and most TA recipients reported high levels of satisfaction with TA provider knowledge and awareness of the community's needs. For example, one TA recipient noted benefiting from working with a TA provider who has personal experience with the climate injustices in their community. While TA providers' prior knowledge of the community is a key resource for creating an equitable TA process, it might not always be possible to match TA providers and recipients in this way. Yet in cases where TA providers lacked this contextual knowledge, TA recipients still acknowledged the value of an adaptable TA provider who was willing to put in the extra effort to build their knowledge of the community's needs. The majority of surveyed TA recipients reported being highly satisfied with the knowledge of their TA providers.

"Our TA provider understood [our needs] very well because they're not new to [the region].

They have been assisting us in this area for years. I definitely think it was equitable [because] they understood the needs."

– TA Recipient



Satisfaction of TA provider knowledge



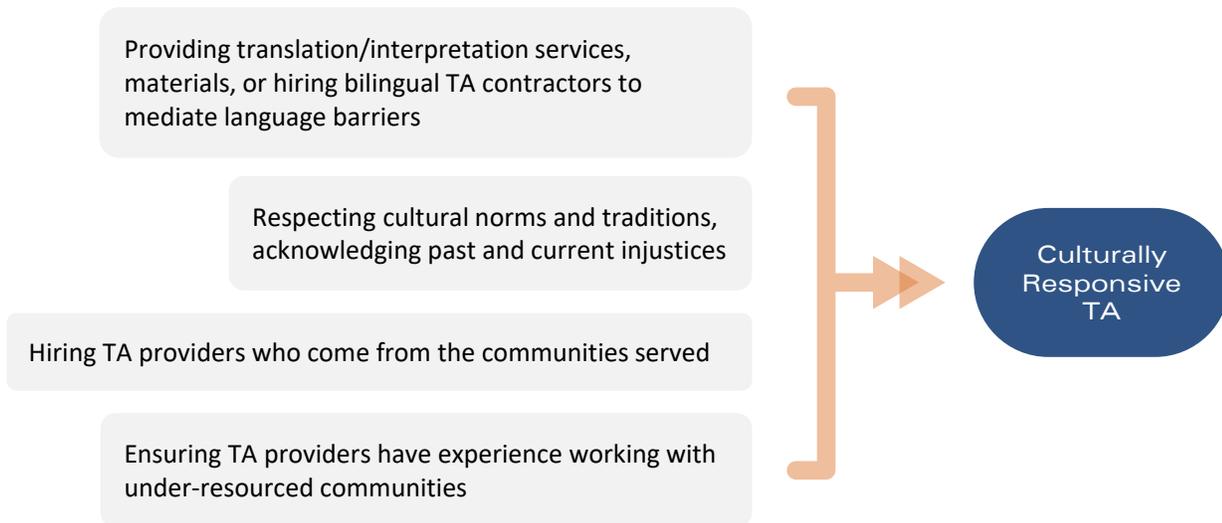
Indicator Score - **3.9**

Build, Organize, Optimize, Strengthen, and Transform (BOOST) and Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) emerged as the highest scoring programs with a mean item score of 4.0 each



of surveyed TA recipients reported very high satisfaction with their TA provider's knowledge of challenges in their region

CULTURAL AWARENESS FOSTERS INCLUSIVITY IN TA PROVISION. Beyond having knowledge of the community and their needs, it is important that TA providers offer culturally responsive services. An equitable process rejects a one-size-fits-all approach, and instead encourages TA providers to elevate the unique strengths of the recipient’s community and adapt their services accordingly. This may include:

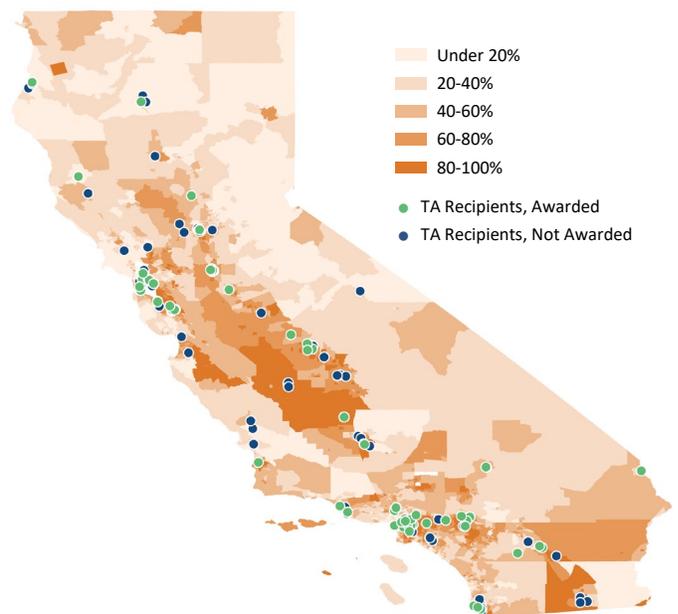


76% of surveyed TA recipients reported very high satisfaction with their TA provider’s cultural competency



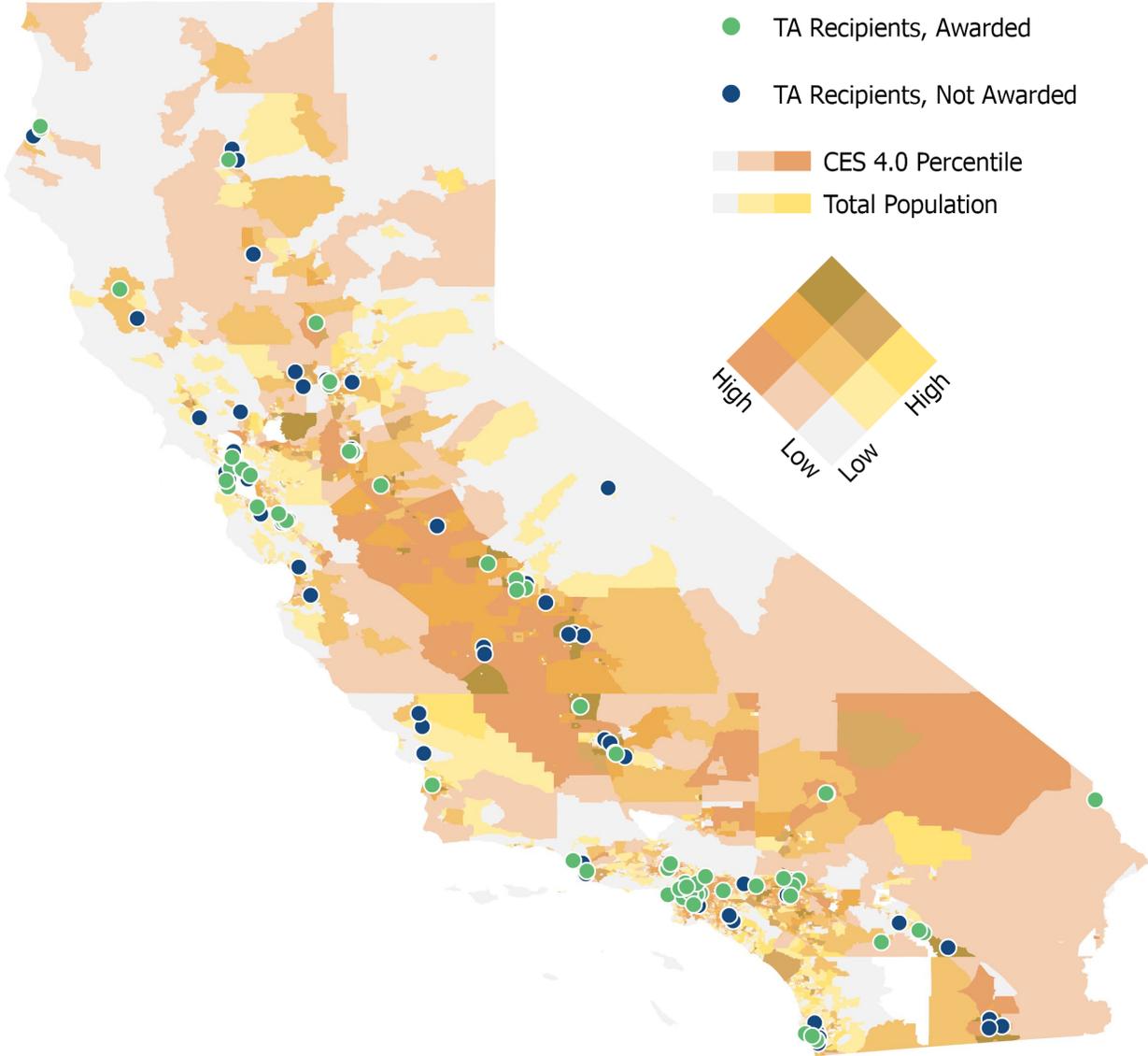
Distribution of TA provision helps close the equity gaps. Exhibit 1 shows that TA recipients are generally located in areas that have a high proportion of people of color, demonstrating evidence of equitable outreach.

Exhibit 1. Percent People of Color



A comparison of population density and CES scores across the State reveals that many communities with the highest needs are not adequately represented among TA recipients. While under-resourced communities deemed to have the highest need in CA are prioritized for TA in the CCI TA program, evidence from Exhibit 2 shows that many communities with the highest need, as measured by CES scores, have received the least amount of TA. In the cases where these communities do receive TA, it is often the case that they are not awarded funding. This gap is likely due to a lack of TA applicants from these areas, which could be a result of capacity limitations or a need for increased outreach and awareness of the CCI TA program.

Exhibit 2. CES 4.0 Percentile by Total Population



² University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2021). County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/california/2021/rankings/outcomes/overall>

TA provision reaches several under-resourced communities across of the State, but more work is needed to support rural communities. As shown in Exhibits 3 and 4, CCI TA successfully reaches under-resourced and disadvantaged communities by awarding TA to communities in priority populations, as identified by high CES scores. TA recipients who were awarded grants are most concentrated in urban settings, such as the Bay Area and Los Angeles County. TA recipients who were not awarded grants are similarly concentrated in urban settings, which highlights the competitiveness of California Climate Investments Programs in these areas. These results also suggest that rural communities continue to be overlooked and left behind. More outreach and engagement is likely needed to close the TA gap for communities with the highest CES scores.

Exhibit 3. CES 4.0 Percentile (TA Recipients Awarded)

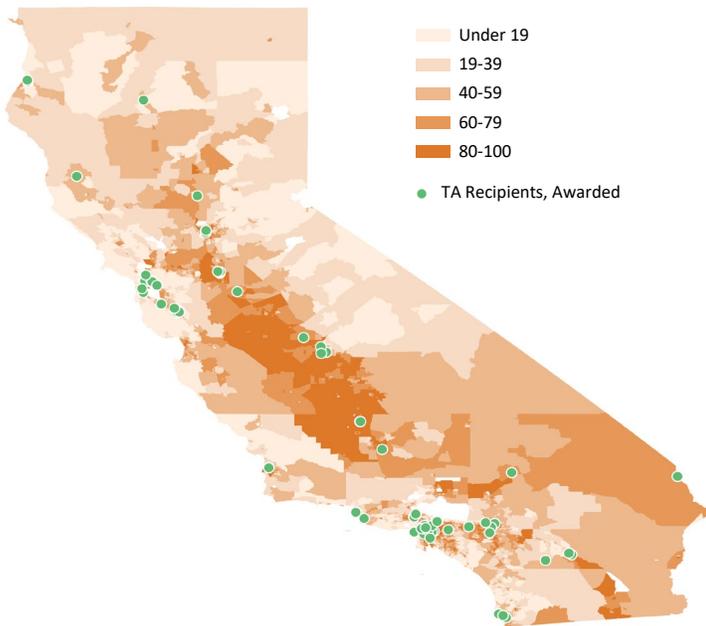
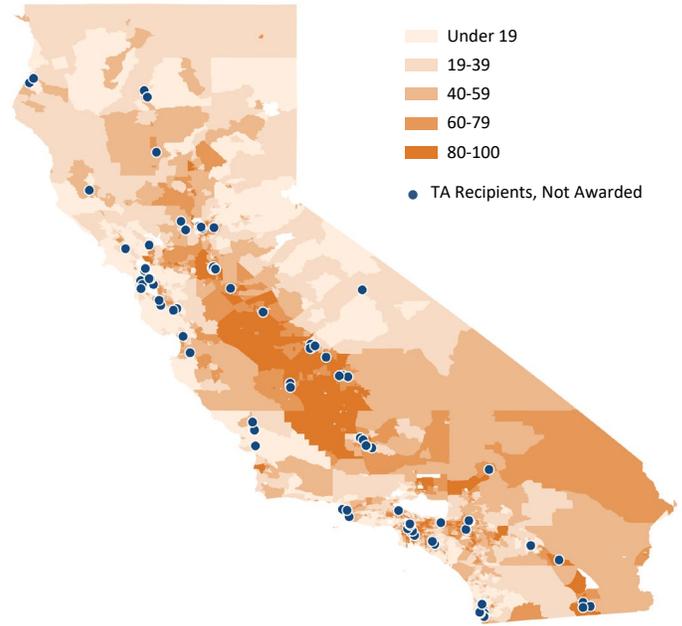


Exhibit 4. CES 4.0 Percentile (TA Recipients Not Awarded)

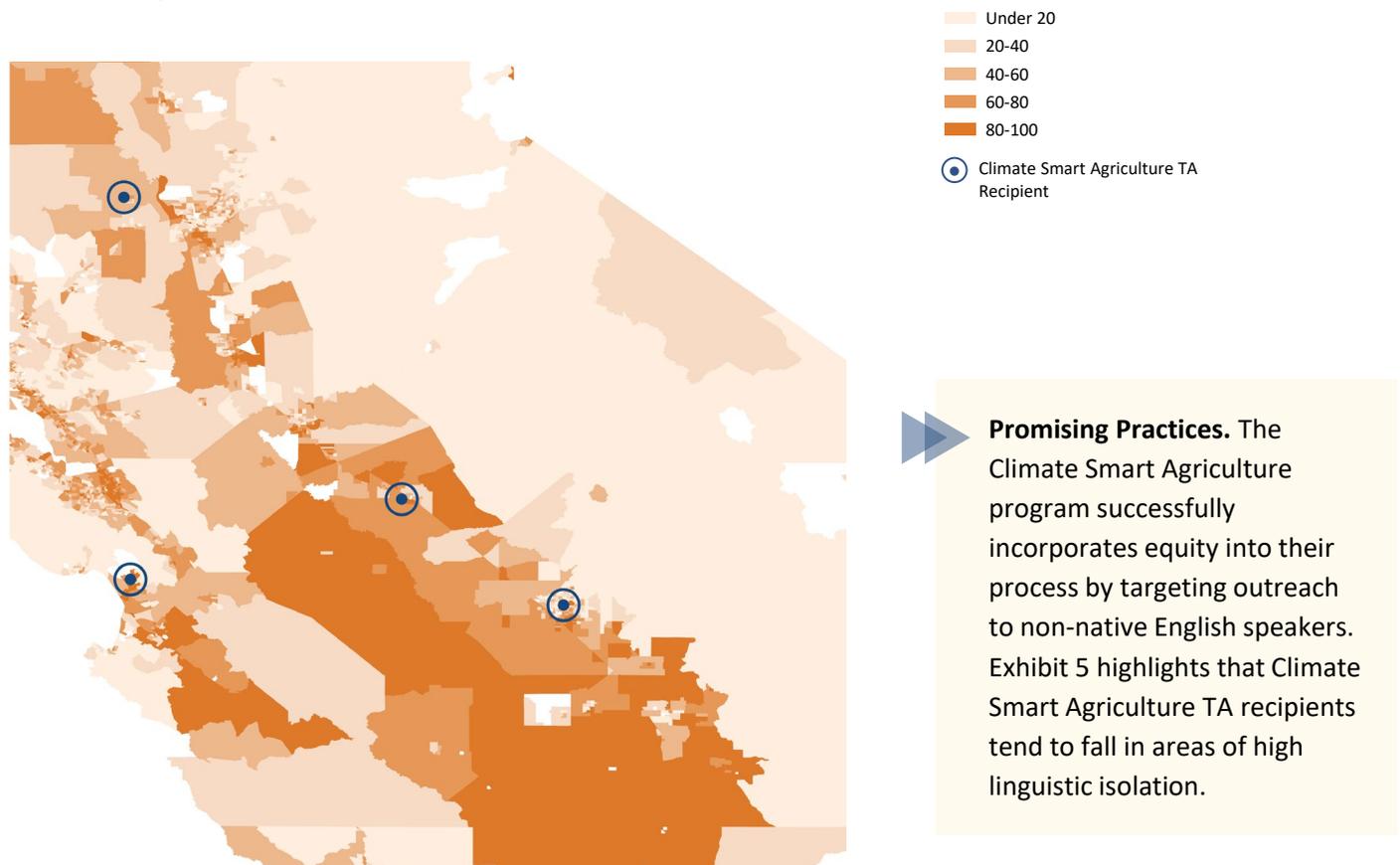


² University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2021). County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/california/2021/rankings/outcomes/overall>



CCI TA plays an important role in advancing climate equity. There is ample evidence to document that SGC conducts extensive outreach, yet there is still room to improve and expand efforts to better accommodate low-capacity communities. Relevant to this finding, one TA provider highlighted the value of asking where outreach efforts are falling short to inform specific recommendations to identify and target jurisdictions that are in need and aware of the opportunity but do not apply for TA. The TA provider further raised the point that many of those who apply for CCI TA "may or may not need it but are going to ask for it [because they] want someone to write [their] grant application...." The key point from this reflection is that those who see the benefit of asking for help will seek it out even when they do not need it, therefore further exacerbating disparities. To achieve equity over equality, the CCI TA program needs to effectively promote and award TA to communities with the highest CES scores. One recommendation is to tailor and translate outreach materials into potential applicants' native languages, and to develop content that is relevant to the community's unique local context.

Exhibit 5. Linguistic Isolation Percentile



ACKNOWLEDGING TA PROVIDER LIMITATIONS SAVES TIME, RESOURCES, AND LEADS TO BENEFICIAL REFERRALS. When TA offering is not in line with recipient priorities, TA providers must set clear and realistic expectations about available services. Whenever possible, TA providers should connect the recipient to other types of TA to address their priority issues. This early engagement facilitates an equitable process and can help build trust and avoid wasting resources.

89%

of surveyed recipients agreed that “if unable to address my needs, TA providers referred me to other resources”



Capacity Building Supports Community Change

This section explores two key findings by providing evidence to support the need for continued investment in capacity building efforts for under-resourced communities.

Capacity building - the process of strengthening local leadership, knowledge, skills, expertise, and access to resources in under-resourced communities - supports community change. Key findings revealed that when under-resourced communities are provided effective capacity building, they can independently compete for future funding and implement projects. Most TA recipients shared that their TA support helped them gain new and relevant knowledge while building their capacity to address and mitigate environmental health challenges posed by climate injustices.

CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES CONTINUE TO BENEFIT RECIPIENTS BEYOND THE APPLICATION. TA was essential for recipients to develop and strengthen skills that can be utilized beyond those needed for the application completion. For example, aspects of project planning such as identifying tasks and outlining what is necessary to accomplish project goals are skills that recipients can apply in other settings. TA also helped recipients design effective project plans to improve the implementation of their work and their ability to leverage funding outside of California Climate Investments. Consider these two survey responses:

87% of TA recipients indicated that receiving TA positively impacted their organization’s capacity to align projects or planning efforts to effective climate solutions

75% of recipients agreed that their TA provider positively impacted their organization’s capacity to engage in policy development, adoption, or implementation

TA providers often pulled in additional support for communities that need it most. When providers noticed issues with grantee’s internal communication or information sharing, some provided resources such as translation or developed documents or guidebooks that are resources for others. For example, providers developed several comprehensive agricultural land strategies that are now publicly available through the [SALC resources page](#).



Promising Practices. A promising practice was the establishment of strong and trusting partnerships between TA providers and recipients. This practice helped cultivate spaces for TA recipients to speak honestly about their most basic or complex needs. TA providers and recipients often identified each other as thought partners and worked together to achieve recipient goals, build capacity, and ultimately promote community change.



Recipient capacity changes due to TA



Indicator Score - **3.6**

ClimateSmart Agriculture emerged as the highest scoring program with a mean item score of 3.9



"We really went over everything – grant management, just overall best practices for accounting, bookkeeping, and how to track everything. It was a tremendous help. The Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) applicant didn't really have any of these foundations set in place. We had a strong emphasis and focus on guidelines and specific TCC requirements. It was just a huge success story!" – TA Provider

TA providers have institutional knowledge and experience that help recipients increase their capacity to understand how infrastructure and energy issues relate. When TA providers share their knowledge, it allows recipients to see the nexus between topics and issue areas.



89%

of recipients agreed that receiving TA positively impacted their organization's capacity to understand and engage in solutions to community change. There was a statistically significant positive relationship between TA provider knowledge and recipient capacity. TA providers who understood community disparities, strengths, and needs were better positioned to nurture recipient capacity and ultimately support community change.

"We can figure it all out but having a local partner on the ground who has worked in these communities and knows the players; that's really helpful." – TA Recipient



Promoting change and advancement



Indicator Score - **3.6**

Build, Organize, Optimize, Strengthen, and Transform (BOOST) emerged as the highest scoring program with a mean item score of 4.0



TA PROVISION IS EFFECTIVE WHEN THE APPLICATION PROCESS IS BROKEN DOWN INTO MANAGEABLE SECTIONS. Meeting recipients where they are helps ensure they understand how to properly frame an application for a State grant program, master the formula for a successful application, and use their social networks to continue building their financial resources. Many TA recipients have not had exposure to State processes and requirements and find the application process complicated and overwhelming. However, because the TA providers parsed out application requirements into manageable sections, there were higher application completion rates. Capacity building in the interpretation of applications is particularly important to support a tailored approach that centers TA provision on what is needed while elevating TA recipient strengths.

“TA providers made sure that we understood that [equity] was an objective of the State and the program: to keep equity and under resourced communities [central] to the design. We sought to recreate that same diversity and breadth of perspective on our stakeholder team here.”

– TA Recipient

TA PROVISION IS EFFECTIVE WHEN THE APPLICATION TA PROVIDERS ARE THE BRIDGE FOR TA RECIPIENTS AND THE STATE. TA providers often help State agencies better understand how to identify and support the unique needs of local communities. The level of application readiness varies for TA recipients. Effective TA providers typically adapt their support to meet varying ranges of TA recipient capacity needs. This approach effectively strengthens the collaboration between TA recipients, providers, and the State, which ultimately helps to increase satisfaction with the quality of TA provision. TA providers frequently bring to light that certain communities face additional barriers when applying or competing for funding. For example, many recipients often lack understanding of State jargon or technical questions on applications. This complexity can confuse potential applicants and discourage them from applying. During the application process, TA providers often try to help overcome these barriers by explaining application questions into simpler language. TA providers will often report their learning to the State. In doing so, TA providers not only create learning opportunities centered on Statewide policies, but also serve as the bridge between the recipient and State communication to support the application process.

83%

of recipients were highly satisfied with the quality of application assistance received





GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) CALCULATION SUPPORT SETS UP TA RECIPIENTS FOR SUCCESS.

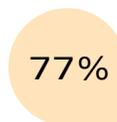
TA providers who offer capacity building in the realm of GHG data quantification are an essential component of an equitable TA process. Next to general application assistance, TA support for building capacity, knowledge, and awareness specific to GHG calculations was cited as one of the top assistance needs of recipients, especially for under-resourced communities. TA providers frequently helped recipients demonstrate how they would achieve GHG reduction – a requirement for nearly all California Climate Investments programs – which ultimately better supports recipients in submitting a successful application. Despite these successes, TA providers still face barriers to building recipients' GHG calculation capacity. Many GHG consultants are overextended and cannot meet the demands of smaller-staffed organizations, and rural communities may be less likely to have access to consultants with these skills.

Community Engagement Sustains TA Impact

This section provides evidence in support of TA that affords meaningful opportunities for community-wide collaboration.

Community engagement helps sustain the long-term benefits of TA through supportive partnerships that work together to mitigate climate injustice. One of the most important elements of the CCI TA Program model is the strengthening of coordination between local agencies and community organizations to support meaningful community engagement. TA providers foster inclusive practices by playing a critical role as facilitators of collaborative processes. For example, TA providers are often effective at helping to plan and advise community workshops, training staff on principles of community outreach and engagement, and hosting meetings with diverse stakeholders. By allowing communities to guide the process and select their own combination of project and community needs, the CCI TA Program encourages an equitable, community-driven approach to addressing local challenges.

CCI TA PROGRAM HELPS SUSTAIN COORDINATED COMMUNITY ACTION. TA providers and recipients shared that when local agencies and community organizations identify common climate equity issues and commit to working together early in the TA process, the partnership is likely to be sustained through project implementation. Strengthening such coordinated efforts creates networks of organizations that support climate work and reach regional shared goals. For some TA recipients, the most meaningful aspect of the TA engagement entailed collaborating with a diverse group of stakeholders with similar lived experiences. For many TA recipients, the TA provider was responsible for creating these new opportunities for collaboration that otherwise would not have happened. Several TA recipients shared that the newly established partnerships help respond to TA recipients' self-identified needs, help close capacity gaps, and potentially open future funding opportunities.



of recipients indicated that community engagement was an area of focus for the TA



of recipients thought their application was more competitive due to increased capacity to build and maintain partnerships



agree that TA supported the growth of their organization's ability to conduct community engagement



of recipients who completed the survey indicated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of community engagement support from their TA providers

“When you have very limited staff, having those relationships and having team members and collaborators that you know, that you can go to and that you've established a rapport with, is absolutely necessary and critical to moving forward on projects.” – TA Recipient

TA PROVIDERS FACILITATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH WHICH VALIDATES THE APPLICATION PROCESS AND HELPS CULTIVATE TRUST. This is especially the case when TA not only supports local governments but also meaningfully engages residents and community-based organizations. Effective community engagement was defined by recipients as being responsive to the needs and context of their community. Being responsive to the often complicated interpersonal and inter-organizational dynamics in a community helps nourish trust by ensuring everyone has access to information and has an active role in the decision-making process. To further center equity through cultivating trust, TA has a role to integrate their engagement as early as possible in project design and throughout project implementation.

“The approach we took to this project is really community development from the ground, from the bottom up...We gave a project to a developer to do after we worked with the community for six months, with all the community groups and residents to figure out what they wanted and what they needed.” – TA Recipient

“I started talking to all our community-based organizations that serve the causes of socioeconomically disadvantaged people...One [organization] was [focused on] empowerment, one was about wellness. And then we also collaborated with the media...and established partnerships with the broadcasting stations.” – TA Recipient



TA facilitated collaborative opportunities



Indicator Score - **3.4**

ClimateSmart Agriculture emerged as the highest scoring program with a mean item score of 4.0

Too often local community-based organizations and residents are not part of the pool of TA providers.

Yet they are critical to the implementation success of California Climate Investments funded projects. Local community-based organizations often take the role of a sub-TA provider, which is a subcontracted organization that supplements TA provision with local context and specialized skill sets. TA recipients expressed satisfaction with this practice that brought forward actionable knowledge to tailor locally appropriate projects.



Promising Practices. Local community-based organizations are vital for driving the successful and sustainable regional collaboration from the application process to project implementation and beyond. TA providers should engage community-based organizations with local knowledge, lived experience, and specialized skills as project design and implementation partners.

In addition, when community engagement is well-executed, it promotes trust, and outlines a promising practice for designing and implementing impactful climate mitigation projects. For example, TA providers often connect with local organizations with pre-established connections and high cultural competency to reach out to community members and diminish cultural inequities.

Systemic Barriers Beyond the TA Model

This section presents recommendations and practical solutions for eliminating inequities to accessing and sustaining State funding.

The CCI TA Program model provides the State with a unique opportunity to facilitate and scale systemic change to address the same social and racial inequities confronted by under-resourced communities. When designed and implemented with attention to dynamics related to race, gender, income, and other disparities, the CCI TA Program creates opportunities, access to State funding, and supportive resources. This sections identifies solvable barriers noted by TA recipients and provides potential solutions.

California Climate Investments funding reaches many of the most vulnerable and historically marginalized communities in California. However, most of the California Climate Investments funding applications are burdensome. Many applicants do not have the organizational resources to comply with the onerous expectations. As such, the California Climate Investments Program's ability to scale and meet the needs of California's diverse communities will be limited. TA recipients provided numerous examples of how complex grant requirements can overwhelm potential applicants and prevent them from applying. Without TA support, only those with existing high capacity to understand government forms and requirements are successful.

"[Under-resourced communities] have to really pick and choose where staff spends their time. So if they're just like, 'You know what, this is a dozens of page application, we don't have the capacity to create something competitive. We're just not even going to apply.'"
– TA Provider

"We're talking about jurisdictions who oftentimes [lack] basic infrastructure like water and wastewater, let alone a draining gutter in a sidewalk... And we're just perpetuating [systemic racism] by having the same level of goals for them as... these other jurisdictions who obviously have extensive resources... to apply for some of these programs."

– TA Provider

Differences in necessary, existing infrastructure inhibit the development of grant applications for large-scale projects in under-resourced communities. Without the basic infrastructure, some communities lack key structures to support proposed California Climate Investments projects.



Under-resourced communities often have limited staffing and organizational resources that are already committed to non-grant writing activities. Developing an application for California Climate Investments is a costly endeavor, requiring hours of internal staff hours to develop an application over several months. Many organizations in under-resourced communities lack the funds to pay for staff time and keep critical programming running. Additionally, these same organizations do not have the financial or in-kind resources to provide the required match. California Climate Investments funding opportunities could consider no match or sliding match scale according to organizational capacity to encourage more diverse applicants from under-resourced communities.

“[SGC] would have to infuse working capital in the process in order for the TA to be successful. Otherwise... [recipients] don't have [enough resources.] I mean, you got to spend \$250,000 on this application.” – TA Recipient



Under-resourced non-native English-speaking communities may not speak or understand technical application language. The application process is focused on English-speaking applications, starting with the English-only application processes (e.g., Notice of Funding Availability). California's rich cultural diversity requires that public resources be available in multiple languages or supplied with translation resources and support (e.g., hosting webinars in multiple languages).

Greenhouse gas (GHG) calculations that are a requirement of many California Climate Investments Program applications are burdensome to utilize and adapt to the local context. Several TA recipients noted that they lack the technical capacity (i.e., machinery) to measure the GHG baseline levels that are often an application requirement. Additionally, even if they have results, they may lack the technical expertise to translate results into State reporting requirements and to predict how much they can lower GHG emissions with their intervention.

The result is too often an underestimation of their maximal potential impact, rendering their application less competitive than others. More consultants with expertise in GHG calculations are needed to support the development of competitive applications. The State should also consider supplying appropriate machinery to under-resourced communities.



Under-resourced communities often experience significant barriers in the implementation phase. Once under-resourced communities receive funding, many TA recipients struggle with the components for a successful project implementation. They may lack staff capacity to carry out the project or the key public sector partners to fully execute their plans. For example, a recipient may need a land use permit for air quality monitoring but lack both the staff and the connection to the public body to seek and approve the permit. This is particularly acute for rural areas with high CES scores.

"You can invest all this time in providing direct TA and get [an expert] who's on staff... And then they leave and all of their knowledge leaves with them. So it's like the organization never got TA to begin with." – TA Provider

Recommendations for Enhancing Provision of TA

This section presents knowledge of systemic limitations and opportunities in order to provide data-driven recommendations for enhancing TA provision.



Indicator Score - **3.9**

Build, Organize, Optimize, Strengthen, and Transform (BOOST), Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC), and ClimateSmart Agriculture emerged as the highest scoring programs with a mean item score of 4.0 each

- **Invest in subcontracted providers with local knowledge** who understand community context, since these providers tend to be successful in designing relevant project aims and creating partnerships based on trust and mutual understanding. The CCI TA Program should consider revising its criteria for TA provider requirements so that subcontractors could potentially become the lead TA provider.
- **Increase the number of TA providers with high levels of cultural awareness** through selecting providers who are skilled in language translation and respect cultural norms and traditions. Hiring providers from within the communities served and with experience working in under-resourced communities would also support more equitable outcomes. Diversifying the outreach strategies for TA providers could achieve this recommendation.
- **Expand TA supports** for rural and Tribal communities that often lack the organizational capacity to retain a new staff with specialized technical skills. TA providers working with recipients in these regions should receive extra resources to help increase and diversify TA provision.
- **Offer culturally appropriate materials and services**, like simultaneous translation and interpretation for community convenings, as these can create an inclusive environment, bring unique perspectives to the table, and enable broader participation among under-resourced communities. Access to culturally appropriate resources should not be confined to TA providers. Having culturally appropriate materials should be standard for all documents and processes established by California Climate Investments Programs and CCI TA provision.
- **Communicate systemic inequities identified during TA provision** to State agencies for programmatic improvement. TA providers often hold power serving as a communication bridge between TA recipients and the State agencies. Therefore, TA providers should communicate recurring systemic and regional issues with the State in a way that creates change iteratively with a focus on increasing access for under-resourced communities. California Climate Investments Programs should consider hosting quarterly learning circles, that is, spaces for providers to learn from each other, share promising practices, and establish explicit avenues for continuous quality improvement.



TA PROVISION PROMISING PRACTICES. In addition to identifying these areas for consideration and improvement, the evaluation team identified ample successful TA promising practices that should be sustained and amplified. Some of the most successful approaches enacted by providers include, but are not limited to:



Identifying the nexus between issues related to climate, infrastructure, and energy areas to help craft compelling application narratives and design projects with a clear, unified purpose.



Meeting TA recipients where they are by recognizing differences in systemic barriers faced, capacity and staffing limitations, regional concerns and priorities, and needed additional supports related to language and cultural needs.



Creating resources for sustained and ongoing learning such as scoping tools, project management timelines, guidebooks and supporting documents, and grant application guides that are broadly applicable beyond the pursuit of California Climate Investments funds.



Nurturing trust in community engagements and partnership formation by creating inclusive environments with culturally appropriate materials and ensuring content is responsive to community concerns.



Working toward equity not equality. Equity is what is needed in both *process and outcomes*. Successful TA providers recognize sources of inconsistency in their services and results and act to address them.



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