

Rural Community Assistance Corporation

Blue Sky Center, New Cuyama, CA

Accomplishments (RCB FY 2017)

Capacity Building – Economic Revitalization

RCAC's Building Rural Economies Team has provided Blue Sky with extensive technical assistance, training and workshops. In 2019, a diverse group of community stakeholders attended RCAC's Recharge Our Community's Economy (ROCE) workshop series to discuss how to unlock the Cuyama Valley's potential for sustainable development. As a result of the ROCE workshop series, Blue Sky established a Tourism and Wayfinding Working Group focused on community beautification and wayfinding to encourage visitors to visit, shop, and explore Cuyama Valley communities. They developed partnerships, found new funding sources and created detailed plans to develop regional maps, creative road signage and a visitor center. The working group also worked with Caltrans to provide \$1 million of new arts-based transportation funding to Cuyama, established a new tourism website, visitcuyama.com; and created a community-wide resource directory of local businesses, craftspeople, and other resources. In 2020, RCAC co-facilitated with the Blue Sky staff, the bilingual Start, Grow, Revive Your Business (SGR) workshop series to equip local entrepreneurs with the knowledge and tools to form, grow, and mature their business plans. RCAC also contributed to the *Cocinando un Negocio* entrepreneurial workshop series that offered culturally appropriate, Spanish-language translations of the standard Start Grow Revive material to Latina entrepreneurs.

As a result of this partnership, and HUD's RBDG support, Blue Sky Center was able to hire a Community Coordinator (CC) to assist in Blue Sky Center and RCAC community economic development activities.

"RCAC's focus on building staff and human resource capacity in the communities that it serves sets it apart from other organizations, and this is one of the most impactful things it can continue to do," said Em Johnson, Blue Sky Director of Strategy. "This work of establishing a foundation of small businesses and entrepreneurs will help stabilize our community for a long time."

