



To: California Racial Equity Commissioners

From: Racial Equity Commission Staff

Re: Meet-N-Greet Summary

Date: June 25, 2025



Figure 1 Group photo of Racial Equity Commission staff, El Sausal Middle School staff, and Youth Empowerment Commission's Director on June 25, 2025

On June 25, 2025, the Racial Equity Commission (the Commission) visited Salinas to hold a Meet-N-Greet to learn from residents in the area. The Commission partnered with the [Center for Community Advocacy](#) (CCA) who hosted the Meet-N-Greet at [El Sausal Middle School](#). The Center for Community Advocacy helps farm workers build leadership within the community and advocates for their needs to improve living conditions, affordable housing, and access to health services and resources. In attendance was



Figure 2 Community members at El Sausal Middle School

Executive Director of the Center for Community Advocacy, Joel Hernandez Laguna and his team, as well as Staff from the Salinas Unified High School District including Dr. Carissa Purnell, Yvette Ramos, Monica Morales Bravo, Estella Cruz, and Maria de Jesus Cuentas.

The purpose of visiting Salinas was to listen to community voices and learn about their lived experiences to inform the development of the Framework. The Meet-N-Greet was conducted primarily in Spanish to be more inclusive and intentional about centering community. This was the

second Meet-N-Greet where the Commission conducted a meeting primarily in a language other than English.

Opening Remarks

The Principal of El Sausal Middle School, Francisco Huerta, provided opening remarks and thanked the community for attending. CCA's Executive Director Joel Hernandez Laguna welcomed community and thanked the Commission for coming to Salinas to hear from community and center their voices. The attendees also heard from one of the Commission's Senior Program Analysts, Dylun Turner-Keener, who shared opening remarks and gave a brief overview of the Commission and its [charge](#).

Community Building Exercises or Breakout discussions

The attendees sat at tables and gathered in a smaller groups to begin the discussion activity. Commissioner Traco Matthews presented questions for community to discuss at their tables before sharing out their answers to the broader audience. The first question was **"What are you most proud of in your community?"** One attendee shared how they were glad to receive council's approval of last year's [rent stabilization](#) that was a collective effort between community and community-based organizations to improve rental costs. In addition, multiple members stated how proud they are of fellow community members who are farm workers, who work long days in the field from sunup until sundown from past generations to present day. Members also went on to say how much they love their community and how they "feel proud of the unity" and described themselves as a "hard working community...community of fighters."



Considerations for Change

The final question centered on changes for the community, **“If there is one thing you could change to make your community better, what would it be?”** Numerous attendees highlighted several issues about the need to improve access to health and food support services, affordable housing, better public transportation, repairing sidewalks to be accessible for disabled people and children, more visibility to Indigenous Latin communities, and clear concise dissemination of information to the public. In addition, members of the community also shared issues of discrimination, rising costs of living, low wages, and a need for more support and protection efforts for farm workers.



Figure 3 Attendees discussing in small groups

Considerations for the Commission

The Meet-N-Greet in Salinas was important for the Commission to identify themes emerging in this community that are both unique to Salinas and similar to other areas around the State that the Commission has previously visited. Salinas community members raised concerns about similar issues that were shared by community in Imperial, such as farm workers’ safety and the need for higher salaries. Other similar themes that emerged in Salinas

include improving public transportation, high costs of living, more informed resources, and making local government meetings more accessible. One of the challenges that was unique to Salinas is protecting the coastal environment and preserving its natural beauty.

The Commission will take these lessons learned to inform the development of the Framework and best practices to conduct community engagement. The Racial Equity Commission learned about the vibrant community in Salinas who are proud of their culture, strong in their commitment to help farm workers, and support members of the community as a collective.

Prepared by Dylun Turner-Keener, Senior Program Analyst



Figure 4 Graphic Note from Meet-N-Greet by Raven Tahara