Learning for Action partners with social sector organizations to advance knowledge, capacity, and culture of learning in the service of equity and justice.
Introduction

In 2010, The California Endowment (TCE) embarked on a 10-year strategy of Building Healthy Communities (BHC). TCE selected 14 neighborhoods around the state, making deep investments designed to bring about comprehensive community change – with the ultimate goal of creating health and justice for all. Each BHC neighborhood embarked on its own planning process (with support from TCE), and local priorities emerged from each site. For several BHC sites, criminal justice reform emerged as a public health issue. The criminal justice system inflicts harm on low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. The extreme stress and deprivation resulting from over-policing are not only unjust, but also undermine the health of people, families, and communities.

While BHC sites were calling attention to the importance of criminal justice issues, two important reforms were taking place in California. The first was Assembly Bill 109 passed in 2011 – the Public Safety Realignment Act – moved people who were charged low-level, non-violent crimes from the state prison system to county jail systems. The law also emphasized reduced recidivism and alternatives to incarceration, allocating billions of dollars to counties to manage their Realignment efforts. And then in 2014, Proposition 47 passed, changing six non-violent felonies into misdemeanors. This new sentencing policy meant that incarcerated people could be re-sentenced, and people who had been imprisoned in the past for “Prop 47 crimes” could have their records changed. In addition, Prop 47 set up a “Prop 47 Fund” to house the dollars that the state would save as a result of reduced incarceration due to Prop 47. AB 109 and Prop 47 both opened up possibilities for justice reinvestment: reducing public sector investments in law enforcement and corrections, and using those savings to fund prevention and rehabilitation programs designed to reduce criminal justice system involvement and incarceration.

The history of Realignment funds was disappointing: despite the emphasis in the law on reduced recidivism and alternatives to incarceration, much of the Realignment funding had—in fact—been funneled back into law enforcement and corrections rather than prevention and rehabilitation. After voters passed Prop 47, criminal justice advocates around the state were determined that it would not repeat the history of AB 109. At the state level, their advocacy took the form of seeking to prevent—as much as possible—the Prop 47 fund from being used for grants to law enforcement-related programming.\(^2\) At the county level things were more complicated. Prop 47 had designated a mechanism and process to reinvest savings into prevention and rehabilitation programs, but it did not designate any parallel processes at the county level. The Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJCJ) estimated in 2014 that between $400 and $700 million in savings would accrue to all 58 counties (in the aggregate), but it would be up to each county to identify and reallocate the savings.\(^3\)

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The possibility of millions of dollars available at the county level opened up an opportunity for criminal justice advocates across the state. To capitalize on this opportunity, and to respond to the priorities that BHC leaders had identified, TCE made significant investments in seven BHC sites (in six counties) for implementation of Prop 47. Prop 47 implementation entailed, first, supporting sentence reclassification and record change among eligible residents. It also entailed advocacy for *justice reinvestment*: identifying savings accruing to counties from reductions in county jails, and investing those savings in community-based programming.

Given the importance of justice reinvestment for shrinking the carceral state and healing communities, TCE had a strong interest in learning from the experience in these six counties—and, accordingly, commissioned an evaluation to study each site and to draw cross-site lessons. The first lesson is that it has been extremely challenging to push counties to engage in Prop 47 reallocation. This is for two reasons. To begin with, while county-level savings can be *estimated*, doing the actual calculations turns out to be incredibly difficult. At the same time, county departments associated with law enforcement and corrections have been adept at arguing against reductions to their budgets. Even in counties with a progressive electorate, law enforcement often still holds considerable sway over county budgets. In addition, the technical

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\(^2\) They were largely successful. For the story of state-level Prop 47 advocacy, see TITLE/HYPERLINK.

challenge of calculating savings bolstered the arguments of law enforcement for why savings could not be taken from their budgets and invested in programs and services.

Meeting this obstacle to county-level Prop 47 savings reallocation, advocates turned to additional strategies of justice reinvestment. They worked both sides of the justice reinvestment equation, seeking to push their cities and counties to lower investments in punitive approaches, and raise investments in services and treatment. Each county and BHC site approached justice reinvestment in unique ways, responding to local opportunities and constraints, and building upon what mattered most to the communities where they were organizing. The evaluation follows the lead of the BHC sites, focusing on the broader issues of justice reinvestment writ large (rather than more narrowly on Prop 47 reallocation in the counties).

**Evaluation Overview**

The evaluation is based on the advocacy goals that groups in each site identified, and these goals also align with two of the *North Star Goals* that TCE developed to structure its BHC strategy:

**North Star Goal #1: Building Voice and Power for a Healthy and Inclusive California.** Historically excluded adult and youth residents have **voice, agency, and power in public and private decision making** to create an inclusive democracy and close health equity gaps.

**North Star Goal #4: Health Happens in Neighborhoods.** California cities and counties directly engage community residents to build health into land use decisions, stabilize neighborhoods, and **shift resources from punishment to prevention.**

Given the work of the sites and the North Star Goals, the evaluation focuses on these two sets of questions:

- What has **justice reinvestment** advocacy looked like? What has been each county’s strategy for advocating to shift public resources from punishment and incarceration to prevention? How successful are these efforts?
- Justice reinvestment is part of TCE’s broader vision to **build voice and power for a healthy and inclusive California.** To support this vision, TCE’s investments are meant to result in a **power-building infrastructure.** Most broadly, then, the evaluation asks: to what extent are advocacy fields in the BHC counties building voice and power around Prop 47-related advocacy and broader justice reinvestment advocacy?
To address these questions, the evaluation team conducted in-depth case studies of each of the seven sites. To understand what type of data we should collect for each case, we started with a framework to highlight the concepts we would focus on. These concepts derive from TCE’s Theory of Change (TOC) for its BHC work. Starting from the TOC, we expect that the effectiveness of coalitions, local/state alignment, people power, and narrative change will all influence justice reinvestment outcomes. We also expect that local political context will affect outcomes as well. The data collection plan was designed to gather data that would illuminate these concepts for each case.

Data collection for the case studies included several rounds of interviews. First, we spoke with the Program Managers for each site, to get the lay of the land and an initial list of people to interview. Second, we spoke with a small group of interviewees from each site to hear from them what would be useful to them to learn from the evaluation. We also checked in to find out whether we should expand our list of interviewees. Next, we spoke to past and present grantee partners at each site. Then, supplementing the interview data with grantee reports to TCE and some newspaper research, we put together high-level site profiles. Finally, we got feedback from Program Managers on those profiles, and then did a last round of interviews with a small set of stakeholders at each site (2-3 people who we expected to have a birds-eye view). In that last interview with site stakeholders, we shared the site profiles and asked for additional reflection about what the findings mean.

This report first shares the highlights of justice reinvestment for each case, and then explores the factors expected to relate to outcomes (collaboration, local/statewide alignment, people power, narrative change). In addition, budget advocacy – working with city and county officials to identify the budget specifics of how to shift funds out of incarceration and invest in prevention and rehabilitation – rose to the top as an important area to explore. Finally, we include lessons from the cross-site comparison, and provide a concluding list of considerations that TCE might take into account as it is developing its next iteration of justice reinvestment strategy. In addition to this cross-site report, individual case studies are available for each site (you can link to them in the justice reinvestment table in the next section).

**Justice Reinvestment Highlights**

The results of justice reinvestment advocacy are summarized below. In each site, advocates were able to reach goals of increased investments in prevention and rehabilitation programs and services, and most sites were able to achieve some divestment goals as well. In addition to
divestment and investment goals, there were also some other achievements that are more generally about changing policies, practices, and the philosophical grounding of approaches. More details are available in individual case studies (click on hyperlinks in the left-hand column).

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| Alameda (East Oakland) | • Ended juvenile fines and fees | • 50% of Realignment funding to reentry programs  
• County committed to 1400 jobs for people with felony convictions | |
| (Contra Costa Richmond) | • Ended juvenile fines and fees  
• Ended Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contract | • $9.5 Million in Realignment funding to community based reentry support  
• Diversions and services for arrestees with substance abuse or mental illness | • County established Racial Justice Task Force  
• A progressive was appointed as interim District Attorney (and then won election) |
| Los Angeles (Long Beach) | | • Long Beach allocated $200,000 in seed funding for a Children and Youth Fund  
• City Prosecutor launched a pilot diversion program | • School Board resolution on using restorative justice |
| Los Angeles (South LA) | | • Statewide campaign resulted in more than doubling the amount allocated to the state Prop 47 fund | • Prop 47 Jobs and Services Task Forces established  
• Groundwork laid to develop systems to track county-level Prop 47 savings |
| Monterey (East Salinas) | • Board of Supervisors support for audit of Sherriff’s department  
• School districts rejected federal dollars for School Resource Officers | • $6 million dollar grant from the Prop 47 Fund to Behavioral Health Department and MILPA  
• $2.1 Million invested in health coverage for undocumented immigrants | • Trained more than half of the City of Salinas’s staff in Healing-Informed Governing for Racial Equity |
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| Sacramento (South Sacramento) | • Ended juvenile fines and fees  
• Ended ICE contract                                                                 | • $25 million from reserve fund allocated to affordable housing and homeless services  
• CAO offered ISDF members to identify how to spend $20 million in the county budget (not to be made public)  
• One of the juvenile detention centers is transforming to a “campus for healing and education,” with $260 million allocated  
• County Public Safety department created a flexible fund for community-based organizations | • County supervisors adopted a proposal strengthening the Inspector General’s independent oversight of the sheriff  
• Probation Chief making significant practice changes, including reduced used of pepper spray and solitary confinement, improving food, and expanding visiting hours |
| San Diego (City Heights) | • Juvenile Detention Center closed                                                                 |                                                                                   |                                                                                            |
Advocacy with public sector institutions is often a complex, large-scale, and long-term undertaking. Given the size, power, and resources of those institutions, organizations and groups undertaking advocacy campaigns must band together in collaboratives and coalitions. TCE explicitly recognized this need as it developed its strategy’s North Star Goals and Indicators. The North Star Goal #1 is **building voice and power for a healthy and inclusive California**, and this goal’s first indicator is:

**Power-building infrastructure:**
*Strengthened leadership, organizations, collaborations, and networks are in place to engage community members in organizing in cross-race, issue, and sector campaigns, both locally and statewide.*

As part of understanding the extent to which this power-building infrastructure is developing, TCE “would look for signs that these are becoming organic, lasting structures.” Collaboration is, then, a critical element of the power-building infrastructure, and – in turn – a critical element in justice reinvestment successful policy advocacy. This chapter addresses the extent to which sites are in fact developing strong coalitions as part of their power-building infrastructure. It also addresses the challenges of collaboration, and how organizations working in coalition together have sought to mitigate those inherent challenges.

**Successes of Collaboration**

The list of justice reinvestment successes achieved by coalitions makes clear the fact that by banding together, organizations can push forward the cause of justice reinvestment. Coalitions have brought together their ability to mobilize members and residents for actions to put pressure on the city or county, and they have systematically cultivated inside allies. The more base-building organizations that can mobilize people power, the more the coalitions can demonstrate grassroots unity and commitment, and the more leverage coalitions will have (all else equal). In addition, coalitions have tended to have leaders with a history of working with

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4 See TCE’s online statement of its North Star Goals and Indicators.
decision-makers in the city or county. These relationships with “insiders” are critical advocacy resources, since they allow direct communication with those making policy decisions relevant to justice reinvestment.

Indeed, advocates sometimes talk about building power through solidarity, and through a division of labor that brings several critical types of skill and power to the table. This is especially clear in San Diego, where advocates speak of how they all bring something vital to the table. Several of the base-building organizations can mobilize parishioners, members, and residents – turning out hundreds at advocacy events; SEIU brings the resources and clout of a union; Center for Policy Initiatives (the budget advocacy partner) brings specialized budget expertise; and the ACLU brings knowledge of the law and – occasionally – the threat of legal action. As a collaborative, this group has become a force to be reckoned with in San Diego. We can see that the collaborative has built considerable power, because even in a county where the Board of Supervisors is dominated by Republicans, several county agencies work closely with collaborative members, and also turn to the collaborative to identify ways to spend public sector funds.

This appreciation for a division of labor is also something shared by advocates in Long Beach. The coalitions include organizations that specialize in terms of function (base-building, advocacy, or service provision) and in different populations (e.g. Khmer girls, queer youth). Since service providers cannot engage in advocacy in the same way that other organizations do, they are able to offer other strengths – like perspective on policy goals and making connections with community residents who may want to become activists. A similar convergence of complementary competencies and roles emerged among Salinas advocates in Monterey County. MILPA (Motivating Individual Leadership for Public Advancement), a base-building organization committed to bringing a potent mix of movement-building and culturally-rooted healing practices to the formerly incarcerated community, was able to partner with the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council, a long-time player in county politics. The two groups were able to successfully mix their different skills to produce an unbeatable combination of transformative community organizing and sophisticated electoral know-how and insider political relationships.

We’re like the Justice League – we all bring superpowers.
-San Diego County Advocate

I feel like our coalition works well because we are composed of different types of youth-serving organizations. The service providers can do work with organizers because they don’t organize – aren’t able to visibly do advocacy. CFJ and KGA hold down the advocacy, and the base-building, and they have the youth leaders. That’s worked well.
-Long Beach Advocate
Some of the greatest successes of collaboration may have actually been the ways in which member organizations have overcome the inherent challenges of collaboration. We return to this topic after discussing the challenges themselves.

**Challenges of Collaboration**

Criminal justice advocates are grateful to be in the fight for social justice with their peers and comrades. And at the same time, they are keenly aware of the challenges of working in coalition. One person interviewed for this report sardonically answered the question about how collaboration was working: “flawless!” Then laughed and said: “coalitions are terrible. Why do people always ask this question?” Given how prominent the themes of collaboration challenges are, we begin by exploring what coalition members struggled with, and then turn to the ways in which coalitions were able to work together successfully. Finally, based on the stories of success and challenge, as well as what advocates themselves recommended in terms of how to work well together, we explore the way that TCE can influence the success of collaboration.

The grassroots organizations are better at accessing people and mobilizing. They feel that they do all the work, and then large organizations take credit for the work [that the grassroots organizations do] to get more funding. They feel that the large organizations get a lot of resources, and what trickles down is peanuts. The small ones resent that and feel that they deserve a bigger chunk of the funding.

-San Diego County Advocate

The challenge that rises to the top for collaboratives pertains to the tensions between different types of organizations. Nonprofit organizations usually fall on one side of a grassroots/grasstop divide. Grassroots organizations in the collaboratives are deeply embedded in communities and are typically base-building organizations, while grasstop organizations don’t do community organizing work, and employ professional advocates (e.g. policy analysts or attorneys focused on advocacy) that do their advocacy work on behalf of impacted communities. There are multiple distinctions that tend to compound this divide. First, there are the distinctions of resources and social status. Grassroots organizations tend to be under-resourced, while grasstop organizations are well-resourced. The staff at grasstop organizations tend to be more socially “elite,” in the sense that they may come from an upper-middle or upper-class background, and often have more years of formal education (sometimes from elite institutions), and may hold advanced degrees. Staff at grassroots organizations are less likely to have socially elite backgrounds.

And in California the status differences often also have a racial dimension. Grassroots organizations generally have more staff of color, while grasstop organizations tend to have...
more white staff. As one advocate put it: “There’s a lot of race and class stuff that comes up. Like who works in the larger, more resourced organizations, versus who works in the smaller, base-building organizations.” Another advocate spoke specifically to the legal advocacy organizations, saying that “almost by definition there will be cultural tensions. The legal profession is more than 80% white, and there are lots of men – and many organizers and those leading community efforts are people of color....”

The divides of resource, status, and race are then further compounded by two more: organizational function and source of expertise. Grassroots organizations derive their expertise from community embeddedness and lived experience. (For the justice reinvestment field, “lived experience” often means experience inside the criminal justice system, although it also includes having incarcerated family members, or living in neighborhoods that are victimized by over-policing.) In contrast, the source of expertise for those staffing grasstops organizations is usually educational attainment, as well as additional exposure to research and data on the job. Obviously, those in grassroots organizations have access to research and data as well, and often integrate research into their advocacy work – but one of the things that distinguishes the expertise of grassroots organizations is their greater ability to rely less on direct experience.

Since these distinctions inhabit hierarchies, the grasstops organizations are “dominant” (on the winning side of the distinctions), and grassroots organizations are “subordinate” (on the losing side). To be clear: this is not an objective value judgment – instead it is simply a statement about socially- and culturally-constructed hierarchies. In addition, as is always the case with hierarchies, additional material and symbolic resources accrue to the dominant organizations (more resources, status, credit, etc.), and less so to the subordinate ones. As all of these material and symbolic distinctions reinforce one another, they perpetuate inequities, and also set the stage for multiple tensions that can play out in collaboratives when organizations of both types work together.

It is worth noting that distinctions between the categories of “grassroots” and “grasstops” organizations highlighted are true generally, rather than 100% of the time. For example, PICO California and the Anti-Recidivism Coalition both do base-building work, and both are very well resourced. The descriptors linked to grassroots and grasstops organizations are, rather, meant as a useful heuristic rather than a universal rule.

In addition, before discussing the ways that these tensions play out, it is worth pausing to recognize the fact that some of the analyses shared here may not land well with readers. And which analyses do not land well with a particular reader will depend partly on whether one is closer to the grassroots or to the grasstops. Different observations will land – or will seem to be
missing the mark – to different people, and it is surely true that just about no one will be happy with the full list. Our goal in putting this list together is to share – as best we can – several perspectives on the dynamics of the coalitions among organizations working hard for social justice under very difficult conditions.

### Resource Inequities

- **Grasstops organizations attract more funding than do grassroots organizations, despite the fact that grassroots organizations are in greater need.** Almost every interviewee spoke about a resource competition between grassroots organizations and the various types of organizations that could be designated as “grasstops.” What can be especially frustrating to grassroots organizations in a coalition context is the fact that grasstops organizations are sometimes funded to facilitate the group or provide backbone support, when grassroots organizations have done this type of work without any funding. The fact that an already well-resourced organization is being paid to facilitate a coalition perpetuates inequities in two ways: resources are flowing to a grasstops organization and the facilitation role places the grasstops organization “above” other organizations in the coalition. Reflecting on this dynamic, several interviewees characterized grasstops organizations as “sucking up” or “hijacking” foundation funding.

- **The fact that grasstops organizations attract more funding sometimes comes across as particularly unjust to grassroots organizations given that grassroots organizations do the extremely hard and valuable work of organizing and mobilizing the community.** Grassroots organizations usually focus on base-building work, and mobilizing the base is mission-critical for advocacy. Given the critical nature of base-building, as well as the inordinate amount of staff time, effort, and skill that it takes, it can make little sense to grassroots organizations that they receive smaller grants than the organizations that do not engage in this important and
time-consuming work. Some staff from grassroots organizations spoke about the way that they do “the heavy lifting” in terms of mobilizing members for campaigns and bringing the powerful stories of formerly incarcerated people to the fore. And in fact, given that mobilizing members to come out for actions is often a vital part of advocacy’s success, grasstops organizations are sometimes seen as “borrowing” power from grassroots organizations. One grassroots advocate said: “Instead of investing in folks on the ground, [a large criminal justice advocacy organization] gets a $2.2 million grant, and everyone else gets a fraction of that. But we are the ones doing the heavy lifting.”

Resource Inequities Related to a Status Hierarchy

- Some of the staff from grassroots organizations had developed a social critique of funding dynamics, arguing that a type of “status kinship” between grasstops staff and foundation staff supports a system perpetuating resource inequities in the nonprofit sector. Some interviewees pointed out the ways that foundations and very large nonprofits have a natural affinity. They often come from similar social and/or educational backgrounds, look at the world in the same way, and hold one another in high regard. Foundations, which hold a great deal of power in the social sector, reward these large nonprofits with high levels of funding, while grassroots organizations struggling for resources receive only very small grants. One advocate spoke about the way that grasstops organizations are “sexier” to foundations.

- Some grassroots advocates argue that grasstops organizations and foundations take for granted the value of professional expertise, and devalue the expertise based in direct experience with the criminal justice system. This value differentiation applied to sources of expertise may emerge from the common worldview that professional advocates and foundation staff share. And the common worldview has, of course, resource implications, if one of the reasons that foundations make larger grants to grasstops organizations is due to the additional value placed on professional expertise. Grassroots advocates also see the value

The organizations tend to be very diverse.
The diagnosis from the grassroots emphasizes the ways that grasstops organizations want to accumulate funding and power, sometimes at the expense of the grassroots organizations.

-Sacramento County Advocate

Those who are closest to the pain are closest to the solution. It’s problematic with those not directly impacted, but with letters behind their name, or other privilege, get to lead these movements. It’s like the civil rights freedom bus – but blacks are still at the back of the bus. I will continue to push on this issue. It will get reproduced. A lot of this is orchestrated by funders. Like I see that [a grasstops organization] is important, but the funding disparities reproduce systems of oppression.

-Los Angeles County Advocate
differential as an expression of a deep lack of respect for those who are formerly incarcerated. The way some see it, grasstops leaders give lip service to the value of the incarceration experience, but in fact believe that they are the ones who actually know how to create solutions. One person said that for the grasstops organizations, “the model is that the people who are impacted share their stories and serve as wallpaper, but then the lawyers do the work. It’s fucked up.”

- An organization in a coalition “taking credit” can be problematic; coalitions are meant to act and take credit collectively, but credit is also related to resources and respect. Continued funding is linked to the ability of organizations to demonstrate their effectiveness to foundations – and organizations often demonstrate their effectiveness through claiming credit for an outcome. When organizations work in coalition, though, these outcomes are jointly achieved, and often coalitions publicly showcase their wins as belonging to the coalition. This can present a dilemma to individual organizations, especially when they are small and struggling for resources. In addition, several grassroots organizations spoke about the way that grasstops organizations had taken credit for successes that were due to their own community mobilization work.

We have no communications staff. So when we put a blast out on our social media, even if we’re leading [a campaign], if a larger organization with a larger communications infrastructure [puts out a blast], they get more credit. Because it goes out to their network – so they get credited with the campaign, even if we’re leading it.

-Alameda County Advocate

The [large advocacy organization] was dismissive of the local groups. And there was a lot of brand-building. At events, too many times, they said “this is us, this is us, this is us” – without recognition of all the groups standing right there.

-Los Angeles County Advocate

Different Structural Locations of Organizations can Generate Tension

- Grassroots and grasstops organizations will sometimes have different perspectives on what works, and there are grassroots organizations that attribute the difference to their proximity to the community (on the one hand) or powerful institutions (on the other). Some of the grassroots interviewees pointed out that grasstops organizations can be more willing to compromise with law enforcement, and potentially can identify with law enforcement professionals.

There’s a tension between grassroots and professional advocacy organizations. ... When folks are further away from the ground, then the policy solutions they develop sometimes miss.

-Los Angeles County Advocate
because of a socially similar background. One advocate sees a competition between organizations that want to accumulate power and make change by working in insider positions. “If you get the sheriff on your side who, just by writing a memo could change everything, and has lunch every week with the DA, then you’ve already accumulated tons of power.” Grassroots leaders, on the other hand, are less interested in compromise with law enforcement because it can undermine their credibility and legitimacy with their base and with other grassroots groups. They talked about their belief that the key to solutions is foregrounding those who are formerly incarcerated and consistently building power.

- When service providers join advocacy coalitions, their structural position within the field can create challenging differences of perspective. While it is not typical for service providers to engage in advocacy, some take this approach because they see advocacy as a way to strike at the root of the issues that they are seeking to address through services. A topic that comes up when discussing the inclusion of service providers in a coalition is the fact that they are sometimes in the awkward position of seeking or receiving funding from a county agency that may be a target of advocacy. This means that if service providers participate in the advocacy, they run the risk of alienating the agency and jeopardizing their own funding source. (They can’t be a partner on the one hand, and also participate in advocacy targeting them.) Given that they cannot commit to always being part of advocacy campaigns, they do not have “skin in the game” in the same way that advocacy organizations do. For this reason, the advocacy organizations may wonder about the value of their presence or their input into strategy, and their input does not always sit well with those who actively engage in the political struggle. While this feeling is – of course – completely understandable, service providers sometimes have especially keen insights into advocacy with public agencies, given the fact that they know those agencies so well.

Success through Mitigating Collaboration’s Challenges

As organizations come together to collaborate, they inevitably wrestle with issues such as the extent to which they share goals and perspectives, the time and bandwidth needed to participate in a collaborative, and friction around the distribution of resources. These issues are largely structural. For example, it will be rare that grassroots and grasstops organizations don’t bring different perspectives to the table, and when collaboratives include different types and sizes of organizations, resources will always accrue more to some organizations than others. In addition, less-resourced organizations will always struggle more with the time and bandwidth demands than organizations with greater resources.
The issues are really how other aspects of the work will soften the hard edges of the challenges, and how coalitions address their issues. And the more effectively organizations working together address the issues, the more likely that their coalition will be sustainable. Below are a few ways that coalitions have been able to minimize challenges.

- **Prioritizing relationship-building supports collaborative functioning.** It is naïve to reduce collaborative functioning to the health of the relationships among individual members, since friction is often rooted in structural issues. However, it is also true that human beings represent the organizational members, and individuals manifest those tensions. One person who had conflict with another collaborative member spoke about the way that their relationship manifested some of the distinctions discussed above (grassroots v. grasstops, and person of color v. white) – and that one day they simply decided to put the tension to rest and reached out, asking: “tell me your story, how did you get into this work? Who are you?” And by the end of that conversation, they were figuring out new ways to collaborate. Another person spoke about the fact that there was “considerable lack of trust” eight years ago. But now “we’re all friends. We really do trust each other. Not just work stuff. Me and [two others from two other organizations in the coalition], we just took a day off early and sat there and comforted each other. And gave ourselves the pep talk on what we’re going to do to protect our communities. I don’t think that eight years ago that would have happened. […] I’m really proud of how far we’ve come.” Another site shares that they do face what one advocate calls “the typical challenges” of service providers and advocates working together, because organizations offering services must avoid being perceived as an antagonist to agencies that they may have contractual relationships with (or hope to have in the future). While this is a challenge, the organizations in the coalition recognize its reality and just talk it through.

- **Focusing on healing to build relationships, align values, and resolve conflict.** When multiple groups come together in a coalition, a well-defined set of shared beliefs, values, and behavioral expectations can transform the experience of working together. Advocates in Monterey shared a common grounding in *La Cultura Cura*, a set of healing practices and beliefs rooted in core teachings of Chicanx, Latinx, Raza, and Native ancestors about the importance of sacred values, traditions, and interconnected relationships as the foundation of cultural strength. A key practice in this tradition is the healing circle, used to strengthen community ties and to restore and resolve conflict. The founders of MILPA expanded and innovated on this model by adding an explicit focus on power, movement building, and social change. MILPA organizers introduced other advocates and the community to *La Cultura Cura* including leading a set of powerful community healing circles in the wake of the string of officer-involved shootings in the summer of 2014. Culturally-rooted healing practices became deeply integrated into all the work of the Justice Reinvestment Coalition – from the opening of coalition meetings to the building of campaign strategy to the structure of one-on-one meetings with targets of advocacy. Internally, when members or
organizations in the coalition were at odds, having a concrete set of practices for addressing conflict and harm – the healing circle – that stressed interconnectedness and relationship-building allowed the coalition to productively work through their differences.

- **Enacting norms of reciprocity helps to build “network trustworthiness” – which creates a virtuous cycle to strengthen coalitions.** The concept of network trustworthiness refers to the idea that as people interact in a network, they need to be able to rely on one another to live up to their commitments and obligations. The more they can rely on one another, the more they build up trust in their relationships, and the stronger the network is. This is something that advocates refer to when describing the way that coalitions work well. In Long Beach, advocates talk about how they have developed the deceptively simple practice of showing up: being there, without fail, for one another on campaigns and activities. There is also the understanding of how much effort the work takes, and that organizations are at different places in terms of their people capacity. When one organization can’t show up or has to temporarily pull back in terms of participation, another organization will be there (knowing that down the line the favor will be returned). The practice of showing up is so powerful for two reasons. First, one of the most important resources that advocacy organizations have is their people power – their ability to mobilize members and residents to bring their passion, unity, and commitment to events and activities that put pressure on decision-makers. In bringing people power to the efforts of one another, organizations are sharing their most valuable resource. They are demonstrating how much the shared goals matter, and they are strengthening ties by bringing something of so much value. Second, trust among organizations is a critical ingredient for successful collaboration. And the most effective path to trust is being there for the long haul. By consistently showing up over time, building trust, and bringing the powerful resource of people power, organizations strengthen relationships within their coalition. And in South LA, one advocate spoke of the importance of what local groups always do for one another – they always publicly share credit for collaborative work. When one organization consistently did not share credit – but instead took credit for work that had been collectively accomplished – that “dismissing” of other organizations took its toll and eroded trust.

- **The role of grassroots organizations bringing technical assistance or facilitation to collaboratives is most successful when those organizations work in service of the grassroots organizations.** Organizations that bring particular skills or roles to collaboratives are typically grassroots organizations, and their roles and any additional resources they receive for their roles can become a source of tension with grassroots organizations. There are some useful contrasts between counties that can shed light on how to manage those tensions. In one county, a member of the collaborative received additional resources to take on the role of backbone support and narrative change TA provider. This created a challenge because the special role and additional resources reinforced a hierarchy between grassroots and grassroots organizations. In this site, feedback from one of the advocates was that the

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resources going to the TA provider was “reproducing systems of oppression.” The advocate absolutely believed that there are important roles that TA providers and facilitators can play, but “its role needs to be redefined as being in service of folks on the ground.” In another site where the TA provider is part of the collaborative (like this one), the friction does not exist – and it is also the case that the TA provider (bringing budget advocacy capacity) indeed largely functions in a way so as to work “in service of” the rest of the collaborative. The resources going to a budget advocacy TA provider outside the collaborative in a third site is also no cause for resentment – and again, when coalition members describe that TA provider, it is in terms of the effectiveness of the services they bring to the coalition. When a TA provider demonstrates that their role is to be in service of the coalition or collaborative, this approach to the role mitigates (or obviates) any resentment that grassroots organizations might experience as when resources accrue to a well-resourced organization, or when the TA provider adopts a stance of being “above” other organizations.

Feedback from Advocates about How TCE can Support the Success of Collaboration

Advocates see multiple ways that TCE has been effectively supporting collaboration, and they also have some ideas of the ways that TCE can continue to build out its support.

- Funding over a long period of time has been helpful not only in providing resources to coalitions and coalition members, but also in establishing some certainty about the future (which makes planning easier). In several counties, advocates credit TCE with supporting the development their coalitions. There are two very simple factors that advocates in two counties pointed to: time and money. The fact of the 10-year commitment gave groups assurances that this initiative would stick around, so they could make long-term plans based on the fact that the BHC work would shape the field. In addition, the fact of additional resources coming to the communities means that groups have leeway to undertake work, partnerships, and capacity-building that they could not have otherwise. In addition, these counties point to the time and resources specifically for planning and coordination, as well as the willingness of TCE to truly listen to what the community wants, rather than to impose their own vision.

Collaboration is one key success in the organizing work here. Before the TCE’s BHC initiative, most of the partners had been doing siloed work, and not knowing what other organizations are doing. So now the partners are working together to create this model of the safe community. … I don’t think any of these organizations would have built so much of a relationship without TCE coming in.

-Long Beach Advocate
Local/Statewide Alignment

Since justice reinvestment happens at the local and state levels, there is potential for statewide and local advocates to align their work in a variety of ways to strengthen efforts at both levels. Local efforts can inform or support statewide advocacy, and advocacy organizations working at a state level can bring their skills and perspectives to support local advocates and campaigns. To find ways that local/statewide alignment might be contributing to progress in policy change, TCE has an interest in finding: “Evidence of strengthened alignment of state and local efforts across content areas, with strong resident engagement, which helps build policy, systems, and practice change and leads to significant improvements in health equity. This includes evidence of linking and supporting existing statewide networks with local efforts for local, regional, and statewide advocacy.”

While there are definitely instances of local/statewide alignment as part of justice reinvestment advocacy, it has not appeared to play a very big role. And in fact, when advocates were asked about it, several of them spoke about the fact that they wished for more local/statewide alignment, and they brought up a few examples of other statewide networks that they believe may have lessons on how to support opportunities for alignment across BHC sites.

Guiding Questions

- How do statewide and local efforts connect/interact?
- How are local communities connected to state level advocacy efforts?
- Are efforts at either level being leveraged to reinforce one another?

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6 The California Endowment and the Center for the Study of Social Policy. 2016. The North Star Goals and Indicator for Building Healthy Communities. Los Angeles: TCE Workgroup on North Star Goals and Indicators.
Advocacy with the Board of State and Community Corrections

Prop 47 had designated a specific mechanism and process for justice reinvestment at the state level: California’s Department of Finance would calculate the savings due to Prop 47, and 65% of those funds would be disbursed by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC). Although there was a formal process, advocates could not simply trust that the promise of Prop 47 would be fulfilled. It was possible that the law could go the way of Realignment, with much of the funding getting channeled back to law enforcement. Many organizations came together as part of a “BSCC Collaborative” to advocate with the BSCC to ensure that grants from the Prop 47 fund would go mostly to non-law enforcement public sector entities (e.g. public health departments, school districts, cities, etc.), and also that much of the funding would be passed through from public agencies to community-based organizations.

Although the work of BSCC advocacy was not closely integrated into county-level work of the justice reinvestment coalitions, there is overlap in the participants. MILPA is part of the Monterey coalition, Californians for Safety and Justice was part of the South LA coalition. And in addition to the core BSCC collaborative members, there is a much broader set of members that participate in collaborative calls and that also take part in specific advocacy actions with the BSCC. This extended group includes CURYJ (Communities United for Restorative youth Justice) and the Ella Baker Center (both in the Alameda coalition), and A New Way of Life (in the South LA coalition and the Long Beach Coalition). The Ella Baker Center worked with other organizations in the BSCC Collaborative on an effort (led by Californians United for a Responsible Budget – also one of the members of the extended BSCC collaborative) to help ensure that formerly incarcerated people were fairly represented on the BSCC committee that developed the Prop 47 request for proposals and then chose the agencies to receive grants. They proposed a slate of 14 people, and three of them were selected (one of them a leader who was then at the Ella Baker Center, and who is now at CURYJ).

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7 Beyond the core set of organizations, the BSCC Collaborative includes a broader set of members. The broader set includes many additional organizations. A partial list is: A New Way of Life, Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB), Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ), the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, and Starting Over.
One county coalition – the Justice Reinvestment Coalition (JRC) in Alameda County – was directly involved in the BSCC efforts. The JRC developed a memo on the importance of trauma-informed care, arguing that programs receiving grants from the Prop 47 fund should incorporate trauma-informed care models. This memo helped to influence the thinking of the Prop 47 Executive Steering Committee (ESC) and – as a result – the Request for Proposals (RFP) included the following guiding principle: “Prioritize client-focused/client-centered and holistic programs and approaches, including healing strategies and trauma informed care.”\(^8\)

In addition, the BSCC advocacy ultimately – although indirectly – influenced the Prop 47 Fund grants. The table below shows the awards and amounts going to the counties included in this report:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Funded Agency</th>
<th>Award Amount</th>
<th>Percent Passed through to CBOs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alameda County</td>
<td>County Health Services Department</td>
<td>$6 million</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contra Costa</td>
<td>County Health Services Department</td>
<td>$5.98 million</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>El Rancho Unified School District</td>
<td>$997,436</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office</td>
<td>$6 million</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City of Los Angeles Mayor’s Office of Reentry</td>
<td>$5.99 million</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Department of Health Services Office of Diversion and Reentry</td>
<td>$20 million</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pasadena City Police Department</td>
<td>$2.51 million</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monterey County</td>
<td>County Health Department Behavioral Health Bureau</td>
<td>$6 million</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>Oceanside Unified School District</td>
<td>$998,300</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>San Diego County</td>
<td>$6 million</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^8\) Board of State and Community Corrections, November 18, 2016. *Proposition 47 Grant Program Request for Proposals.* (Accessed here.)
A Successful Statewide Campaign to Increase the Budget Allocation to the State’s Prop 47 Fund

Prop 47 was created to house the dollars that the state saved as incarceration rates declined, with these funds available to be granted out to counties. In 2015, the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) estimated the amount of funding to be between $100 and $200 million per year (available to be granted out by July 2017). However, when the governor released his proposed budget in January 2016, the line item for the Prop 47 fund was only $29 million. This severe reduction in funds available for prevention and rehabilitation programs was a betrayal of the goals of Prop 47.

Community Coalition, a grassroots organization in LA’s Coalition for Safety and Justice, organized a statewide campaign with the ultimate goal that “Governor Brown adopts the LAO’s framework of analyzing state savings in the 2016-17 budget.” The campaign was a massive undertaking, mobilizing not only the LA coalition members but also other coalitions and networks across the state. Ultimately, as part of the campaign, there was a long list of accomplishments: the campaign received 55 letters of support and endorsements from civil rights, faith-based, and labor organizations; advocates appeared at the Assembly Sub-Committee on Public Safety, the Senate Sub-Committee on Corrections, Public Safety, and Judiciary, and Boys and Men of Color Caucus hearings; there were delegation visits with the Department of Finance (which had made the calculation resulting in the $29 million allocation), the Senate Pro Tem, the Assembly Speaker, 12 Assembly Members, and two Senators; four municipal and county resolutions were passed in support of a budget increase (Los Angeles City Council and Board of Supervisors, San Diego City Council, and San Bernardino School Board); there were two community meetings with Assembly Members; advocacy organizations coordinated three lobby days at the Capitol; nine editorials were published or aired in the media (including in the LA Times and the Sacramento Bee); and there was a statewide day of action with rallies in Los Angeles and Oakland.

The campaign ultimately resulted in a more than doubling of the Prop 47 Fund amount allocated in the state budget – from $29 million to $68 million ($40 million would be an annual appropriation, and $28 million was a one-time appropriation for the 2016-17 fiscal year). The increase for the annual appropriation happened during the “May Revise” of the budget, and the one-time appropriation came from a combination of $10 million approved by the Assembly Sub-Committee on Public Safety, and $18 million for the K-12 Truancy and Dropout Prevention

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10 This articulation of the campaign goal is taken from a Community Coalition strategy overview document.
Programs (approved in conference committee as the Assembly and Senate reconciled their versions of the state budget with one another).

The Missed Opportunities to Align Local and Statewide Efforts

Coalition members generally appreciate being part of a statewide network of BHC sites. Having peers across the state who are engaging in similar work means that people in each site are able to pick up the phone and talk through ideas or challenges. However, two advocates – one from Northern and one from Southern California – shared that they wish that the coordinating entity from TCE had been more robust (with both of them using the phrase “missed opportunity”). They each gave an example of statewide networks that they belong to, suggesting that TCE’s efforts at local/statewide alignment might take some cues from how these networks pursue their goals.

- **California Calls.** California Calls is a statewide alliance of 31 organizations organized in 12 counties, with a long-term goal of developing a progressive alliance of grassroots social justice organizations and unions representing key issues. It uses its collective power to pursue systems change. The advocate who believes that California Calls has a good model pointed to its flexibility. The Coordinating Committee (the highest decision-making body in the alliance) has a keen awareness of the way that strategies need to be tailored for locality. This can sometimes be a problem in statewide networks: the perspective of the statewide coordinators often tends to grow out of experience in San Francisco or Los Angeles. An example was: “With the really good [statewide coordinators], they have a statewide and a local lens. We say: ‘hey that won’t work for our homeless voters’ – and they say: ‘gotcha, we’ll work with you, we’ll figure it out.’ The rigid ones say: “then stop registering them.” This advocate was not arguing that TCE’s statewide work is rigid – this story illustrated that not only is flexibility helpful, but also that California Calls really gets to know what is happening locally. That was the real contrast with TCE: this advocate felt that the missed opportunity was that statewide staff from TCE “don’t engage with us at a local level and are disconnected from the local work.”

- **California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN).** Another advocate described how CPEHN’s model has been effective. CPEHN does a good job of coordinating calls and meetings for the network members. CPEHN also brings together members in Sacramento for legislative visits and supports bill-writing. The legislative visits and the bill-writing have built local advocacy capacity. The network has also provided a great deal of information to local members about what is happening in their counties – in particular, implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and AB 109.
To strengthen local/statewide alignment and efforts, TCE might consider meeting with partners who have strong opinions about how the TCE’s approach to statewide work could improve, and conduct an appreciative inquiry exercise to unpack what the ingredients are of local/statewide alignment.

**People Power**

When communities have people power, “historically excluded adult and youth residents have voice, agency, and power in public and private decision-making.”

People power is usually organized by grassroots, base-building organizations, generating “collective power ... to name problems, demand specific solutions, and hold those in power accountable.” People power also entails empowering residents to identify their highest priority issues and to connect those to policy solutions, as well as what is typically thought of as power-building: organizing and mobilizing residents to take action. Grassroots organizations, then – as well as other organizations that can turn out membership – play an indispensable role in developing the power-building infrastructure. TCE has recognized this indispensable role, and as part of its BHC strategy, TCE has been investing in building people power.

**People Power has been a Critical Ingredient in Advocacy**

As coalitions have built power, they have cultivated both *inside* and *outside* power. Not only have staff from coalition members been meeting with public sector department staff and elected officials, but people have been showing up in force to rally, protest, and make public comment. Every single advocacy win had *both* inside and outside power – and it is impossible to imagine the wins without advocates rallying and showing their numbers and commitment in

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public spaces. For example, in South LA, the board of supervisors passed strongly worded motions to push law enforcement departments to track and calculate savings accruing as a result of Prop 47. But in the year prior to these motions, Prop 47 implementation was not on their radar. The South LA coalition changed that, by mobilizing over 4,000 people to show up at a Prop 47 resource fair, demonstrating the need for the board to pay attention. This event created a “flashpoint,” and the coalition amplified the message by working with journalists to cover the resource fair.

Other good examples are in Long Beach and Sacramento, in which elected officials were quoted in the press saying that the progress would not have happened without persistent activism. Responding to an Invest in Youth advocacy campaign, the Long Beach city budget included $20,000 in seed money to establish a Children and Youth Fund and for a youth-led strategic planning process for the Fund. A city councilmember was quoted in the paper saying that the line item appeared in the budget “only … because [invest in Youth] advocated for it.”14 And the Sacramento Board of Supervisors voted not to renew a contract with ICE after two years of advocacy from the local coalition (and other partners). One of the supervisors was quoted in the Sacramento Bee, saying: “Certainly, the activists deserve a lot of credit for really bringing the nuances of the issue to the forefront in terms of what we are being asked to consider with the contract extension.”15

Building People Power is Extremely Difficult

Turning people into dedicated activists is an uphill battle. To do it well, base-building organizations need to engage the community, mobilize people for actions, develop a pipeline of resident leaders, and supporting people to stay involved over the long term. This work requires skilled, dedicated community organizers who have built longstanding, trusting relationships with community members. That is hard enough under any circumstances – but those building people power among communities impacted by the criminal justice system face another layer of difficulty. Organizers

The biggest and heaviest lift is on the ground. We’re involved with kids who are experiencing trauma. We’re doing youth action research and leadership development, and we’re responding to crisis all the time. And I’m hiring people out of jail – people who need a lot of support. We’re hustling to find housing and to pay for funerals – lots of things we can’t plan for. We enter into a sacred relationship with these people.

-Alameda County Advocate


15 Chabria, A. June 6, 2018. “‘This is a big win for us.’ Cancellation of Sacramento ICE contract part of a national push.” Sacramento Bee. (Accessed here.)
work with a population that has endured the trauma of incarceration and over-policing. This population needs resources, support, and healing. Those who are being organized need a great deal from the organizers, and those things are often unpredictable, and emotionally draining as well. The degree to which this job is challenging needs to be honored by those funding the work.

**Storytelling as Central to Building People Power**

Storytelling has proven fundamental to building people power. For example, in Long Beach, as the youth brought their stories to the Young People’s Budget Hearing and to other events, they were able to share the ways that they must constantly negotiate being policed in school, and also the ways that positive youth development programming can be a lifeline. And in Alameda County, formerly incarcerated people have told their stories at rallies for a campaign pressuring the Board of Supervisors to commit to creating 1400 jobs within the county. They have been able to share the experience of being incarcerated, as well as what it’s like to reenter and then thrive after finding services that meet them where they are at. These stories put the listeners in the shoes of the storytellers, and can help to mobilize people to advocate for shifting policies. They also help to keep people engaged in the work, as they are able to build a bond with others through sharing what is deeply personal.

When members of the public are investing their time – whenever there’s someone from ... a community most impacted – that’s what works. People are moved by their stories. [Professional] advocates can’t do that if that’s not their stories. It’s incredibly effective. Yes statistics help, but it’s someone standing up and saying how it has impacted them directly. No one cares if the lawyers are the only ones showing up.

- Alameda County Advocate

**The Hazard of Treating People Transactionally when Using Storytelling Strategies to Build People Power**

Sometimes well-meaning organizations say: “okay, we have to mobilize and advocate for these issues, and we have to have the faces of the people who are impacted.” And of course that’s absolutely true. However, I don’t like when you take a person who’s been through the system that has already traumatized them, and then youexploit them by just taking their stories. Do they get to help choose what part is included? Do they give their permission? Do they get compensated?
When using stories as a tactic, organizations run the risk of simply treating people as a “storytelling resource” rather than as human beings. This is especially common when organizations that are not embedded into the community are implementing an advocacy strategy that involves having formerly incarcerated people share their stories in public. Grassroots activists can sometimes be treated as “the grassroots module:” something to simply fulfill a role when needed. This relationship is highly transactional, rather than relational. It views grassroots activists as resources to be leveraged, rather than people to be in community with. Formerly incarcerated people who share their stories are often telling very traumatic stories and, as an advocate puts it, “people have to expend massive amounts of time and psychic energy, retelling their stories, sometimes against outright opposition.”

The issue of being treated transactionally is related to the tension between the inside and outside strategies of power-building. When organizations are building inside power, the lion’s share of their attention is likely to be on the institutional insiders with whom they are seeking a relationship – and they may end up focusing more on that relationship than on the people whose voices they ultimately seek to center. In Alameda, Long Beach, Sacramento, and South LA, coalition members discussed the fact that it’s important to have people involved in advocacy with the mindset that centers the wellbeing of the grassroots activists among whom they are building their base.

And is $40 what I will sell my soul for? … Some folks might use storytelling in a way that can be harmful.

- Long Beach Advocate

The storytelling can be strengthened: making sure those folks are supported, and there are resources for them. The people who are doing the advocacy also need services. When you have people tell their stories, they need to be in a certain state of readiness, because telling the stories can be triggering. Once they are more stable [with the support of services] they are more prepared to do this storytelling work.

- Alameda County Advocate

The Game-Changing Nature of Budget Advocacy Capacity

Public sector budgets are policy in action – where the rubber hits the road. Whatever is funded – and not funded – reflects policy priorities and underlying values. Conducting advocacy to change budgets, then, is a way of going straight to the heart of policy. This is especially true for justice reinvestment advocacy, because it focuses specifically on how cities, counties, and the state of California should reduce funds in law enforcement and corrections, and increase funds in the parts of the budget that support healthy communities.
While the focus on budgets can be a highly effective way of advocating for policy change, it is also an arena characterized by a sharp information asymmetry that advantages those seeking to protect the status quo. Not only do people on the inside of the public sector know more about their budgets and how their budgets work, but they also have the capacity to prevent others from accessing budget information. And in fact, county and city officials often use the inherent complexity and highly technical nature of budgets as a way to resist those demands for justice reinvestment. The specialized knowledge needed to understand budgets becomes an advantage to those who would prefer their budgets to be left alone: complexity can function, then, as an “entry barrier” to advocates.

Advocates are, however, clearly not helpless in the face of budget complexity and the resistance of public sector actors to make budgets transparent. As advocates build their budget advocacy skills, their newfound expertise can be used as a way to level the playing field between advocates and targets of advocacy. Since budget advocacy is not typically in the toolbox of advocates, collaboratives focused on justice reinvestment worked hard to build their budget advocacy capacity by working with organizations and TA providers who brought expertise in budgets and budget advocacy. Advocates learned a variety of skills, including things like estimating how reduced incarceration can translate into freed-up dollars, identifying where money should come from and go to in a particular budget, raising the salience of budgets with the grassroots, and making budget asks.

Budget advocacy turned out to be a game changer in justice reinvestment advocacy. Across sites, building budget advocacy skills strengthened the ability of coalitions to do their work. In addition, building this capacity sometimes became a potent tool for building people power and cultivating inside allies.

**Budget Advocacy Expertise as a Critical Capacity for Coalitions**

The Advancement Project adds tremendous value to this work. We would not be able to be where we’re currently at without their technical support, and their research and policy analysis.

- Long Beach Advocate

To move something you need 1) data, 2) stories,
Budget advocacy is a relatively esoteric skill – not something that most people in organizing or advocacy organizations have learned how to do. For this reason, having access to an organization with that expertise provides the knowledge that coalitions need to conduct justice reinvestment policy advocacy. For two of the coalitions (San Diego and South LA) a budget advocacy organization was actually a coalition member; for the rest of the coalitions, budget advocacy organizations provided training and TA to the coalition members. In both models, the participation of an organization that could conduct budget advocacy and train others to participate was a boon to the whole coalition. Their work allowed them to engage in a type of advocacy that they would not otherwise have been able to carry out. The growing capacity in budget advocacy has allowed organizations to go to county boards of supervisors and city councils to discuss budgets with confidence, proposing in compelling ways where dollars can come from and how they should be used.

The magic of budget advocacy is the ability to push back against the information asymmetry that favors the public sector vis-à-vis advocates. With the capacity to understand the budgets – or even understand the questions to ask or where to go to get the information – city and county departments have a harder time using their superior knowledge to push back against advocacy.

And in addition, simply bringing some budget research into the public domain – even if it’s not perfect – is powerful. If advocates use that research as a basis on which to make demands, and public sector officials want to resist by saying: “your information is wrong,” they are put in the position of having to share the right information. So by opening up budgets to public deliberation, advocates are bringing more budget information to light and increasing transparency.

I think one of the greatest tools has been the TA – the budget experts, the messaging, the policy side. ... When we have the hard information, it’s hard for people to say ‘we can’t do that, that’s impossible.’ Those are key, getting people armed with the information they need. ... I can’t stress enough how helpful it is to have people who do data collection and analysis – the deeper dives, they really flesh out what the opportunities are....

- Sacramento County Advocate

Around the county budget, we seized control from the county on the facts, because we have access to the facts. It’s not: “the county said....” No! Because we’ve done research on that.

- San Diego County Advocate
Budget Advocacy is a Potent Tool for Mobilizing People Power

Some coalitions have used budgets as a way to bring people out to events. The issue of how the public sector spends funds to either undermine or support communities can be incredibly compelling. One example is in Long Beach, where youth conducted a survey with community members to solicit feedback on how they believed the city should allocate its budget. They asked 750 residents: “if you had a million dollars, how would you spend it, and why?” Results showed seven out of 10 supported increasing public funds for youth programs, and eight out of 10 favored investing in community-based youth development programs as a way of making communities safer. While the survey results were shared back with the city council, as part of their Invest in Youth campaign, the act of surveying also functioned as part of community organizing work – asking residents what problems they could solve if they had the resources for it. This survey was actually a way of creating – as some of the organizers said – a “frame shift,” in the sense that people could see that they have a right to weigh in on how funding is spent.

In San Diego, advocates also found out just how powerful a tool budgets were for mobilizing residents. Several organizations within the coalition were able to bring people out to budget hearings, including the ACLU inviting formerly incarcerated people to tell their stories at county budget hearings in order to raise the profile of the need for justice reinvestment. At one of the budget hearings, about 1000 people showed up. With so many people showing up, telling stories, and giving public comment, the Board of Supervisors voted to allocate $25 million to homeless services and affordable housing. With that win, groups had an easier time mobilizing members to come to budget hearings.

When the odds are stacked against you, only the die-hard people on the issue show up, because it’s a lost cause. But now that the groups see an opportunity to have an influence, more are showing up. New organizations are getting involved. … When you see all those groups show up, it’s because of something that’s shifting. …They’re showing up together. These meetings happen in the middle of the day on weekdays, and they find 30-50 people to show up.

- San Diego County Advocate

Coalitions use Budget Advocacy to Cultivate Inside Allies

Another goal in the research meetings is that we’re trying to build relationships with people in power. So they are very much about building relationships and power through those relationships, so that we can create systems
The work of budget advocacy naturally fits with a model of advocacy that is about building relationships with inside allies. Advocates need to work directly with city councilmembers, county supervisors, or managers within departments to discuss ideas about how to allocate funding. For example, the coalition in Sacramento has conducted “research meetings,” at which advocates gather with the leaders from key county departments (including the Sheriff’s Department, the Probation Department, the Public Defender’s Office, the District Attorney’s Office, and Health & Human Services) and county supervisors, bringing research and data on the costs of law enforcement and the benefits of programs and services for prevention and rehabilitation. These meetings are designed to open up a dialogue with decision-makers about strategies for shifting funds from law enforcement to programs and services. In these meetings, coalition members advocate for specific types of spending, and they also present themselves as people who can help the departments figure out how to do important prevention work, asking: “what are your roadblocks?” As they conduct this advocacy, they are building power by developing close relationships with those who have power over budgets.

Using budget advocacy to cultivate inside allies is opening up new opportunities for justice reinvestment. Given the fact that some city and county departments and agencies would be the beneficiaries of budget reinvestment (e.g. behavioral health departments), advocates can continue to build alliances with these departments. Advocates can strengthen the relationships they have built so far, and can collaborate with their inside allies develop strategies for how to work across agencies within a city or county to shift funds into prevention and rehabilitation.16

**Narrative Change**

**Guiding Questions**

- How are advocates’ efforts helping to change the narrative for rolling back mass incarceration and imagining health and community support at the center?
- How is the law enforcement narrative on change.

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16 This type of alliance-building is already happening to the extent that coalitions are cultivating inside allies. They may not yet be working with their inside allies to develop a comprehensive justice reinvestment strategy across departments. This idea arose in a meeting where TCE Program Managers and the Learning & Evaluation Department staff were reflecting on the evaluation findings. Another idea that arose during the discussion was that counties might take on the role of training the public on budgets and budgeting, and might also develop participatory budgeting processes.
Narrative is central to policy advocacy and social change: the success of advocacy rests on the ability to communicate in a way that engages and mobilizes community members, sways public opinion, and persuades policymakers. TCE explicitly recognizes the power of narrative, defining narrative change in this way: “The dominant cultural narrative has changed to one of inclusion and equity, recognizing traditionally excluded adult and youth residents as assets to their communities and prioritizing prevention over punishment.”\(^\text{17}\)

TCE invests in narrative change by making grants for messaging work done within the BHC sites. Through grassroots storytelling, messaging work, advocacy campaigns, and day-to-day policy advocacy, activists and advocates mobilize prevention-not-punishment narratives. The consistent use of these narratives can galvanize change in four ways: by raising the salience of criminal justice issues; by persuading policymakers and voters; by mobilizing people to participate in an advocacy campaign; and by creating new standards for “what counts as common sense” in the public sphere, laying out the facts and values that people must appeal to in order to make legitimate claims.

By the time Prop 47 had passed at the end of 2014, the prevention-not-punishment narrative was already quite widespread. The framing might be summed up as “smart on crime”\(^\text{18}\) – a perspective that opens up new narrative terrain, escaping the false dichotomy of “tough on crime” and “soft on crime.” As ACLU California’s Criminal Justice and Drug Policy Director said in the Sacramento Bee the day after Prop 47 passed: “There’s a shift in the national consciousness ... about crime and punishment, and I think that ‘smart on crime’ sort of captures the mood of the nation now. It’s time to be smart, and not just enact harsher legislation. I think people realize that now.”\(^\text{19}\) The basic ideas of justice reinvestment had become well known. As advocates engaged in their narrative change strategies, they could draw upon the narrative resources that the Prop 47 campaign made available.

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\(^\text{17}\) See North Star Indicator #2 Under North Star Goal #1: https://www.calendow.org/northstar/goal1.html.

\(^\text{18}\) A term coined by Kamala Harris in her 2009 book when she was San Francisco’s District Attorney. Lenore Anderson, the Executive Director of CSJ, worked with Harris when she was a DA.

**Narrative Change Strategies**

Strategies to create a shift in the public safety narrative were of two general types: public education campaigns with clearly delineated tactics, and also simply *speaking* the narrative in a way that is embedded in all advocacy efforts. All sites used op-eds, earned media (getting stories into local newspapers), and the crafting and sharing of talking points to be used at events. Advocates in the BHC counties in Northern California (Alameda, Contra Costa, Monterey, and Sacramento) also undertook a “Budget Our Values” billboard campaign, which was complemented with formerly incarcerated people telling their stories in online videos. In addition, narrative change was simply embedded in advocacy, because the messaging of prevention-not-punishment was an inherent part of every single advocacy conversation, and of any story that was told at any event. And storytelling – just as it is a centerpiece of building power – is a centerpiece of narrative change as well.

**Building Capacity to Engage in Narrative Change Strategies**

For the four Northern California sites, TA for narrative change work was provided by the Ella Baker Center, working with the Center for Story-Based Strategy (CSS). CSS worked with coalitions to identify the stories emerging from local experience, and the work resulted in billboards in each of the four counties, along with videos posted online. There were many ways in which the billboards were a success. They were designed to heighten public awareness about the power of budgets and – in doing so – increase the issue salience of budgets to voters. With voters paying more attention to the importance of budgets, supervisors would know that they would be held accountable to creating budgets reflecting the values already articulated by the county when a majority voted for Prop 47. In addition, billboards pictured system-impacted people, and having formerly incarcerated people on billboards around the county generated a lot of pride. It is hard to know, though, the extent to which they changed hearts and minds.

Whether or not we know the effect of the billboards and online videos, advocacy campaigns must clearly include a narrative change element, so possibly a more relevant question is how effectively the TA supported coalition members to engage in narrative change strategies. While there was definitely appreciation for the workshops and the billboards in Northern California, the TA approach and the coalitions may not have been a good match. The TA was designed partly to make narrative change work less burdensome – to take on some of the work, since organizations often did not have the time or the bandwidth to engage fully in these campaigns. As the TA provider endeavored to make things easier, some of the organizations in the coalitions experienced the process as not organic enough. There was a critique that the process should have been more organic, with the system-impacted people having more of a say in the shape of the narrative strategy.
The critique of the narrative change TA parallels the critique sometimes made of storytelling work: that formerly incarcerated people were being treated in a transactional way. In other words, they became the “material” for the narrative work, rather than human beings with painful stories to tell.

All of this is 2020 hindsight, however. The real lesson learned may be that if narrative change is to become integrated into an advocacy strategy, capacity for that work should be built inside the grassroots organizations with formerly incarcerated leaders. Building this capacity will take longer and may be more costly, but with such capacity, the voices of formerly incarcerated people will be truly centered, and the narrative strategies will not be “consultant-driven.”

**Fighting Back against the Tough-on-Crime Narrative – and Law Enforcement’s Cooptation of Prevention-not-Punishment**

As the advocates promoted a prevention-not-punishment frame, they have been confronted with two challenges from law enforcement: first, a consistent argument that Prop 47 was responsible for any uptick in crime rates; and second, a cooptation of the frame so that law enforcement agencies could position themselves for funding. Law enforcement agencies across California (notably sheriffs and district attorneys) were overwhelmingly opposed to Prop 47. They argued that it would translate into more criminals on the streets, and it would also lower the deterrent to crime by making punishment less severe. Because that was their argument, just about every time statistics came out showing that crime was up in a particular county, or in California, or if a high-profile crime was committed, an op-ed would come out from someone in law enforcement arguing that it was due to Prop 47. Advocates found themselves fighting back against these op-eds, writing op-eds of their own, or leveraging their relationships with the media to call up reporters to explain why these opinions were wrong.

On the other side of the ledger, law enforcement has also begun to adopt the language of Prop 47. All across California, law enforcement and corrections departments have begun – over the past few years – to apply for services funding. The perspective of advocates is that they are using this approach to justify keeping their budgets at the same level or even growing their budgets. One advocate explained that “I don’t know if sheriffs are using the term “justice reinvestment” in the same way we are – but I do know the sheriffs have this in mind when they are thinking about programs. They want to get the money to do this sort

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All of the sheriffs are continuing with the narrative of: “we need this money to keep the public safe.” They point to how the money can improve conditions in jails. They position themselves as social service providers – that’s a way for them to justify having more funding even as the jail populations could drop.

- **Alameda County Advocate**
of work. They can argue for more supervision – and it’s a way to include justice reinvestment in what they do.” Another advocate worried about the downside of law enforcement taking trauma-informed care seriously: “I’ve seen a shift where police, sheriffs, jail staff, and behavioral health people are aligning around the fact that trauma-informed care is so important. But then there’s the downside, because it creates a false sense of security that you can get good trauma-informed care from law enforcement personnel.”

This cooptation of the prevention-not-punishment frame by law enforcement is simply the new normal. There is, however, a philosophical divide among advocates about how to address it. Most advocates are firm that law enforcement and corrections should be consistently starved of resources, with resources coming back to communities. A few say, however, that the singular focus on care outside of jail ignores the fact that what happens inside of jail is still important. One advocate argued that what we really want are very few people in jail, but for jail to be very expensive because it includes a great deal of excellent programming.

**Has the Narrative Shifted?**

The narrative has definitely shifted since the pre-Prop 47 days. The Prop 47 campaign created broad publicity for the prevention-not-punishment, smart-on-crime narrative. And the very fact that law enforcement seeks to coopt the narrative shows that these frames are indeed ascendant. As one advocate puts it – “we have, as a movement, won the narrative. ... I would say that law enforcement and the apparatus of jailing has had to shift its tone to maintain control. Instead of saying ‘we want to build a jail to lock everyone up’ it’s: ‘we’ll be service providers.’ All the rehabilitation programs – the cops will run them. ... Jails need to look different to justify their existence. That’s partly why I know we’re winning. Law enforcement needs to try to sound like us.”

There is also other data suggesting a shift in narrative. A study of stories in the media shows that: “Coverage of community safety focuses on solutions with preventive approaches, with police reform becoming increasingly visible in the news between 2013 and 2015.” In addition, a rigorous survey conducted in California in 2016 found that 66% of voters believe that their local governments should offer more job training programs, increase youth support programs, and increase access to mental health services. Only 11% believe that more jails/prisons should be built (although 39% believe we should increase the number of police).

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Lessons from the Cross-Site Comparison

Effect of the Advocacy Efforts on Justice Reinvestment

The justice reinvestment “equation” has two sides: invest less in law enforcement, and invest more in prevention and rehabilitation. As we discussed at the outset, reducing investments in law enforcement is much harder than the other side of the equation. Even so, there were some divestment wins: two counties ended ICE contracts, and three counties ended juvenile fines and fees. And the work that coalitions did to promote investments in community-based prevention and rehabilitation programming saw such wins as seed funding for a Fund for Children and Youth, the establishment of a program for Alameda County to employ 1400 formerly incarcerated people, and San Diego moving $25 million out of its reserve funds for affordable housing and homelessness services.

The fact that these goals were achieved is *prima facie* evidence that advocacy has made a difference for justice reinvestment. This is for one simple reason:

*The goals adopted by advocates were not on the policy agendas of elected officials in any of the counties where coalitions were conducting justice reinvestment advocacy.*

For some of these goals, the coalitions funded by TCE worked in partnership with other organizations and coalitions – so the argument is not that the wins can be traced entirely to the TCE-funded coalitions. But the larger point is still true: without advocacy, these goals would not have been achieved at all. In other words, in the “counterfactual world” where advocates were not raising the salience of justice reinvestment issues, were not getting them on policy agendas, and were not pushing county boards of supervisors, city councils, and county departments to adopt new policies and practices, there is not a single reason to believe that any of the elected and appointed officials would have adopted and pursued these new policies and practices themselves. And, as pointed out below in the discussion of people power, public officials in two sites stated this directly (a city council member in Long Beach about the $200,000 line item in the budget as seed funding for the Fund for Children and Youth, and a county supervisor in Sacramento about the influence of advocates on the vote to not renew the ICE contract).

The work of the coalitions is impressive. Each one was agile, taking advantage of new opportunities as they arose, and thinking broadly about what justice reinvestment efforts could
look like. In terms of cross-site lessons, what can we learn about what the obstacles to, and enablers of, advocacy wins?

Obstacles to Advocacy Wins

The main challenge to advocacy coming up in all of the sites is the issue of budget complexity and a lack of transparency around budgets. This challenge presents both specific and broad challenges to justice reinvestment advocacy. The specific challenge is the difficulty of calculating the savings that accrue to the public sector due to Prop 47. Given that these calculations present fairly intractable technical challenges, advocates turned away from the narrower goals of “Prop 47 reallocation” to broader goals of justice reinvestment. With broader justice reinvestment goals, budget complexity and opacity still create barriers, but they are much more surmountable. This is where building budget advocacy capacity comes in: budgets can be demystified and the playing field becomes a bit more level as budget knowledge ameliorates the information asymmetry between public sector organizations and advocates. Even in counties that are particularly known for their budget opacity, San Diego and Sacramento, coalitions still had justice reinvestment wins.

Predictably, the power of law enforcement has been another obstacle to advocacy wins. For example, Long Beach had to temper its advocacy demands, because the police union holds such sway with city council. Advocates made a conscious decision to focus only on the invest side of the justice reinvestment equation, and steer clear of the divest side. And in Los Angeles, as a result of advocacy, the board of supervisors directed the Auditor-Controller (A-C) to work with eight departments to identify the savings that accrued due to Prop 47. While the A-C was able to estimate savings, each department simply pushed back and explained that the savings had to be reallocated within their departments and were not available to be reallocated to other prevention and rehabilitation programs funded in other departments.

Factors Promoting Advocacy Wins

People power stands out as a factor promoting advocacy wins in every site. For example, in Alameda, organizations with a long history of doing advocacy for issues of criminal justice and other challenges facing communities of color had formed a coalition in 2012 to respond to the opportunities offered by Realignment. Base-building organizations in the coalition already had large constituencies, as well as the skills for doing additional organizing around Prop 47 issues. Through door-knocking, Know Your Rights fairs, leadership development training, deep relationship-building, opportunities for storytelling, and member-led meetings, these organizations have marshalled the people power to bring the voice of system-impacted communities to county decision-makers.
In South LA, the strong capacity of several organizations in the local coalition to do community organizing and to engage in messaging work has created a synergy between people power and narrative change. Their community organizing capacity has meant that hundreds of residents have been engaged not only in events but also in leadership development. This large base has been a massive resource that the coalition can mobilize for rallies, testimony, community forums, and other events. The residents are also able to steadily build more power in the community, by exercising their leadership skills and engaging in community organizing themselves. In addition, these organizations have integrated narrative change work with organizing and trainings, so that the base they have built has been able to carry the justice reinvestment narrative into the community. Through repeating justice reinvestment messaging and talking points as they tell their stories – either one-on-one or in group settings – they are doing the work needed to make a prevention-not-punishment approach into common sense. The work in the community to establish a new common sense (including among voters) ultimately supported the board of supervisors to maintain a strong stance on Prop 47 and broader justice reinvestment issues.

Budget advocacy has also been critical to advocacy wins. As discussed earlier, building budget advocacy skills has been a game-changer for justice reinvestment. Not only has it focused in on where policy is encoded – in budgets – but it has also helped to level the playing field between those controlling the budgets (in cities and counties) and those advocating for budget shifts. It has also become a method of cultivating inside allies. For example, in San Diego, coalition members are investing time and effort in getting to know individuals in key departments and positioning themselves as “joint problem-solvers.”

The inside/outside strategy is a common one among advocates, and it has been effective among these justice reinvestment advocates. The use of people power has mobilized residents to put pressure on elected and appointed officials, showing them that voters care about investing in programs and services that can heal communities, and want to move away from punitive approaches. At the same time, coalition members have combined their budget advocacy with relationship-building skills to cultivate inside allies. From this position, they can help insiders solve the challenge of responding to constituents.
Considerations for Future Strategy: How TCE Can Continue Contributing to Power-Building Infrastructure

In every BHC county, the funding and support of TCE has indeed contributed to power-building infrastructure, and coalitions have been able to conduct advocacy together that they would not have been able to accomplish on their own. The infrastructure comprises the coalitions, their people power, their budget advocacy capacity, and their capacity to engage in narrative change work. Ultimately, though, we can think of the infrastructure as based on the set of organizations working in coalition. For a strong infrastructure, what is needed is a set of strong organizations embedded in networks, with the skill, norms, and supports that will enable effective coalitions.

Even though collaboration is sometimes challenging (as is natural), TCE’s BHC initiative has helped create a container for strengthening coalitions. (Even in South LA, where the TCE-funded coalition has disbanded, key organizations that were on the front lines in TCE-funded advocacy are still embedded in a network of other organizations that they can join forces with when the time is right and if they have the resources.) As part of acting as that “container,” TCE has supported coalition members to build budget advocacy skills (which have been a game-changer for justice reinvestment), and has opened up possibilities for additional organizing among residents – especially among formerly incarcerated people.

The most important legacy of TCE’s support for justice reinvestment will be the power-building infrastructure that has already developed, as well as the capacity to continue developing that infrastructure. **What are the lessons for how TCE might continue to support the development of power-building infrastructure, and how it might do so even more effectively?** As the BHC initiative nears its end, it is clear that the investments in the justice reinvestment work have paid off – and this is a moment to take stock of the lessons that the past hold for TCE’s future justice reinvestment strategy. Based on how advocacy unfolded in each site, and based on feedback from grantees, we can derive a set of considerations that TCE might take into account as it revisits ways to support power-building infrastructure. The considerations fall into three categories: (1) ways that TCE can strengthen coalitions directly; (2) ways that TCE can strengthen the organizations within coalitions, and (3) ways that TCE can strengthen the advocacy field by making “coalitional resources” broadly available to organizations and coalitions. After discussing some ideas for how TCE might support the power-building infrastructure, we conclude with some thoughts on timing: how bringing advocates into advocacy campaign design can avoid challenges that can come up as part of the details of policy implementation after a campaign win.
Strengthening Coalitions

Given the necessity and the benefits of collaboration, organizations work in coalition to reach their advocacy goals. With coalitions being a primary vehicle for advocacy work, TCE should continue its efforts to support strong and healthy coalitions. Here are some lessons for how TCE might improve its support for coalitions.

- **Building on coalitions already working in the local advocacy field, rather than “setting a new table” or bringing in new organizations as part of a “forced marriage.”** Collaboration is challenging under any circumstances, but there are fewer challenges to address when organizations come together organically, and not in response to a grant or to a funder strategy. In two counties, the justice reinvestment coalitions that TCE supported faced the challenge of shifting away from what had locally developed. In one case, a collaborative was already in existence, and the funding from TCE eventually led to a new collaborative replacing the old one (and some believe that the previous collaborative worked better). In the other case, a statewide organization was brought in to co-lead a county collaborative. The statewide organization did not have a good understanding of the local landscape, and didn’t have the trust of those who had been in the county for years. While the situations are different, the conclusion is similar: build on what is already there. TCE can build on what is organically in place, taking the lead from local organizations in terms of whether they want to expand, and what organization should facilitate or provide backbone support (if a facilitator is not already in place).

- **Considering the ways that coalitions might function as a set of small, strong, strategic partnerships that can link to tactical allies for campaigns – as an alternative to large, strong, long-lasting collaboratives.** Some of the challenges of collaboration pertain to the expectations of building a strong, sustainable infrastructure. In addition, coalitions work best (all else equal) when they function within a set of norms of reciprocity (showing up for one another, giving one another credit, sharing resources, making good on commitments). Such norms can develop only through repeated interactions over time – and the need for time seems to point to the need to create a sustainable collaborative infrastructure. How to square that circle? One advocate had the intriguing argument that coalition works better when it is based on small clusters of organizations with very strong partnerships (with the same philosophies, aligned goals, long-standing relationships, etc.). Those partnerships can then work together within a broad, loose coalition for specific campaigns. There is then less pressure on the coalition to form a strong collaborative, leaving a coalition is a less momentous event, and the coalition is time-limited so unhealthy member relationships do not have time to fester. At the same time, norms of reciprocity will be strengthened because organizations that do not practice them will not be re-invited to join coalitions. The field can gradually strengthen those norms, and through repeated interactions, more small clusters
can form (as they build very strong relationships by working together over the years). TCE may want to explore this model more deeply, and experiment with ways to support it.

- **Coalitions surfacing issues and developing effective ways to work together at the outset.** As TCE makes grants to support coalitions, it might consider a model of grantmaking that encourages coalitions to establish healthy ways of working together as they launch their work together. Advocates from three counties reflected on negative and positive examples of working together in collaboration, and they offered insights into how important it is to develop strong, open, and authentic relationships from the beginning. While coalitions can strengthen relationships at any time, it is more effective and easier to establish trusting relationships in the beginning, before unhealthy dynamics have had time to take root. One advocate reflected on their experience from another collaborative, sharing that the small number of organizations did a great deal of up-front work to establish norms and regular practices, and to build trust. The norms and practices they set up together included check-ins and check-outs at every meeting, an agreement to raise concerns immediately with the group (along with the agreement not to have side conversations about others in the collaborative), and the use of POP (purpose, outcomes, and process) on each meeting agenda. They also acknowledged power and privilege differentials, had candid facilitated discussions early on (“like marriage counseling before things get shitty” as one advocate put it), and developed a vision statement for their collaboration.

- **Coalitions with the autonomy to develop their own funding amounts and distribution.** Funding – when it is insufficient and especially when it is viewed as inequitable – can be a great source of stress within a collaborative. TCE might consider using a grantmaking model in which they approach a collaborative and ask them to develop a proposal for an advocacy project, request the amount of funding needed, and establish among themselves how each organization within the collaborative is funded. (This model was described by one advocate who shared their extremely positive experience with a non-TCE collaborative.) By deciding among themselves how the funding should be divided, coalition members could work out issues of equity in a transparent way – deciding themselves what is fair rather than depending on the funder to make these decisions. When the grantmaking is done this way, and coalition members have power over how the funding is distributed, funding inequities and resentment can be avoided.

**Strengthening Organizations within Coalitions**

The ability to conduct effective advocacy depends partly on healthy coalitions – and healthy coalitions also depend critically on the strength and health of coalition members. And the need for supporting organizations is really one of supporting grassroots base-building organizations in particular. Small base-building organizations deeply embedded in communities are mission-critical for advocacy work – yet at the same time, as they participate in coalitions, they are often stretched near the breaking point. Just like the professional advocacy organizations in the coalition, they must send staff to coalition meetings and coordinate their teams to participate in
advocacy campaigns. But they have work that the professional advocacy organizations don’t have: they also engage in community organizing and mobilization – which is extremely time-consuming and often emotionally draining work. And they do all of this on a shoestring.

Underfunding poses a challenge to the work of individual organizations, and it adds an extra layer of challenge to coalition member relationships. The funding imbalance can create resentment and tensions among coalition members, which is especially salient among grassroots organizations with formerly incarcerated leaders. This is the case because those leaders inhabit a cultural hierarchy in which they are often treated as less valued than professional advocates. To adequately support the work of coalitions, then, TCE should consider the ways that it can more comprehensively support the grassroots organizations that are responsible for bringing the people power.

- **Funding that truly covers the cost for grassroots organizations participating in coalitions.** Lack of time and bandwidth is a prevalent challenge often making it difficult for organizations to participate in coalitions. Base-building organizations, in particular, are likely to be under-resourced, and participating in coalitions stretches them even further. Funding can buy time and bandwidth. Small organizations that do the critical base-building work do not receive funding at the level that would appreciably reduce the financial strain that grassroots organizations are typically under. In addition, they often don’t receive any grants for their time spent collaborating with others. Providing grassroots organizations with grants for engaging in collaboration would ease financial stress, would value the work they do and what they bring to the table, and it would lessen the friction that results in coalitions when grasstops organizations receive funding while grassroots organizations do not. The amount of funding, though, needs to take into account what is truly needed to avoid simply stretching grassroots organizations further. A stipend, or funding for one-quarter of a person’s time, will simply stretch the organization further. Without being able to expand their staff so that they can have someone dedicated to an advocacy campaign, they will simply need those currently on staff to add more to their plates.

- **Funding for base-building organizations specifically to support their organizing capacity.** Grassroots organizing is a skill that grows over time, but organizing jobs typically pay so little that organizers tend to burn out quickly and leave. Turnover is expensive,
straining finances even more – and the skills that an organizer accumulated through practice are gone. Organizing should be an attractive profession, and funders can help make it one by providing funding for organizer salaries and for professional development.

- **Providing general operating support.** Advocates spoke of the need for general operating support (GOS). Several felt this is an area where TCE excels, and a few people had examples of other foundations giving generous funding with even greater flexibility.\(^{22}\) TCE program managers are finding more ways to provide GOS by demonstrating the percent of grantees’ work that is aligned with TCE’s strategic goals. With some recent change in grantmaking practices at TCE, providing GOS is now possible even with fiscally sponsored organizations. This new practice means that program managers can grant this kind of flexible funding even to very small community-based groups – the very groups that may be the most starved for this type of funding.

- **Organizational capacity-building.** TCE would like to provide larger grants to grassroots organizations, but at the same time, it is constrained by what is known as the “IRS tipping rule:” if its funding accounts for more than two-thirds of the budget, the grantee will lose its 501c3 status. Given the needs of these small organizations and the constraints on foundation funding, one option for TCE is to pay for organizational capacity-building. Organizational capacity-building can include strengthened back-office operations, leadership coaching, professional development for staff, communications support, and strategic planning. Indeed there was one advocate from a small organization who expressed great appreciation for the organizational capacity-building that TCE had provided, and this advocate is worth quoting at length:

> I’ve had a great experience with TCE. I’ve been able to take advantage of so much professional development. All of their convenings, and the leadership training. I’ve grown so much by having access to all of the knowledge, and I got an executive coach. Never in my wildest dreams would I have expected someone to give me an executive coach. I got to take my team for a four-day retreat – it got us all aligned with the same mission and vision – I never could have afforded that. Any time there’s a resource that helps me move the campaign, I hear about

\(^{22}\) The two funders mentioned in these discussions were the Sunlight Foundation and the Open Society Foundation.
it. [my Program Manager] has connected me to other funders. I got to be on a roadshow with Jim Keddy and Manuel Pastor – as an equal. [My organization] would never have the ability to do that. [My Program Manager] is always: “what do you need to be more effective? Who can I help you connect to?”

- **Grassroots organizations funded to hire TA providers.** Currently TCE hires TA providers to work with organizations – which means that the TA provider’s client is TCE rather than the organization they work with. It also means that TCE, rather than the nonprofit, chooses the TA provider. Often these TA providers are wonderful, popular, and appreciated – but not always. The leaders of small nonprofits are well aware of how useful the additional bandwidth or capacity-building support would be (even when they have sometimes chafed at having to work with some providers that TCE made grants to in the past). The issue is not TA – they are in fact eager for TA – instead, it is having providers “forced on us,” as one advocate put it. Nonprofits are able to understand what they need and who they would like to work with better than TCE can. If TCE were to fund organizations to hire their own TA providers, TA is likely to be much more effective.

**Developing a Supply of “Coalitional Resources” Available to Organizations and Coalitions in the Field**

As an important funder in the field, TCE is in a position to strengthen the field by going beyond grantmaking, and making a variety of *coalitional* resources available to organizations and coalitions. TCE can use its connections and birds-eye view to identify the resources and connections needed, and to enable an array of “infrastructure services.”

- **Convening key field partners to map the field and to bring advocates together on values.** One advocate in South LA spoke about the way that the number of organizations involved in criminal justice advocacy has exploded over the last five years. These organizations are working in many arenas of criminal justice (all of which touch upon justice reinvestment in some way): juvenile justice, bail reform, treatment and services, electing progressive district attorneys, and halting jail expansion. Organizations have different approaches, and they are also “becoming territorial on issues and geography.” At the same time, they often work in coalition (and the number of coalitions is growing as well). Given the proliferation of groups, coalitions, and approaches, this advocate believes that TCE can do a great service to the field by helping the field to “defragment” and by supporting the organizations in the field to develop a common set of principles and values that they work from. In the words of the advocate: “The work ... has become very disjointed. We’re focusing on specific issues rather than a long-term strategy. ... Funders can play a critical role to [help us work together]. ... It’s important that we convene as criminal justice reform organizations, doing the work on justice reinvestment, to develop an agreement on values and principles. So even if we have different approaches, at least we have the same values. So then even if we’re not in collaboratives together, we can better coordinate our work.”
• **Bolstering the supply of excellent TA providers.** There is clearly a need for capacity-building to coalition members, and there is also a demand for TA providers – particularly when they do really excellent work. The TA providers that do budget advocacy in both Northern and Southern California have excellent reputations, but there are not enough of them. Part of the undersupply may be due to the fact that they get multiple small grants for their TA services – and it is difficult to sustain an organization when each individual grant is only in the $10,000-$20,000 range. To address the “tiny grant problem,” TCE could make a large grant to a collaborative, which can then use the funds to hire a TA provider that the whole collaborative can engage as they need to. In addition, TCE could fund some of the best providers to mentor others in the field in order to create a professional development pipeline of people who are becoming highly skilled at providing TA and capacity-building services both for advocacy and for more general organizational capacity.

• **Offering trainings to support collaboratives to build trust and solidarity.** Finally, given the race dynamics that can sometimes reinforce the status hierarchy of grassroots and grasstops organizations, it would be helpful if coalitions had access to trainings that could help them build solidarity across social divides. These trainings could address equity issues, white supremacy culture, and anti-Blackness. One grassroots advocate who had a lot to say about the lack of respect for grassroots leaders clearly stated that “we need white allies,” and “there’s a role for everyone in this movement – I want to partner with everyone.... I want them to feel welcome.” However, this person objected to “the phenomenon of the ‘savior complex’ that intermediaries and lawyers have.” This person and several others talked about the need for authentic centering of the community, and in particular those who are formerly incarcerated. They feel disrespected when formerly incarcerated people are “used for their stories” and then told to step aside. Some of the trainings could highlight the ways that grasstops organizations can support and sometimes take direction from grassroots leaders. And putting the grassroots and grasstops differences aside, understanding the unique dynamics of anti-Black racism and how they emerge in multi-racial coalitions – even when all members are base-building organizations – is core to building the capacity of groups to effectively address mass incarceration. Ongoing training can help to build a shared understanding of the deep historical roots of mass incarceration in slavery, Jim Crow, and the subjugation and exploitation of Black people as well as to surface the shortcomings of current criminal justice reform efforts that try to avoid explicitly addressing race in order to make policy proposals palatable to the general public. Finally, trainings to conduct healing circles – as MILPA does – can support coalitions to address internal conflict and to build relationships in a way that is focused on collective healing and cultural strength. TCE can consider approaching partners to discuss the best way to make trainings available – for example, TCE could host a training series in regions around the state, or perhaps fund collaboratives (or networks of collaboratives) to host their own trainings.
Involving Advocates in Campaign Development to Avoid Challenges during Implementation after a Policy Win

Occasionally during interviews advocates voiced frustration about the fact that some of the challenges of Prop 47 implementation could have been foreseen – and if the right people had been in the room, the initiative itself would have been designed differently. The main implementation challenge discussed was the very different ways the law treated state-level and county-level funding reallocation. For state-level reallocation, the proposition specified a process and structure for ensuring that it happened: the State Department of Finance would calculate the savings, which would then be appropriated through the state budget to be deposited into a Prop 47 Fund, housed with the Board of State and Community Corrections. Then a BSCC Executive Steering Committee would design a request for proposals, and grant the funds out to counties.

By contrast, while the law pointed to county-level reallocation, it did not include any language on how that would happen. Each county needed to find its own way of calculating and reallocating savings. But since each county could resist reallocation without violating the law, powerful local interests and institutional inertia made county-level Prop 47 reallocation extremely difficult. While it is true that calculating the savings is very hard to do, some reasonable estimates can in fact be developed (for example, see estimates for each county from the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice here). Advocates argue that the law could in fact have ensured (1) that each county use a formula for making estimates, (2) reduce jail spending by the estimated amount, and (3) spend that amount on prevention and rehabilitation. If this process is mandated in the law, boards of supervisors would have found a way to implement it.

We do not mean to suggest that this outline for Prop 47 county-level reallocation is the right one, or that it would have been politically or technically feasible. (It may not have been.) We are simply bringing up one (important) example of where implementation (after a campaign win) might have been easier to make a broader point: that additional policy options might have been introduced if participation in campaign development had included more stakeholders who were going to be responsible for implementation on the back end. As TCE continues to support advocacy networks as they design campaigns, this is a lesson that may be useful in the future.