Building an Economy for the Common Good
Mapping Community Organizations Building an Equitable and Sustainable Future

Caspar Community Center

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Economic Sector	Community Services
Address	15051 Caspar Road. Caspar, CA 95420
Website	casparcommons.org/
Phone	707-964-4997
Contact Person	Sienna Potts, Rochelle Elkins
Structure	Nonprofit
Description	Preserves and enhancse all life in Caspar by running the CasparCommunity Center; clearing invasive species; establishing an emergency preparation model of how a community can come together in the face of a disaster; and onnecting neighbors to build community. GOALS: Deal with water, food, live safely, prepare to last a long time
Decision-making Method	Consensus at community meetings. Self-Appointed Board takes inputs from community meetings to make final decisions.
Economic Actions	Provides jobs, an affordable venue for community gathering and a community garden.
Environmental Actions	Cares for public land by removing invasives. Protects the night sky by encouraging low night lighting. Counters climate change and resource depletion with photovoltaic electric generation. Has plans to serve as an environmental model for water usage and disposal.
Social Actions	Builds community connectins through events and productions; Provides a playground for kids to enjoy and share; Engages developmentally disabled people in productive activity; Provides a venue for diverse social actions, dancing, exercise, funerals, weddings, etc.
Political Actions	Prziovides a venue for citizens to engage in their citizenship responsibilities; League of Women Voters, Occupy, candidate forums, facilitates voting as a polling place etc.
Future Plans & Needs	No value
Suggestor	No value
Interviewer	Jim, Judy

Workshop 5 — GETTING THE STORIES

Purpose: To prepare all the workshop participants to begin interviewing people of the selected organizations

Materials: live interview organized.

Paradigm: The interview is the most exciting and exhilarating part of this project; at the same time it is the most difficult and problematic.

Context: Interviewees love to tell their stories and interviewers have enjoyed hearing the devotion and excitement of the people doing the day-to-day work on their projects.

In our Mendocino County project, we nominated 200 organizations to be on our map of the local Economy for Our Common Good. After working with 50 people for almost a year, we only had 41 interviews and organizations ready to go on our map. We had not even been able to schedule interviews with the most prominent organizations of our Economy for the Common Good.

Getting interviews done and ready to enter into the database is the most difficult mechanism in our "bicycle" that we have to work on. Doing the interview has been only a small part of this bottleneck. Scheduling the interview and preparing the information for the database are the most problematic aspects of this process. This is what made us question if our interviewing approach was really the best way to collect the data we need to build the Economy for the Common Good.

Initially, though, we started out utilizing personal interviews. At this stage of the process, you have a group of people enthusiastic about completing the data collection and a list of organizations to be interviewed. People tend to interview the organizations that they have personal connections to or are great supporters of. This works well except that it may not cover all of the organizations that should be on your map.

Since we decided that two people should do the interview together — one to ask the questions and one to take the notes — the two interviewers have to decide, who in the organization they should interview and when they can do it. Then they have to schedule the interview.

Before going to the interview, the interviewers need to:

• Familiarize themselves with the organization so that they are knowledgeable about the issues the organization faces;

* Study the survey form ahead of time. The questioner should be familiar with all of the questions and know all of the prompts.

• Remember that interviewing is a live skill where interviewers have to go with the flow of the conversation and insert the prompts where they think they would be relevant. The conversation will often not follow the order of the survey form, so interviewers should not ask questions that have already been covered earlier by the interviewee. But they should also use the survey form to make sure that all of the necessary information has been covered.

There are several things to keep in mind during the interview and compiling process. The primary thing to remember is that the information from the interview appears in a pop up box on the map we are putting together. An example of one of these pop-up boxes appears at the top of this section of the study guide. Notice that there is not space for a lot of words.

Since the space is limited, you want to get short, pithy answers that will fit neatly into the information categories in the pop-up box. The description of an organization should be around 50 words and use about 300 characters. All of the actions should be short, strong sentences It is best if the compiler of the interview, who is usually the note taker, uses sentences that say something like "Ajax Food Bank challenges market-driven decision-making by providing free, healthy food to people who otherwise could not afford it." The other side to getting short, pithy statements is that the best interviews are the ones that tell a story. If readers can get a coherent story from the material in the pop-up box, they will remember it better.

Since the interview conversation may not follow the order of the survey form, the note taker is going to have to jump around and realize when the interviewee is answering a question out of order and put their response in the proper place on the survey form. We have remade the survey form multiple times, mainly driven by the desire of having it in an order that flows naturally.

Transcribing an interview is a tedious process and can create another hurdle in getting the interview into the pop-up box. If an interview is recorded, there is software that can transcribe the interview, but depending on the quality of the recording and the clarity of the speaker, it will be more or less effective. But it is always good to have the recording anyway.

There is also a way to add a video or photos to the pop-up box that could capture more of the interview, and in some programs you could do far more with videos, but we will talk about that in our section on creating the map.

Once an interview has been digitally transcribed onto the survey form with all the answers keyed to the questions on the form, the results should be run back past the person they interviewed. They should then include any changes made to the interview transcription and pass the form on to the people entering the material into the database.

If this interviewing process is holding back completion of the project, here are some optional approaches:

• Just have one person do an interview with a recorder running so they do not have to take notes. This will add time to the transcription process, but may save scheduling problems.

• Do the interviews over the phone. This will eliminate some of the scheduling or travelling difficulties, but will erode the relationship aspect and unless the interviewer has a way to record the phone conversation, it makes it more difficult to create an accurate version of the interview.

• Or, what we have finally ended up doing is filling out the survey form ourselves with information we collect online or from other sources. Then we send that partially completed survey form to the organization for them to flesh out and correct.

Preparation: Before the next workshop email all of the information in the Context section above to everyone taking the course, so they can be familiar with the data collection process. You can also prepare to do an interview in class so that everyone can see how the interview process goes. To do that you should identify a person to be interviewed from one of the nominated organizations and have them come to the class. Then have two workshop participants prepare to interview that person. They should probably be people who already have some interest in the organization they are interviewing, and are willing to do it. They should also decide who is asking the questions and who is taking the notes.

Activities: The first activity of this workshop should be to discuss all of the information in the context section above. If you have made some sort of a handout of that information, distribute it now and talk about each of the points.

Once everyone is comfortable with the process you are using to collect the data, have people sign up to collect information from the various organizations. Hopefully people will volunteer to contact the organizations that they nominated initially. One of the facilitators should be recording who is interviewing which organization.

The most important thing to do in this workshop is to do an actual interview. Have the preselected interviewers and interviewees sit at the front of the group facing each other so that everyone has eye contact. You should videotape it for future reference.

Have the interviewers introduce themselves and the mapping project and start asking the questions. Once the interview is done, all of the participants should discuss what they noticed worked and did not work about the interview. It can be a very instructive process.

If you have extra time at the end of the workshop you can always show a video about the Solidarity Economy or the Economy for the Common Good from our list of videos. A good one for this workshop might be the one with Laura Flanders with New Era Windows at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-gci9KTOjM

Remember to leave time for people to make relevant announcements at the end of the workshop, and let people know that in the next workshop you will all be talking abut how the database spreadsheet and the mapping program interact.

The day after the workshop, email everyone an overview of what happened in this workshop and the list of who signed up to interview which organizations.

Then the day before the next workshop, send out an email that the workshop is coming up, and remind people who have done interviews to bring their interviews to the workshop as digital files.