

# NURTURING COMMUNITIES OF CARE & BELONGING

*Centering older adults and community connection through local  
ECO groups in the Northend of Imperial County.*



# Background

From January 2024 to June 2025, the Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation partnered with four rural communities to uplift the voices of older adults in Imperial County's Northend and build communities of care and belonging.

IV Wellness Foundation was proud to work alongside the Bombay Beach Community Services District, Calipatria Latin American Club, Northend Alliance 111, and the Westmorland Community Food Pantry. Together, these partners formed a team of Community Connectors dedicated to building relationships, sharing resources, and fostering a stronger sense of connection and support for older adults.



**Care, Connect & Thrive**

*This project was funded by:*



California Health Care Foundation

**Metta Fund**



# At a Glance

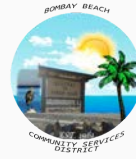
## Project Goal

Promote inclusivity, strengthen community bonds and ensure that aging is characterized by care, connection and a sense of belonging for all.

## 16 ECO Group Gatherings



## 5 Partners



## 11 Community Collaborators



## 2 Learning Exchanges

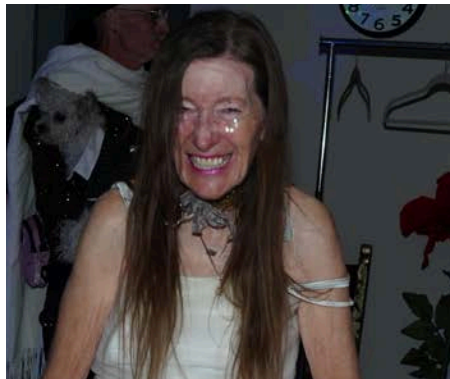


75 ECO Group  
Members

200+ Engaged  
Community  
Members

# ECO Group Gatherings

Each community hosted ECO group gatherings, creating welcoming and accessible spaces for older adults to come together, build community, share their needs, and connect with resources and one another. The gatherings were fun, inclusive and nurturing in every sense.





# What did we learn?

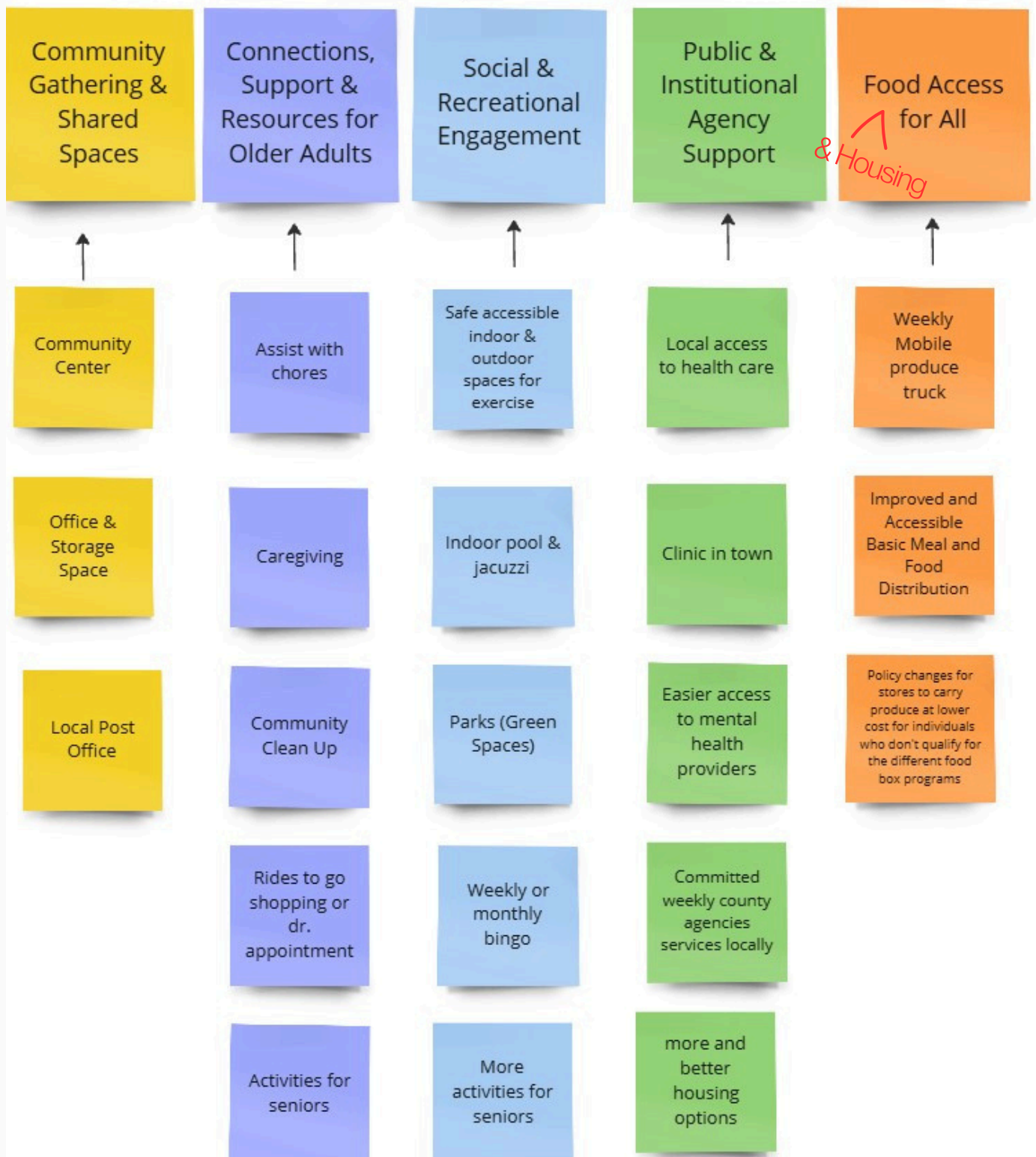


## Making Space for Conversations

Through conversations, surveys and games at the ECO group gatherings, we listened to what the older adults had to share. Themes began to emerge including the need for social engagement, community connection, housing stability, access to health care, transportation and more. From these priorities, collectively we developed the five pillars that shape a community of care and belonging.

# Framework

05



# Learning Exchanges



## Connecting Lessons to Local Solutions

Through the project, we hosted two Learning Exchanges that brought together representatives from Aging and Disability Services, the Area Agency on Aging, Department of Social Services, Public Health Department, Transportation Commission, Housing Authority, Imperial Irrigation District, Project Food Box, Innercare, Regional Occupational Program, Office of Emergency Services, and local government. We introduced the Communities of Care and Belonging framework and explored how each organization's services could align with the needs identified by older adults. These opportunities were well-received, as they offered organizations valuable insight into community priorities and, most importantly connected them with trusted local leaders and voices.



# Outcomes & Impact

## Launched ECO Group Collaborative

Empowered trusted local organizations in Bombay Beach, Calipatria, Niland, and Westmorland to lead gatherings that fostered connection, care, and community for older adults.

## Developed Partnerships

Hosted two Learning Exchanges with local agencies, bridging gaps between service providers and community voices, and leading to improved access to aging, health, housing, and transportation services.

## Ongoing Work

Secured over \$100,000 collectively for these groups to continue this work including gatherings for older adults, capacity building and other community-led initiatives.

## Engaged 200+ Residents and Developed Framework

Together, we developed the Communities of Care and Belonging framework. These five pillars now guide ongoing efforts around social connection, access to resources, and community well-being.

## Community Change

ECO groups sparked new initiatives like a senior meal site in Calipatria, expanded cooling center hours in Niland, and a weekly coffee club in Bombay Beach all stemming from local voices.



We partnered with Imperial County Transportation Commission to transport older adults and guests to our ECO group celebration on June 9, 2025 in Calipatria, CA.



# Community Collaborators



The success of this project is thanks to the hard work of our community collaborators. Their passion, local knowledge, and dedication shaped every part of this effort. They helped build trust, bring people together, and create spaces where older adults feel connected, supported, and heard.



# What's Next?



## Building Communities of Care and Belonging

We invite you to join us as we continue growing our ECO groups and strengthening communities of care and belonging in Imperial County's Northend. We'll keep gathering, using the framework as our guide, making adjustments as needed, and working together on solutions that support older adults where it matters most. Now institutions and government agencies seek and see the ECO groups as important voice and trusted resource in the community.



# Join Us

To learn more about this project or how to get involved,  
contact the Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation  
at [rbarros@ivwf.org](mailto:rbarros@ivwf.org).



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WESTMORLAND  
COMMUNITY  
**FOODPANTRY**

