



NORTH LONG BEACH COLLABORATIVE (NLBC): A COMMUNITY STORY OF LEADERSHIP, CONNECTION, & CHANGE



“Residents coming together to build safer, stronger, and more connected neighborhoods.”



May 2026



NLBC INTRODUCTION

The North Long Beach Collaborative (NLBC) was created with a simple but powerful idea: when residents are supported, connected, and equipped with the right tools, they can transform their own neighborhoods. With support from The California Wellness Foundation (Cal Wellness), the Long Beach Center for Economic Inclusion (LBCEI) spent three years building a stronger, more united North Long Beach by serving as a leadership convener to support the NLBC—a space where residents lead, youth thrive, and community safety and belonging grow from the inside out.

This document shares the story of how NLBC was formed, what the community told us through a landscape analysis, and how resident leaders stepped forward to design and lead projects that strengthened economic resilience, youth development, and neighborhood safety.

Core values

Trust

Leadership

Community

NLBC was launched to strengthen social cohesion among residents and expand the base of local leaders.

The project had **two main goals**:

1. **Grow a diverse group of resident leaders who could advocate for their neighborhoods.**
2. **Create Neighborhood Teams—groups of residents and community organizations working together on shared priorities.**

A Design Team of three local organizations—[Success in Challenges](#), the [National Pacific Islander Education Network](#), and [Puente Latino](#)—helped shape the early work. They conducted outreach, supported community engagement, and coached emerging leaders. Their projects laid the foundation for NLBC's approach by:

- Forming the **first Sankofa parent group at Perry Lindsey Middle School** to support Black student success.
- Strengthening **public safety committees at three North Long Beach middle schools.**
- Integrating **cultural healing practices** into food distribution events to promote inclusion and connection.

These early efforts demonstrated the power of community-rooted leadership and helped NLBC build trust across neighborhoods.



LISTENING FIRST: THE LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Before launching any major activities, NLBC partnered with Dr. Amber Johnson and graduate students from California State University, Long Beach to conduct a community-informed landscape analysis. The process began with a community meeting in December 2023 and included capturing more than 400 resident surveys. Three community meetings were held to share the landscape analysis results.



Residents identified three top priorities:

1. **Expand youth development programming**

Families wanted more safe spaces, mentorship opportunities, and positive outlets for young people.

2. **Strengthen economic resilience**

Residents emphasized the need for small-business support, job opportunities, and pathways to financial stability.

3. **Increase awareness of local resources**

Many community members were unaware of existing programs, services, and supports available to them.



Resident Capacity Building

The analysis also identified three capacity-building topics residents wanted to learn:

- Fundamentals of nonprofit operations
- Advocacy 101
- Authentic community engagement

These findings shaped NLBC's next major step: training resident leaders to design and lead community action projects.



TRAINING AND SUPPORTING RESIDENT LEADERS



Re-Engaging: Resident Capacity Building

During the no-cost extension period of **June 2025-May 2026**, LBCEI partnered with The NonProfit (TNP) and CLA Consulting. During this time, residents participated in a 3-part training and received technical and administrative assistance from TNP. To participate in the NLBC, residents needed to live in or attend school in North Long Beach. The training series—two offered in-person and one virtual session to accommodate work schedules and immigration raid concerns—helped residents build skills in advocacy, community engagement, and nonprofit planning. Weekly technical assistance from TNP ensured that residents felt supported every step of the way to complete their community action projects.

24

Residents
completing the 3-
part training

3

Number of
cohort
community
projects

476

Total number of
attendees at
cohort
community
projects



COHORT COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECTS



Northtown Festival

Supporting local talent & business.

The festival engaged nine local micro-business owners, five youth performers, and connected families to 22 youth-serving organizations. It also offered an expungement clinic that supported 10 returning citizens.



Rise & Thrive

Youth Day of Healing

Held at DeForest Park, residents hosted a multicultural day of healing featuring conflict-mediation workshops, art and cultural performances. The event brought together Pacific Islander, Black, and Latino youth and families.



Alleyway Beautification

*Built Environment
Improvement- Public Safety*

Residents installed lighting and planters in a Starr King alleyway heavily impacted by human trafficking. The project beautified the area, strengthened relationships among neighbors, and helped residents advocate for improved safety conditions.

NLBC community event surveys showed strong positive social connectedness:

93%

of participants said the community can work together to improve the neighborhood

89%

said they felt welcomed and respected at the event

82%

said they met someone new at NLBC events



LEARNING BY DOING

Factors contributing to NLBC's progress:

- **Authentic community engagement** — Rebuilding trust through transparent communication and public updates.
- **Strong partnerships** — Aligning efforts with key agencies and council offices to increase resident visibility.
- **High-quality technical assistance** — providing weekly coaching on project design.
- **Clear structure and coordination** — Clarifying roles and creating a space for resident leadership.



- **Faith-based engagement** — Identified new collaboration pathways with local pastors.



- **Community concerns** -resident capacity constraints, including immigration, employment instability, and reduced safety-net benefits impacted participation.

Challenges Along the Way

NLBC also faced obstacles:

- **Re-engaging residents** after the project hiatus required building trust.
- Aligning Design Team roles and managing cohort recruitment delays were a priority.
- **Managing a compressed timeline** to plan and implement cohort projects was a team effort.
- **Fostering cross-neighborhood cohesion** required relationship building in a compressed timeline.



LESSON LEARNED & WHAT'S NEXT

Through this grant, NLBC learned that lasting change requires more than one-time events. It Requires:

1. A durable collaborative structure.

Residents want to continue meeting and leading.

- 88% want to keep growing NLBC even without guaranteed funding.
- 82% want to meet monthly or quarterly.

2. Consistent communication and staffing

- A dedicated community organizer is essential to maintain momentum, support leaders, and coordinate partners.

3. Tailored engagement with faith communities

- Future work will align with faith leaders' priorities and offer clear, time-bound roles.

4. Continued resident capacity building

- Residents identified training needs in public speaking, grant writing, event planning, leadership, and wellness.

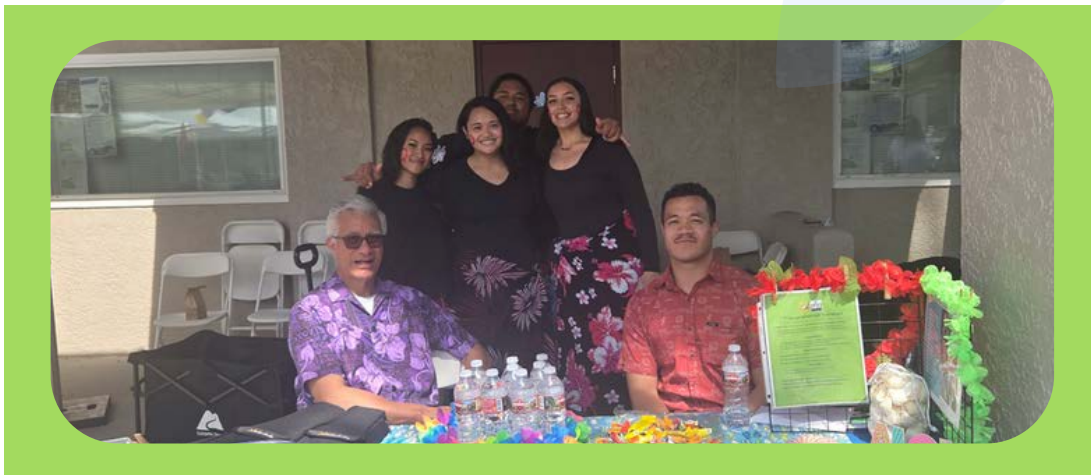


“The connections I forged within the cohort were wonderful, the sense of teamwork, community identity, and network of resources... It gave me a way to experience serving my community in a way that’s new to me... The mission statement, part of the 3 classes, especially stuck with me.”

Cohort 1 Participant



FUTURE OUTLOOK



A Focus on Long-Term Shared Priorities

NLBC will continue advancing:

- Increase economic resilience of North Long Beach businesses.
- Increase investment in youth violence prevention strategies.
- Address food insecurity.
- Integrate cultural healing and wellness practices into programming.

The Path Forward

NLBC seeks continued support to:

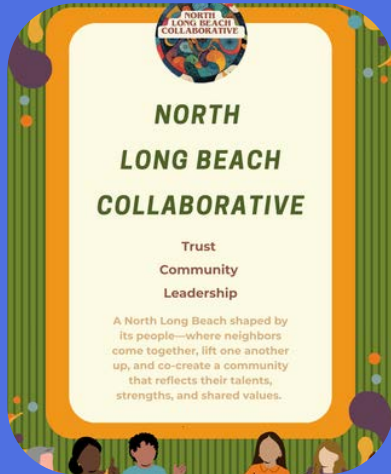
- Formalize a resident-centered governance structure.
- Hire a dedicated Community Organizer/ Project Coordinator.
- Continue capacity-building trainings with stipends.
- Plan high-visibility community actions aligned with shared priorities.



This investment will help NLBC become a stable, resident-led collaborative that will strengthen safety, youth development, and economic resilience across North Long Beach.



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THANK YOU

We are grateful to the Design Team members who advised and supported the formation of the NLBC and to the resident leaders who stepped up and created a dynamic space. We also acknowledge the great partnership with TNP to provide technical assistance in the formation of the NLBC. Together, they supported the initial steps for the North Long Beach Collaborative - a space of trust, community and leadership.

