

# Redwood Region RISE In-Person Convening

**Nov. 5, 2025 @ Robinson Rancheria**

## Welcome to Our Regional Gathering

Join us for a day of collaboration, learning, and community building as we work to strengthen the Redwood Region's collective impact. Today's convening brings together community partners, Tribal leaders, elected officials, and resource partners to advance our shared vision for regional prosperity and resilience.

We extend our gratitude to the Robinson Rancheria Pomo Indians of California for graciously hosting this event. We honor both their hospitality and the significance of being welcomed on their ancestral lands.

The Robinson Rancheria organized their Tribal government in 1978 and adopted their constitution in 1980, formalizing their sovereignty as a federally recognized Tribe of Eastern Pomo people in Lake County. Since 1989, they have owned and operated the Robinson Rancheria Resort & Casino, demonstrating their commitment to economic self-determination and creating opportunities that benefit all Tribal members and future generations.

We are honored to gather on these lands and acknowledge the Robinson Rancheria's resilience and leadership.

## Goals for Today: Building Our Regional Collective Impact

- Strengthen Partnership and Collaboration
- Begin Tracking Our Impact
- Start Setting a Policy Agenda for Our Region
- Connect with Resource Partners



## Schedule at a Glance

Time	Session	Location
8:00-9:30 AM	Breakfast Meetings (Invite-Only)	Various
8:30-9:15 AM	RRRISE Onboarding	Outside Area (TBD)
9:15-10:00 AM	Registration + Networking + Breakfast	Main Room
10:00-10:20 AM	Welcome & Opening Ceremony	Main Room
10:20-11:00 AM	Collective Impact in the Redwood Region	Main Room
11:00-11:15 AM	Coffee Break	
11:15 AM-12:45 PM	Working Sessions (3 concurrent)	Various
12:45-1:45 PM	Networking Lunch	Main Room
1:45-3:15 PM	Afternoon Sessions (2 concurrent)	Various
3:15-4:15 PM	Closing Ceremony & Reception	Main Room
5:30 PM+	Optional: Economic Summit Mixer	Skylark Hotel



## Detailed Program

**Breakfast**  
**8:00–10:00 AM**

**Morning Sessions**  
**10:00–11:00 AM**

- **Welcome & Opening Ceremony | 10:00–10:20 AM | Main Room**

Join us for an opening that honors our regional vision and shared commitment to collective impact.

*Welcome:* Robinson Rancheria Pomo Indians of California

*Keynote:* Connie Stewart (Cal Poly Humboldt)

- **Collective Impact in the Redwood Region | 10:20–11:00 AM | Main Room**

How can we work together to realize our Roadmap's vision? How are we understanding our collective impact—now and in the future? RRRISE Leaders will discuss three years of successes and current opportunities, while the Sustainability Working Group shares insights on RRRISE's future collective impact opportunities.

**Working Sessions (Choose One)**  
**11:15 AM–12:45 PM**

- **Developing Policy Literacy to Advance a Rural Agenda | Breakout 1**

Develop core policy literacy skills to help you move from issues to action in Sacramento. You'll practice reading the political landscape, identifying strategic opportunities to engage policymakers, and discuss pathways to amplify rural voices at the state level.

*Facilitated by:* Toni Symonds (Policy Works California)

- **Creating Healthy Partnerships and Coalitions | Breakout 2**

This session will help equip you with tools to build and sustain effective partnerships across diverse organizations, using RRRISE Catalyst Project case studies to enable productive and resilient collaboration among first-time partners.

*Facilitated by:* Sarah Kerr (Pink Possum Consulting)

- **Strengthening Career Pathways | Breakout 3**

Strengthen career pathways in target sectors using Capitol Impact's Talent Pipeline Management framework and insights from our Activation Plans.

*Facilitated by:* Capitol Impact



## Detailed Program (Continued)

**Networking Lunch**  
12:45–1:45 PM

**Afternoon Sessions (Choose One)**  
1:45–3:15 PM

- **Turning Regional Plans Into Investable Pipelines | Breakout 1**  
How can our region work together to advance our key industry sectors? Through inspiring case studies and a dive into RRRISE’s sector strategies, this session will align priorities, surface support needs, and spotlight investment opportunities that catalyze growth.  
*Facilitated by:* Regional Government Services (RGS) + Sector Investment Coordinators
- **Grantwriting and Grant-Readiness Workshop for New and Growing Organizations | Breakout 2 (Invite-Only: Catalyst Projects and Applicants)**  
Strengthen grant-readiness and application skills for growing organizations through hands-on practice, peer feedback, and expert guidance on storytelling, budget development, and funder alignment strategies.  
*Facilitated by:* Ursula Bischoff Consulting

**Closing Ceremony and Networking Reception**  
3:15–4:15 PM

- Join our **Networking Reception**, organized by Calder Johnson and team, celebrating our Regional Identity and Brand, with ice cream from Foggy Bottoms Boys and reusable serveware from Bright and Green.

## Speaker & Panelist Biographies

### **Connie Stewart, Executive Director of Initiatives, Cal Poly Humboldt**

#### *Opening Keynote*

Connie Stewart began her career in environmental advocacy before serving two terms as Arcata’s Mayor, leading energy, land use, and climate initiatives. She co-created the Redwood Coast Energy Authority and led the California Center for Rural Policy, advancing health, broadband, and rural equity. Now Cal Poly Humboldt’s Executive Director of Initiatives and Chief Policy Advisor for CCRP, she’s secured \$30M+ in research funding and represents the region on the Advisory Board of GoldenStateNet, Aspen Institute’s Rural Development Innovation Group, and UC ANR’s President’s Advisory Commission.



## **Michael Kraft, Kraft Consultants**

*Redwood Region RISE Onboarding*

Michael Kraft is a seasoned consultant with over 30 years of experience across for-profit and nonprofit sectors. Based in Humboldt County for 18 years, he previously served as Executive Director of the North Coast SBDC and Compliance/Government Affairs Officer at Papa & Barkley. Since launching his practice in 2023, he provides support in organizational development, compliance, and strategic planning. Kraft has been supporting Redwood Region RISE's governance through strategic consulting, bylaws development, and efforts to strengthen the organization's shared leadership framework.

## **Toni Symonds, Policy Work California**

*Developing Policy Literacy to Advance a Rural Agenda*

Toni Symonds is the principal advisor at Policy Works California, a public policy firm dedicated to fostering economic justice. With over 37 years of government experience, Symonds helps clients navigate complex policy, legislative, and fiscal actions at all levels, from federal to local. Her work focuses on community-centered strategies that build financial independence and wealth in historically underinvested areas. She leverages her extensive experience to empower communities and strengthen economies through meaningful policy engagement.

## **Sarah Kerr, Pink Possum Consulting**

*Creating Healthy Partnerships and Coalitions*

With over 20 years of leadership experience in nonprofit healthcare and social services, Sarah Kerr helps teams and organizations identify limiting beliefs and find fresh, creative solutions. Sarah's approach to building healthier, more effective workplaces is rooted in fostering strong relationships, believing that meaningful change is driven by inviting one another in to share experiences, ask good questions, and be open to new ideas. Sarah prioritizes listening first, approaching the unknown with curiosity, and fiercely defending what is right.



## **Capitol Impact, Capacity Support and Workforce Coordinators**

*Strengthening Career Pathways*

Capitol Impact, founded in 2006, is a social impact consulting firm committed to forging a better future for all Californians. The multi-disciplinary firm brings experience, research insights, human-centered program design, comprehensive project management, and other critical skills to build organizational capacity and solve entrenched education and workforce challenges. Capitol Impact is the Capacity Support and Workforce Coordinator for RRRISE.

## **Regional Government Services, Economic Development Finance Team**

*Turning Regional Plans into Investable Pipelines*

Regional Government Services (RGS) is a California Joint Powers Authority established to serve public agencies, including cities, counties, and special districts. RGS provides quality, innovative, and cost-effective administrative, staffing, and advisory services to local governments, supporting operational delivery and best practices. RGS is the convener for RRRISE's Economic Development Finance (EDF) Working Group.

## **Ursula Bischoff, Ursula Bischoff Consulting**

*Grantwriting and Grant-Readiness Workshop for New and Growing Organizations*

Dr. Ursula Bischoff is a strategic management consultant specializing in collaborative systems change, inclusive economic development, and organizational capacity building. Her work in education, workforce development, and human services at national, state, and regional levels builds partnerships to drive innovation and transform complex systems. Her approach centers diverse communities—including BIPOC peoples, youth, immigrants, and justice-involved individuals—in designing initiatives that create equitable access to opportunity and sustainable outcomes.

## **About Redwood Region RISE (RRRISE)**

Redwood Region RISE (Resilient Inclusive Sustainable Economy) builds collective impact across our rural region through coordinated investment, partnerships, and advocacy. Our Theory of Change addresses three critical areas—Economic Development, Equity, and Climate—by transforming challenges into regional strengths through strategic collaboration and community-centered solutions.



- **Voting Member Block** – Provides collaborative governance with Voting Members representing key community organizations across the region, ensuring diverse perspectives guide our collective impact efforts. The Equity Committee, a standing committee of the Voting Member Block, advances equity principles by providing education and training on inclusive economic development tailored to the sectors and projects implementing RRRISE's work in our region, supporting priority community engagement and leadership, and investing in youth leadership.
- **Tribal Table** – Ensures Tribal sovereignty and leadership are centered in all RRRISE activities and decision-making processes, recognizing the fundamental importance of Indigenous voices in regional development.
- **Sector Investment Coordinators & Advisory Councils** – Lead investment strategies and provide sector-specific expertise in four key economic areas: Arts, Culture, and Tourism; Health and Caregiving; Renewable and Resilient Energy; and Working Lands and Blue Economy.
- **Economic Development Finance Working Group** – Provides technical assistance focused on enhancing financial capacity across the Redwood Region and plays a key role in turning strategy into action.
- **Catalyst Projects** – Funding innovative community-driven initiatives across five themed areas: Culture and Placemaking; Food, Fiber, and Farm; “Grow Your Own” Health Workforce; Sustainable Forestry, and Tribal Energy Sovereignty. Current projects include workforce training programs, cultural preservation initiatives, renewable energy installations, food processing facilities, and regional collaboration networks.
- **Convening Team** – The backbone team of Redwood Region RISE's efforts; fiscal agent North Edge Financing, and regional convener, the California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP) at Cal Poly Humboldt.

## Stay Connected

For more information about Redwood Region RISE and future events, visit:

[bit.ly/Redwood-RISE](https://bit.ly/Redwood-RISE)

Follow our work and connect with fellow participants to continue the conversations started today. Stay in the know through our newsletters: [bit.ly/RISE-Mailer](https://bit.ly/RISE-Mailer) and connect on LinkedIn: [bit.ly/RRRISE-LinkedIn](https://bit.ly/RRRISE-LinkedIn)

