



# Sonoma Valley Collaborative Charter

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## PURPOSE

Sonoma Valley Collaborative (SVC) is a forum of community leaders from a wide range of sectors across Sonoma Valley, finding solutions and taking action to address our community’s biggest challenges.

### **Mission**

Our mission is to make positive change in Sonoma Valley by aligning the interest groups in the community toward shared goals and measurable targets, and by supporting efforts that achieve those goals. This common agenda aligns our activities and accelerates success in achieving a just, thriving, sustainable community.

### **Outcomes**

- Measurable progress toward a sustainable Sonoma Valley community. The elements of a sustainable community are a **healthy environment, a strong economy and the**

**well-being of the people living in the community.** A sustainable community meets challenges through integrated solutions rather than through fragmented approaches that meet some goals at the expense of the others. (*Sources: STAR Communities, Institute for Sustainable Communities*)

- Greater trust and understanding between interest groups.
- Ambitious, shared goals that are agreed to by most of the interest groups in the community. Find the “highest common denominator.”
- Measurable targets against which we track progress over time.
- Agreements and alliances that achieve multiple outcomes over time, getting closer to our vision.

## **Vision**

Sonoma Valley is a thriving, just, sustainable community, a model for Sonoma County, the state, and the nation.

## **Core Functions**

1. We identify and tackle complex community problems with an explicit value of sustainability, finding solutions that have the greatest buy-in and also promote balance among: environment, economy and equity.
2. We help facilitate diplomacy across key sectors within the community, linking together organizations and leaders to solve complex community problems.
3. We work to build a shared understanding of complex community problems and shift public opinion toward agreed-upon solutions.
4. We develop tools that inform member decisions on new projects, policies and proposed actions.
5. We identify and link potential investment opportunities with new projects or programs that align with our explicit values and identified solutions.

## **Assumptions and Values of Sonoma Valley Collaborative**

- Our community has strengths, assets, and resources we don't want to lose. We also have problems, stresses, and wrongs that we must resolve.
- We all want what's best for the community. There's more agreement about what the community needs than we usually think there is.
- No one organization or sector can solve the big problems facing our community.
- Using the best available information leads to better outcomes.
- Collaboration and honesty about our interests makes for better outcomes.
- Change is inevitable, and we can guide it.
- Diversity, inclusion, and equity are necessary to achieve sustainability for the Sonoma Valley community.
- To achieve cross-sector sustainability, many modes of participation are equally necessary and equally valid.

These may include stipends, translation, or other accessibility assistance to participants.

## Code of Conduct for Participants

- Assume the best from one another. Have mutual respect. If you think a miscommunication or misunderstanding has happened, talk to each other.
- Accommodate different ways of communicating, to create inclusive conversations. Try using other people's vocabularies to make better connections.
- Learn each others' interests, including their needs, motivations, vocabulary, background, and sensitive issues
- Share approaches and successes with other communities, and learn from them, too.
- Play to each other's strengths. Engage in active cross-pollination. Look for ways to expand the pie.
- Recognize conflict as an opportunity.
- If there is a conflict between Sonoma Valley Collaborative and another entity, let statements about the conflict be from Sonoma Valley Collaborative as a whole, not from an individual.
- Be clear when you are representing Sonoma Valley Collaborative and when you are representing another interest.
- Be prepared to talk explicitly about privilege, race and implicit bias.
- Understand your community and be willing to challenge systems.
- We will internally create, and externally participate in, dialog and actions that advance equity, towards a future when people's race, gender, economic status, sexual orientation, age, etc. do not determine their economic, social, or political opportunities.
- Disclose any potential conflicts of interest to the staff and Steering Committee.

The above sections of this Charter are the basis for selecting Sonoma Valley Collaborative participants who can effectively and constructively represent their interests and work with others. When someone becomes a member of Sonoma Valley Collaborative's staff, Steering Committee, or Council, they sign a statement that they have read and agree to abide by the Charter.

## Decision Criteria

Initial criteria for selecting a topic to focus on

- Generated through authentic community engagement
- Practical consensus of the Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council

Criteria for project selection or adoption:

- Provides multiple benefits of high priority for multiple interest groups

- Increases equity and does not perpetuate inequity\*
- Demonstrate what's missing in the community if Sonoma Valley Collaborative were absent
- Addresses a problem or opportunity that is influenceable
- Timely (e.g. readiness of the community to act, temporary window of opportunity)
- Scalable
- Resources can be assembled to achieve success

SVC may make public statements that endorse or oppose a project, policy, or program. Statements may take the form of media pieces, newsletter articles, or verbal statements at meetings. All SVC public statements should:

- Make clear the process by which SVC arrived at its position, clarifying the 3E buy-in behind the position.

\*When undertaking an equity analysis of a potential project or solution, Council members will work with staff to answer the following questions:

- Are there disparities in who is impacted by each decision around a project or solution?
- What or who causes the disparate impact?
- Who will benefit or be burdened by this decision? What are the potential unintended consequences of a decision?
- How does the system need to change to decrease inequities and increase equity?
- What actions can we take to include the people impacted by issues and address inequities openly and proactively?
- What actions are we taking that perpetuate disparities, and what can we do instead?

## **Policy on Issuing Statements on Public Policy Issues**

**Sonoma Valley Collaborative will make statements\* on public policy issues only when all of the following criteria are met:**

- The issue is consistent with the guiding principles in our Charter.
- The issue has a meaningful direct or indirect effect on the Sonoma Valley and its community. By this criterion, for example, certain land development projects, the city and county general plans, and specific plans are appropriate topics.
- The statement is solution-oriented and collaborative. For example, we would not say "No on this project." but we might say "Sonoma Valley needs more affordable housing, so we recommend not approving new developments unless they include the maximum recommended X% affordable units."
- The statement is verifiable. It is backed up by credible information that we can cite.

- The statement is not about any person, including a political candidate or official. Among possible statements that meet the above criteria, prioritize which ones to get involved in, based on:
- Our own findings and recommendations, such as those in the Homes for a Sonoma Valley Collaborative Valley report.
- The likely level of Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council support for the statement.
- The level of potential impact on the Sonoma Valley and its community.
- Sonoma Valley Collaborative’s technical and financial capacity to do a good job addressing the issue.

**Process**

1. Anyone involved with Sonoma Valley Collaborative who wants Sonoma Valley Collaborative to make a public policy statement sends the issue, and elements of a potential statement, to Sonoma Valley Collaborative’s Project Director.
2. The Project Director decides if the issue and the potential statement have a high likelihood of meeting the criteria and priority above. If it does...
3. The Project Director provides a draft statement, and justification for it, to the Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council.
4. If the Council decides that the issue and statement meets criteria, they may ask staff to develop a revised response or statement (possibly working with certain individuals who have specialized knowledge of the issue), or may vote promptly on the statement. At least 75% of the Council membership must support making the statement.
5. If necessary, all the previous steps may be done by email.
6. After a statement has been disseminated by Sonoma Valley Collaborative, anyone can (and should!) repeat that statement in public or private forums, crediting Sustainable Sonoma each time.

\*Definition: statement = response = position = policy = stance = campaign.

# STRUCTURE

Sonoma Valley Collaborative is a coalition of community interests with its own staff, decision-makers, and activities. Currently, Sonoma Valley Collaborative is a project of Sonoma Ecology Center. The organizational structure is composed of a Steering Committee, Council, Work Group(s), and staff. Their functions are summarized in the diagram on the following page.

**How ideas and actions flow through the structure of Sonoma Valley Collaborative.** Proposals from Council or Steering Committee for what SVC should work on are referred to the Steering Committee, who may approve/adopt/develop them. Staff then works with the Work Group to involve whoever is appropriate, from inside and outside Sonoma Valley

Collaborative, to implement the proposals. The Work Group's chair reports progress to the Council for input and review, and when the Work Group has completed its work, to the Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council for approval.



# Sonoma Valley Collaborative Oversight and Participation Structure

Guided by the mission, vision, and values of Sonoma Valley Collaborative (SVC), the participants create change through the relationships diagrammed below. This diagram illustrates the governance structure of Sonoma Valley Collaborative. It does not illustrate workflow, or how an idea becomes part of Sonoma Valley Collaborative's work. Shapes overlap where individuals may belong to more than one group.

## Steering Committee

- Oversees staff (and backbone organization)
- Monitors overall progress toward outcomes
- Collaborates with staff in fundraising
- Assists with public relations
- Invites and approve new leaders for SVC Council
- Sets and periodically review strategic direction
- Monitors execution of core SVC functions
- Frames Council's choices by adhering to SVC values.

## Staff

- Provides comprehensive administrative support including fundraising
- Communicates about SVC outward in multiple ways
- Communicates assignments that come from Steering Committee or Council to Work Group
- Monitors and reports progress

## Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council

- Decides topics to work on, e.g. housing
- Represents interests that inform SVC positions (must-haves, nice to haves, dealbreakers)
- Meets periodically
- Names recognition and affiliation matter
- Public face of SVC leadership across 3 E's
- Core group of leaders, approved by SC
- Committed over a longer period of time
- Ratifies, gives input and opinions on Steering Committee choices, such as vision and purpose
- Leverages relationships to advance outcomes
- Helps determine course corrections
- Identifies potential Work Group members
- Reviews goal progress and benchmarks

## Work Group

- Meet timelines set by Steering Committee or Council to make deadlines
- Membership changes based upon topic, charge, and required skills
- Task oriented, short-term timelines
- Staff vet/approve participants: SVC Council members, a designee of a SVC Council organization or an outside expert
- Has a chair and co-chair

**Key:** — — — — — Steward, Create and Maintain Conditions for Change to Happen — — — — — Work to Accomplish Goals

The **Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council** is a forum consisting of credible representatives of all the major interest groups in the Sonoma Valley community. It is charged with developing trust and understanding over time that form the basis for collaborative efforts to create positive change for Sonoma Valley.

The **Steering Committee** is charged with operational oversight, including limited budget and HR oversight. The Steering Committee drives strategic planning for growth and success of Sonoma Valley Collaborative. It keeps Sonoma Valley Collaborative true to its mission, vision, and values.

The **Work Group** completes tasks set by the Steering Committee and Council. It may operate independently to achieve those tasks with ongoing oversight and guidance from Sonoma Valley Collaborative staff members. The Work Group may be composed of anyone needed to accomplish the tasks, whether or not they are formally involved as members of the Sonoma Valley Collaborative Steering Committee or Council.

**Staff** conduct the work of Sonoma Valley Collaborative, including administration, facilitation, coordination, management of activities, and supporting the Work Group.

Additionally, informal **advisors and champions** (not part of the governance structure) provide guidance to the Steering Committee and staff, identify opportunities, champion Sonoma Valley Collaborative in the community, and act as liaisons between Sonoma Valley Collaborative and the public.

## **HEALTH ACTION CHAPTER**

Sonoma Valley Collaborative is the Sonoma Valley chapter of Health Action. Health Action is a county-wide initiative that mobilizes community partners and resources to achieve equity and to improve health and well-being for all in Sonoma County. Sonoma Valley Collaborative supports Health Action by addressing social, economic, and environmental determinants of health and health care with an emphasis on eliminating health disparities; leveraging partnerships; working for systemic change; authentically engaging residents, especially those facing the greatest disparities; and measuring change over time.

# **GOVERNANCE**

## **A. Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council**

The Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council is an equitable, inclusive forum of representatives from the major interest groups or sectors in Sonoma Valley. The Council builds trust and understanding between interests, identifies areas of shared agreement (“highest common denominator”) among those interest groups, and prioritizes near-term objectives to tackle together.



The learning and trust developed within the Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council should, over time, produce multiple alignments around community needs. These areas of agreement will then produce tangible positive change in the community by creating allies and solutions that involve multiple sectors, solutions that could not have been achieved without aligning diverse interests.

See the Sonoma Valley Collaborative Oversight and Participation Structure diagram, on page 5, for more about the role of the Council.

The Council does not determine Sonoma Valley Collaborative’s mission, vision, or values; this is the charge of the Steering Committee.

### *Composition*

The Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council are people who live or work here. Members need to be good listeners, oriented toward transparency, have patience, be credible respected representatives of their interest group(s) and/or communities, and believe in the capacity of Sonoma Valley Collaborative to change the future for the better.

Number: at least 25. Tenure: no term limits.

Members may be nominated by Council members, Steering Committee members, or staff. The Steering Committee reviews nominations and votes to approve new Council members. The current Council roster is on the SVC website at <https://sonomavalleycollaborative.org/contact>.

The following are some of the interests and communities that should be represented on the Council. This list is not in any order. It may change over time.

- Youth
- Schools
- Latino
- Black, Indigenous People of Color
- Business owners
- Workers
- Agriculture: wine-related
- Agriculture: not wine-related
- Water
- City: elected and staff
- County: elected and staff
- Philanthropy
- Faith
- Seniors
- Law enforcement
- Wineries, tasting rooms
- Environment: Land, water, climate
- Commuter
- Low-income
- Tourism, hospitality
- Real estate
- Development (commercial and residential)
- Arts & culture
- Long-time residents
- Design, architecture
- Non-profits
- Tenants, commuters
- Social justice
- Community members facing disparities
- others?

We aim to have the Council represent, in the persons of its members, the racial, gender, age, and income diversity of Sonoma Valley’s population. At least one seat will be reserved for the following members who will be assigned an experienced Council member as a mentor, and may receive a stipend to help them participate.

- a younger person between 16 and 24 years old
- a community member representing a population that is facing disparities in Sonoma Valley

*Responsibilities*

Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council members will:

- participate in 2/3 or more of all Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council activities or action requests
- rigorously follow the Code of Conduct
- learn the basics of interest-based negotiation
- honestly convey the needs, motivations, background, long-term goals, and sensitive issues of the interest groups they belong to, including interest groups outside the group(s) they were selected to represent on the Council
- bring their whole selves to the table, not just represent their nominal interest group

*Decision-Making*

The Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council makes decisions using “practical consensus.”

Making decisions using practical consensus

Thumbs up means “I am in agreement with the proposal.”	If all thumbs are either up or sideways, then the proposal passes.
Thumbs sideways means “It is not my first choice, but I can live with it.”	
Thumbs down means “We need more discussion. I do not agree with the proposal as it stands, and here is why.”	

**B. Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee governs the operations of Sonoma Valley Collaborative, promotes Sonoma Valley Collaborative, and keeps Sonoma Valley Collaborative true to its mission, vision, and values. Because Sonoma Valley Collaborative is currently a project of Sonoma Ecology Center, ultimate budgetary, operational, and HR responsibility rests with Sonoma Ecology Center’s board. If and when Sonoma Valley Collaborative becomes its own organization, the Steering Committee’s responsibilities will increase to include those of a standard nonprofit board of directors.

*Composition*

The Steering Committee is comprised of the following members:

- Interest-group representation should be approximately equal between the broad interests of Economy, Environment, and Equity. Represented interests may include those listed for the Council, above.

- Members should include people who are known to have successfully started, grown, and institutionalized new social-benefit or environmental-benefit ventures, people known to provide good business oversight, and people who can commit the necessary time.
- New members are assigned a veteran “buddy” member.
- We aim to have the Steering Committee represent, in the persons of its members, the racial, gender, age, and income diversity of Sonoma Valley’s population.

Number: ideally 4-7.

Tenure: no term limits.

Members may be nominated by Council members, Steering Committee members, or staff. The Steering Committee reviews nominations and votes periodically on new Steering Committee members. Current members are listed on the SVC website.

### *Responsibilities*

See additional responsibilities on the Sonoma Valley Collaborative Oversight and Participation Structure diagram on page 5.

- Acting as a group to govern Sonoma Valley Collaborative
  - Approve staff work plans that direct Sonoma Valley Collaborative’s work and activities.
  - Approve, implement, and revise as necessary Sonoma Valley Collaborative’s organizational structure and governance.
  - Approve formal Sonoma Valley Collaborative projects, sponsorships, and affiliations
  - Review Sonoma Valley Collaborative’s budget and financial health
  - Approve new members of Council, remove members of Council for cause.
- Acting as individuals to support Sonoma Valley Collaborative
  - Attend, prepare for, and actively participate in at least ¾ of scheduled Steering Committee meetings, currently occurring monthly.
  - Promote Sonoma Valley Collaborative to their affiliations, friends, and organizations. Activate their personal connections to raise money and other resources and support for Sonoma Valley Collaborative.
  - Show commitment to the success of Sonoma Valley Collaborative, carry out assigned tasks between meetings.
  - Provide input and feedback to staff on a timely basis

### *Decision-Making*

The Steering Committee makes decisions using “practical consensus.”

#### Making decisions using practical consensus

Thumbs up means “I am in agreement with the proposal.”

Thumbs sideways means “It is not my first choice, but I

<p>can live with it.”</p> <p>Thumbs down means “We need more discussion. I do not agree with the proposal as it stands, and here is why.”</p>	<p>If all thumbs are either up or sideways, then the proposal passes.</p>
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## C. Work Group

### *Composition*

Sonoma Valley Collaborative may establish a Work Group focused on specific, short-term tasks. (There may at times be more than one Work Group convening.) The Work Group consists of staff and any other relevant, interested, productively contributing persons, whether they are formally involved in Sonoma Valley Collaborative or not. Membership changes based upon topic, charge, and required skills. Staff vets and approves participants, who may be SVC Council members, a designee of a SVC Council organization, or an outside expert. The Work Group has a chair and co-chair who stay in close communication with staff.

### *Responsibilities*

The tasks and timelines of the Work Group are set by the Steering Committee or Council, but it may operate independently to achieve those objectives.

- To pursue its assignment, the Work Group may conduct research and outreach, seek funding or other support, develop white papers or reports, communicate and coordinate with other initiatives related to its objective, and initiate other activities.
- Members will follow up on action items assigned to them, as noted in meeting notes.
- The Work Group chair or co-chairs is/are appointed by the Steering Committee, or if the Steering Committee prefers, elected by the Work Group members. Chairs will:
  - Prepare and share agendas at least 2 days before meetings
  - Ensure that meeting notes are taken, distributed to members and staff within 2 days, and posted, after review by members, on Sonoma Valley Collaborative’s website
  - Attend Council and Steering Committee meetings as requested to report on progress and get input
  - Stay informed about progress and status of other relevant SVC activities

If a Work Group is formed to perform projects or tasks that have funding agreements (contracts, grants, certain donations), it is held to a higher standard, as follows:

- The Work Group is responsible for:
  - Creating alignment about scope and outcomes of the project from the outset, by consulting with Sonoma Valley Collaborative staff and acquiring approval from the Steering Committee while scoping a proposal, and reflecting its wishes in a reasonable way

- Creating a draft work plan and getting approval from the Steering Committee before it is too far in the process to receive material feedback
- Updating the Steering Committee regularly on progress and challenges
- Ensuring high quality in both deliverables and process of implementation
- Passing any deliverables to the Steering Committee for review with enough time to receive material feedback. (“Material feedback” means feedback that may significantly change the product.)
- To support this type of Work Group, staff and the Steering Committee will:
  - Offer feedback in a timely fashion
  - Respect organizational and institutional autonomy with both suggestions and participation
  - Help the project be successful with its intended outcomes
  - Have authority to “divest” Sonoma Valley Collaborative from the project if the project manager does not abide by agreement above or Sonoma Valley Collaborative’s Purpose or Code of Conduct

## D. Staff

### *Composition*

Sonoma Valley Collaborative staff is comprised of individuals and contractors who together possess the following skills and knowledge areas:

- Meeting/group facilitation
- Community process design and coalition building
- Communications, publicity, website and social presence
- Technical and content background in environmental, social, and economic issues relevant to Sonoma Valley
- Administration and accountability

### *Responsibilities*

Sonoma Valley Collaborative staff have primary responsibility for implementing Sonoma Valley Collaborative through the following activities:

- In accord with the mission, vision, and values of Sonoma Valley Collaborative, implement the current work plan, budget, and the longer-term strategic plan as approved by the Steering Committee.
- Respond nimbly to evolving events, needs, and processes in the community
- Support the Steering Committee by helping drive their agenda and providing administrative services:
  - Coordinate, schedule, and help facilitate Steering Committee meetings
  - Draft meeting agendas for approval by Steering Committee chair
  - Compile meeting notes, integrate changes requested by members (if there is a conflict, Chair decides), and distribute for review
  - Support follow through on action items by Steering Committee member between meetings
  - Get Steering Committee approval for any final SVC documents or statements, as directed by Steering Committee.

- Facilitate the operations of, and support the growth in diversity and effectiveness of, the Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council. Design agendas, use creativity to elicit input and viewpoints from Council members and communicate them transparently to Council members, investigate conflicts, suggest members, assure that new Council members are familiar with the Charter and have signed a statement promising to uphold SVC values.
- Support the Work Group(s) and report on progress to the Steering Committee and the Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council.
- Maintain communication and transparency between all elements of Sonoma Valley Collaborative's organizational structure, including communicating assignments from Steering Committee or Council to Work Group, and communicating input, viewpoints, and votes from Council members to the whole Council
- Report on the progress and achievements of Sonoma Valley Collaborative, including, when this becomes possible, a sustainability scorecard (possible name: State of the Valley)
- Fundraising and funds management
  - Initiate, develop, obtain review and approval for, and facilitate funding proposals
  - Compile reports to funders, donors, and other supporters
  - Every six months, organize a mutual feedback session--consisting of every person who has grant or project responsibilities--about what's working and what needs to be improved with regards to implementation and process
- Organizational development
  - Support organizational effectiveness review once annually
  - Support inquiry into questions of growth or change for Sonoma Valley Collaborative
  - Support strategic planning process for Sonoma Valley Collaborative
- Marketing and outreach
  - Develop and deliver presentations on Sonoma Valley Collaborative to outside organizations
  - Continually update website with new content, and manage digital communications
  - Develop and implement a communications plan, newsletter, press and social media strategy

## **E. Ambassadors and Champions**

Ambassadors and Champions are high-profile individuals who influence opinion in particular sectors, who take high-visibility positions in strong support of Sonoma Valley Collaborative.

## **F. Advisors**

Advisors representing various interest groups inform staff about the background, needs, concerns, and motivations of their interest groups, and advise on when it is timely to raise proposals or new collaboration opportunities with them.

Process Advisors provide guidance on the timing and sequencing of the topics raised with the Council, Steering Committee, and public; advise on how to build trust, understanding, and alignment within the Council; and connect Sonoma Valley Collaborative to relevant collective change processes in other communities.

Advisors may be occasionally invited to Steering Committee meetings and are welcome to attend Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council meetings.