

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0036
(916) 319-2036
FAX (916) 319-2136

DISTRICT OFFICE
81893 DR CARREON BOULEVARD, SUITE 5
INDIO, CA, 92201
(760) 347-2360

1101 AIRPORT ROAD, SUITE D
IMPERIAL, CA 92251
(760) 355-8656



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June 4, 2026

The Honorable Bryan Anguiano
California State Director for Rural Development
U.S. Department of Agriculture
430 G Street, Agency 4169
Davis, CA 95616

RE: Letter of Support – River Communities Grocery Cooperative Feasibility and Organizational Development Initiative – USDA Rural Business Development Grant Application

Dear Director Anguiano,

I write in strong support of River Communities Coalition's (RCC) application for funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) Program in support of the River Communities Grocery Cooperative Feasibility and Organizational Development Initiative. This project represents an important opportunity to evaluate solutions that may improve food access, strengthen community capacity, and support long-term economic development in Needles, California, and surrounding Colorado River communities.

The proposed initiative will fund a professional feasibility study, community outreach, leadership development, cooperative education, and organizational planning activities designed to determine whether a community-owned grocery cooperative can provide a viable and sustainable solution to local food access challenges. The project will also strengthen local leadership and community engagement while providing objective information necessary for responsible decision-making.

Residents of Needles and the surrounding region face unique challenges associated with geographic isolation, transportation barriers, limited healthy food options, and extreme desert temperatures that frequently exceed 120 degrees during summer months. Many residents must travel significant distances, often crossing state lines, to access full-service grocery stores and fresh food options. These challenges can place an additional burden on seniors, individuals with disabilities, households living on fixed incomes, and residents with limited transportation resources.

River Communities Coalition has demonstrated a strong commitment to community engagement through public meetings, outreach efforts, volunteer activities, and community development initiatives. The organization has worked diligently to bring residents, stakeholders, and

community partners together to explore practical solutions to local challenges and improve opportunities throughout the Colorado River region.

The proposed feasibility and organizational development initiative represents a responsible, data-driven approach to evaluating future food access solutions. By combining professional analysis with leadership development and community engagement, RCC is ensuring that future decisions will be based upon sound information, community participation, and long-term sustainability.

I strongly support River Communities Coalition's application and respectfully request USDA's favorable consideration of this funding request. This investment will help provide the information, leadership development, and organizational capacity necessary to evaluate and potentially advance a community-driven solution to an important regional need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Gonzalez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "G".

Jeff Gonzalez
Assemblyman, 36th District