

What's Next Participant Spotlight

Margie Martinez, Chief Executive Officer Community Health Alliance of Pasadena

For four decades, Margie Martinez has been an advocate for low-income residents of Southern California. She has worked in a variety of community-based organizations that promote health care access and workforce development. Twenty years ago, Margie was selected to lead the Community Health Alliance of Pasadena (ChapCare). During her tenure, she has overseen ChapCare's growth to an independent nonprofit health center network with eight sites in the San Gabriel Valley. In 2017, Margie participated in the *What's Next* program as she considered her options for her retirement.



“*After my sabbatical, I wanted to stay motivated to continue exploring the next stages of my life and my work. The program offered me protected time outside of the agency to think about my future.*”

What's Next is designed with two, two-day retreats for founders and long-term leaders ready to retire. The program emphasizes that getting their organizations ready is a key component to successful transition.

“*The program got me out of the mindset that my leaving would upset the apple cart. Once the agency is sustainable, once that is secured, I would have a much easier time because I am ready and my agency is ready.*”

Margie thinks this type of transition planning should be the ongoing work of the board and staff as well.

“*I realized the key is not just keeping your succession plan on file. You really need to live and breathe this and have it not be such a critical, tension-filled decision. I can talk my board into that now. I can convince them that succession work is not because I'm going to leave tomorrow or in three years, this is to ensure whoever steps up to the plate is able to sustain our mission.*”

People ask me all the time, 'When are you going to retire?' My answer, now, is a little different than others. People talk about retiring on a certain date. My response is that I am going to retire when I have done what I need to do to get the agency ready, and that I prepared myself for an encore career so that I can transition to it with joy.

