

Andrés Rivera
Senior Political Community Engagement Campaigns Manager

As the Senior Political Community Engagement Campaigns Manager, Andrés Rivera is the member of the team that has his feet firmly planted in both outreach initiatives as well as policy and campaign operations. Prior to joining the management team,, Andrés established his tenure on the front lines of the Catalyst policy canvassing team.

Andrés has 13 years of experience in political activism, leadership development, community development and policy implementation. He was born in Medellín, Colombia. The son of immigrants with a dream to live a safe and tranquil life away from the violence that permeated Colombia in the 1980s and 90s because of the War on Drugs. Andrés believes that there is no situation so bad that we can't learn something from it.

"When I was asked to take lead on developing the Live Scan and Expungement Clinic for Catalyst Cares, I was inspired and knew this is how I can combat the War on Drugs from a professional level. I used my network with the UFCW and other strategic organizers I had worked with previously."

Andrés attended the University of California, San Diego where he received a bachelor's degree in Latin American Studies and Anthropology. When Andrés had the opportunity to travel abroad to Bolivia, he learned of the Cocalero Movement.

"Today, I can see the similarities with the cannabis legalization movement in the United States. The coca and marijuana leaves have played a critical role in sustaining and improving livelihoods and are crucial agents of change for many marginalized communities affected by the War on Drugs."

Andrés also has a great deal of experience bringing underrepresented communities to a better life via a path to citizenship. Andrés has a passion for teaching and has been an adjunct instructor at Mount San Antonio College where he teaches U.S. Civics to prepare immigrants for their citizenship exam and interview. Andrés also organized and executed Citizenship Clinics that assisted thousands of immigrants become U.S. Citizens.

"Truly one of my proudest accomplishments is the work I was able to do and still do bringing immigrants out of the shadows and giving them the confidence to be active citizens of the United States."

Andrés' shared passion for community service and policy development quickly advanced him to being offered an opportunity to join the Catalyst Cares Management Team in 2021. Andrés stands out when it comes to his leadership and campaign management skills. Andrés leads policy and business development campaign efforts in communities of interest in order to ensure growth and expansion of the #WFTP Movement. During the 2022 National Election, Andrés led one of the teams who helped bring eight of the twelve cannabis initiatives on the ballot to passing. Andrés recently launched a community survey effort in Lynwood, Hawthorne, Baldwin Park, and Artesia to help Catalyst understand where residents stand on important issues, how satisfied they are with city services, how effective the local government is in meeting resident priorities, and what those priorities are in the first place. When considering the licensing of cannabis business operations in cities of interest, Andrés wants to make sure communities have policies that allow for social equity and economic well-being.

"It is truly satisfying when we win a license or policy initiative as I honestly know that it is what the community wants but also is in the best interest of that community. The data we collect is how we build a Community Benefits Agreement which accompanies a licensing application. This agreement commits both Catalyst and the intended city to focus on the outreach, services and other efforts for their community."

Andrés lives in Anaheim, CA with his partner and two kids and is an avid artist/creator and art collector in his free time. In order to keep a balance in life, he practices mindfulness meditation in which he focuses on being intensely aware of what he's sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. As a Senior Political Community Engagement Campaigns Manager, he ensures that Catalyst Cares and Catalyst Cannabis Co. achieves its goals to grow and expand the Weed for the People Movement (#WFTP). Through his community efforts, Andrés promotes and lives a culture of volunteerism, activism, inclusion, and equity.