



**THE CENTER**  
*at Sierra Health Foundation*

Dear Colleagues,

We are thrilled to share the findings from the Year One Report of The Center at Sierra Health Foundation's Community Economic Mobilization Initiative (CEMI). The report is designed to both inform the future development of CEMI and provide useful insights to the field. We've long known that, despite its critical importance, access to and use of health services alone will not end health disparities. Instead, we recognize that a number of factors contribute to the health and wellness of a community, including its economic infrastructure, access to investment capital and pathways to living wage employment. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed by Congress offers a historic opportunity to advance inclusive economic growth and prosperity through an unprecedented level of investment in state and local development efforts. To ensure all communities have an opportunity to benefit from the legislation and its commitment to economic justice, it is crucial that historically and intentionally neglected communities are supported to take best advantage of this moment. Philanthropy can play a vital role in making this vision a reality by helping communities leverage the networks, knowledge and power required to design, fully participate in and benefit from forthcoming development activity that will shape their economic futures.

To date, CEMI's funder collaborative model has attracted \$22 million dollars in investments from eight philanthropic funding partners, including the James Irvine Foundation, and supports 52 organizations across California with nearly \$15.3 million in grant dollars. The initiative offers robust capacity support to organizations, training and technical assistance, and organizing and power building partnerships to advance inclusive economic development from Siskiyou County to the state's southernmost border.

History has shown time and again that quick economic development most often results in limited and inequitable participation. As shown in the Year One Report's evaluation findings, CEMI equips community-based organizations across California with the tools necessary to leverage historic public dollars coming from federal and state government. With a specific focus on nonprofits that are led by and serve Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, CEMI's funded partners seek to secure the flow of public dollars to projects that serve traditionally underinvested regions and neighborhoods.

Since its launch in March 2022, CEMI has been recognized as a leading effort in California and nationally. The Center has been invited to present the initiative at various conferences and gatherings around the country, including Grantmakers in Health's national conference and a Justice40 Philanthropic Roundtable held by the White House Council on Environmental Quality. CEMI was also featured in California Governor Gavin Newsom's 2023 Social Innovation Impact Report.

The Center commissioned Informing Change to conduct the evaluation of CEMI to enhance our learning and keep us accountable to CEMI's objectives. Their two-year evaluation is focused on refining the core strategies of the initiative and determining the extent to which it has met its short-term outcomes. To accomplish this, the year one evaluation included feedback loops that informed programmatic adjustments. Evaluation activities included gathering data from funded partners, CEMI staff and funders, as well as an analysis of grant data and applications.

The year one evaluation provided The Center with valuable insights including the importance of:

- Leveraging our funded partners' knowledge and expertise in power building to create a stronger and more resilient network of advocates;
- Going deeper in our evaluation efforts to better understand funded partners experience with the technical assistance being provided through CEMI; and
- Encouraging long-term investment and policy changes needed to support under-resourced communities by convening funders to have field building discussions and disseminating our learnings.

The Center believes that by making these adjustments to CEMI over the next year, we are creating the conditions for a more equitable and resilient economic landscape in California. We look forward to sharing CEMI's successes and lessons learned in the year two evaluation report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chet P. Hewitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chet" being the most prominent.

Chet P. Hewitt  
Founding CEO of The Center at Sierra Health Foundation