



ABOUT CEMI

The **Community Economic Mobilization Initiative (CEMI)** collaborates with a growing list of grantees (**funded partners**) that put communities first. As a trailblazing nonprofit capacity-building effort, CEMI was created to strengthen the ability of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (**BIPOC**)-led and serving organizations¹ to secure and influence the use of public funds for broad economic and environmental benefit. It uses power building, grantmaking, and technical assistance strategies to achieve this goal.

Managed by The Center at Sierra Health Foundation (**The Center**), CEMI is funded by philanthropic partners (**funding partners**) and leverages the expertise of **strategic partners to strengthen funded partners'** capacities in resource development, public grants and contracts, and advocacy and power building.

PUBLIC FUNDING FOR PUBLIC GOOD

With an overall investment of \$15.9 million across 53 partners, CEMI achieved its objective of increasing the capacity of funded partners to pursue and win public grants and contracts.

\$197,912,976
in new public funding
won by CEMI partners.

- 96% of funded partners reported that they applied for public funding in Year 3 of CEMI, compared to 66% in Year 1.
- Over the past two years, funded partners have collectively applied for over \$423 million in public grants and contracts, and successfully won almost \$198 million of that for their programs and communities. This means that for every \$1 that CEMI invested in partners, those partners secured over \$11 in government funding for their communities.
- 88% of funded partners reported that CEMI's model of grant support, coupled with technical assistance, was helpful to their efforts to obtain public funds.
- The top sources of grants won by funded partners were California's Department of Health Care Services (**DHCS**), Employment Development Department (**EDD**), Department of Social Services (**CDSS**), and Department of Industrial Relations (**DIR**).

"CEMI has been one of the most impactful partners I have been involved with. When we apply for government funding, it takes a lot of work. With CEMI, we had so much support and still continue to receive it."

– FUNDED PARTNER

COLLABORATION & COLLECTIVE ACTION

CEMI partners increase connections and collaborate within and beyond the CEMI network. Connections were built even through difficult circumstances: across expanded, disconnected geographies; amongst different sectors; and between organizations with limited capacity.

This collaboration is most intensive at the regional level. For one example, in the far north of California, the North State Inclusive Economy Collective has

80%
of funded partners
report working more
collaboratively.

¹ Defined as organizations in which people who identify as part of communities that experience discrimination based on race or ethnicity hold substantive decision-making positions and are at the heart of the organization's mission.

emerged through the leadership of funded and strategic partners. Since its launch, it has added new members and pursued funding to support shared goals related to affordable housing and job development. For another, in the San Joaquin Valley, funded and strategic partners took collective action by advocating for and then testifying at a hearing of the California State Legislature’s Select Committee on Community Economic Mobility and Investment in Fresno in April 2026.

INCLUSIVE ECONOMIES

As funded partners use CEMI grants to strengthen their work and bring new public investment into their communities, they contribute to more inclusive, climate-friendly, and thriving economies. They report numerous outcomes of their efforts, including the following most frequently reported outcomes and the percentage of partners reporting these:

50%

Helped people obtain job training, certifications, or other professional development

44%

Helped people get hired

42%

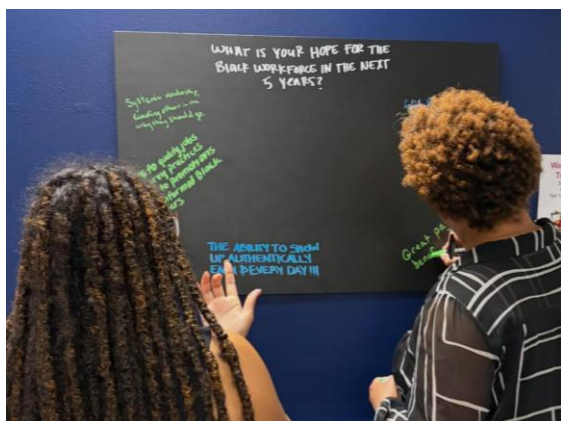
Built stronger networks among entrepreneurs, businesses, and government or nonprofits

42%

Influenced climate-friendly or environmentally sustainable practices by businesses

“We were able to use many of the tools and inspirations for projects we initiated during CEMI, such as [Guardian Vital](#), which is a wine label that brings awareness to the farmworkers and, with a QR code, leads consumers to a hub of resources and information. [and] our work regarding land access and helping current and former farmworkers explore new pathways to farm ownership.”

– LÍDERES CAMPESINAS



“The Inland Empire Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, a pioneering workforce development model created in partnership with a consortium of water/wastewater utilities and community organizations, centers community values and dignity, offers wrap-around services, and leverages strong strategic partnerships to address the persistent Black jobs crisis in the Inland Empire ... Across three cohorts totaling 32 participants, the program achieved a 95% completion rate. Notably, after the third cohort graduated, nearly 40% secured full-time jobs or internships in the water sector.”

– INLAND EMPIRE BLACK WORKER CENTER

TOP TAKEAWAYS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUNDERS

The Center at Sierra Health Foundation has upcoming opportunities to advance CEMI's efforts. In addition, CEMI offers lessons for other funders of community economic development. These include:

1. **Invest in community-driven strategies:** CEMI has excelled at funding directly into the “Justice40” communities (census tracts with a long history of marginalization and underinvestment) that were its original priority. As reported in Year 1 of CEMI, 84% of partners work in Justice40 communities, and 60% also have their headquarters in those census tracts. Additionally, over 97% of grantee partners are led by and serve BIPOC communities throughout California. The Center’s approach to its work, the staff who managed CEMI, the relationships they built, and the work of the organizations they supported all ensured that CEMI grants backed strategies driven by these communities and delivered benefits to them.
2. **Invest in fund development capacities:** While CEMI awarded its grants in flexible support, it encouraged proposals from organizations interested in developing their capacity to seek and manage public funds, and we know from our Year 3 reporting that all partners engaged in some activities related to this kind of capacity-building, whether using funds to invest in this function or participating in related technical assistance. This investment delivered a high ROI, enabling partners to successfully pursue, win, and manage millions more in funding.
3. **Focus technical assistance on creating opportunities that open doors to power:** Funder-provided TA is not always welcomed by grantees. It can vary in usefulness and may add a time burden on grantees. What made CEMI’s technical assistance more valuable to its partners was: 1) that they were consulted on the TA content and format before it was designed, and 2) that multiple aspects of the assistance involved increasing partners’ access to key decision-making spaces. Strategic partners who provided TA didn’t try to change how funded partners approached their work. Instead, they shared knowledge and access to networks that were useful to funded partners. This included access to policymakers in the California legislature, as well as both public and private funders.

