

Promoting Latino Immigrant Entrepreneurship and Economic Mobility in California's Central Valley

The Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative celebrated the graduation of its 6th cohort of participants in the Immigrant Entrepreneurs Program.

FRESNO, CALIFORNIA, USA, August 9, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- American immigration history and scholarship reveal that immigrants who arrive to the United States have generally found three routes to achieve socio-economic mobility and reach their version of the American Dream: by obtaining higher

education degrees, becoming business owners, or joining a labor union. For some contemporary immigrants, a college education is unrealistic, while the roles and prevalence of labor unions have declined over the past decades, making union membership a less common option. Hence, many immigrants, whether highly skilled or employed in low wage occupations, see in entrepreneurship the preferred alternative to make it in America and achieve an economic mobility that can benefit them and subsequent generations.

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Jesus Martinez



Graduation 6th Cohort of CVIIC Immigrant Entrepreneurs Program

This trend is confirmed by the Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative ([CVIIC](#)), which launched its [Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) Program in 2020. Since then, the program has expanded and has already benefitted hundreds of Latino immigrants residing in rural and urban communities across California's Central Valley. On August

4th, CVIIC celebrated the graduation of the 6th cohort of the Immigrant Entrepreneurs Program participants, which consisted of 44 Latinos eager to advance in their entrepreneurial ventures and contribute to the dynamism of the regional, state, and national economies. The role of immigrants in California's economic success is not to be underestimated. Immigrants constitute

32.5% of the state's labor force, while children of immigrants make up an additional 20.5% of all employed individuals. Their contributions have been decisive to make California's economy one of the top four or five in the world, only behind the national economies of the United States, China, Japan, and, perhaps, Germany.

Immigrant contributions are made as members of the labor force and as business owners. In 2022, Governor [Gavin Newsom](#) declared that California is home to 829,369 immigrant entrepreneurs, while the New American Economy informed that, as of 2019, 38.6% of all businesses in the state were owned by immigrants. Immigrant owned businesses in the Golden State may range from an established star in the high technology industry, to a family-run neighborhood store, to an informal vendor's fruit stand at a busy intersection.



Remarkable as this might be, through its work in the Central Valley, CVIIC is demonstrating that California is far from exhausting the entrepreneurial potential of its immigrant residents. In fact, CVIIC's Immigrant Entrepreneurs Program is proving that Latino immigrants are eager to pursue opportunities to develop their entrepreneurial knowledge and expertise in order to start new businesses or to learn how to strengthen existing ones. The challenge to nonprofits like CVIIC and to local and state authorities is to make these opportunities available to more immigrants.

A reason for the interest in entrepreneurship among Latino immigrants in the 8 counties that comprise the San Joaquin Valley is directly related to the limited quality employment opportunities available to them in this region of the Golden State. As a recent study points out:

"The San Joaquin valley, for example, is home to oil fields, farms, prisons, and warehouses. Workers in entry-level positions in these industries may have less of an internal ladder to climb. Likewise, workers cannot readily transition to careers in industries with higher quantities of well-paying jobs, such as technology or finance centers in the Bay Area and Los Angeles, without uprooting their families and other aspects of their lives (e.g., finding housing or transferring children's schools). In other words, California's geographic diversity of jobs reduces workers' ability to easily transition into industries with higher-earning occupations, exacerbating polarization."

CVIIC's Immigrant Entrepreneurship Program was created to help address such systemic barriers by targeting low-income Latino immigrants and focusing on elevating their knowledge of self-employment and contributing to their entrepreneurial development. A consistent finding since the program was first established in 2020 is that the overwhelming majority of the hundreds of Central Valley Latino immigrants who have applied to enroll in the program have never been exposed to such capacity building opportunities or received formal training to set up or run a business.

According to CVIIC's Executive Director, Jesus Martinez,

"This further highlights CVIIC's belief that immigrant entrepreneurship in California could bring about even more formidable results and benefits to the local communities and the state if more significant public investments were made in dedicated trainings and business development initiatives targeting low-income Latinos and other immigrant communities."

The graduation of CVIIC's 6th cohort of participants in the Immigrant Entrepreneurs Program was a moving event highlighted by the testimonies of 44 individuals who described personal journeys, the overcoming of obstacles, and a determination to achieve their American Dream as entrepreneurs.

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