



Regions Rise Together: Salinas

Investment Plan Blueprint 2021



Monterey Bay
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP



SANKOFA CONSULTING

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Executive Summary

On Valentine's Day 2020 the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) hosted a group of community leaders at Taylor Farms headquarters in downtown Salinas. Inspired by the Fresno DRIVE initiative, the group met with the purpose of determining if there was an appetite to create a similar initiative for Salinas. Micah Weinberg, CA Forward's CEO, was in attendance as well as other CA Forward staff who had been involved in the Fresno DRIVE initiative. The group decided to prioritize racial equity and **to create a truly racially equitable economic development investment plan**. Everyone in attendance was supportive of this principle, and we left the meeting in high spirits, excited to embark on this effort.

This initial group of this Regions Rise Together (RRT) initiative evolved into a Core Team – a working group that did the heavy lifting for the initiative planning and execution. At the time, we'd never heard the word COVID, so as our world began to unravel and be reshaped by the pandemic, it became clear that our work was more important than ever. Over the next twenty months, our collective passion and commitment to our community would see us through many dark days. We were joined on this journey by the James Irvine Foundation who generously underwrote the process to create an investment plan that would **achieve the following overarching goals**:

- Achieve inclusivity and prosperity for all residents in the Salinas Valley
- Synchronize and leverage existing efforts
- Enable and empower communities through the co-creation of investment plans, and
- Demonstrate that the Salinas Valley region is investment-ready and investment-worthy

The Salinas Valley is called the "Salad Bowl of the World". **Yet despite supplying 90% of the lettuce consumed across the globe, many Salinas Valley families struggle daily to put food on their tables and make ends meet.** Vast disparities in earnings, income, and quality of life are key characteristics of the economic engine in Monterey County. While the COVID-19 pandemic brought financial insecurity to the forefront of discussions on economic reform, it also highlighted the acute housing crisis, stagnant wages, lack of broadband access, and limited access to high-road jobs and skills training that have existed for decades in this region.

RRT strives to embed community partners and race equity as a core principle in the approach, ensuring that community voices are heard. Knowing that this is an evolving process, RRT seeks to include community voices throughout the life of the initiative phases: design, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and holding implementers accountable for results.

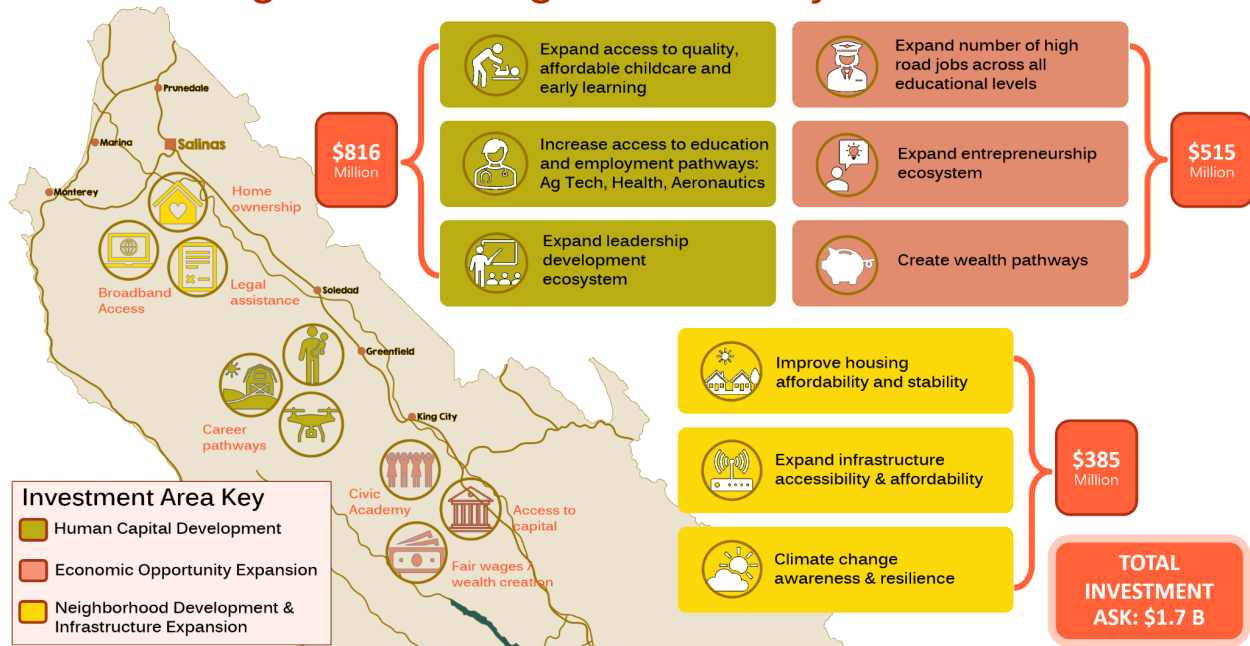
In October 2020 it became apparent that there was a need for more **in-depth conversations with the community to find out explicitly what they need** and to represent their voices more prominently in this process. A Community Engagement Working Group (CEWG) was established, which was a subset of the Core Team that initially met on a weekly basis. The CEWG organized many house meetings, larger evening community convenings (with free childcare), including over 500 community members who shared their concerns and offered their insights. Out of these conversations, six essential needs were articulated: (1) **better wages**, (2) **access to job training**, (3) **access to affordable housing for the undocumented**

community, (4) debt relief, (5) offering/availability of appropriate language services when accessing local resources, (5) investment in their children, and (6) better transportation.

Informed by the above, the **three focus areas** for the Investment Plan Blueprint are:

- Neighborhood Development & Infrastructure Expansion
- Human Capital Development
- Economic Opportunity Expansion

Salinas Regions Rise Together: Priority Investment Areas



Within each of these segments, the investment blueprint focuses on **priority issues that require a total investment of \$1.7B over the next decade**. Some basic impacts of this investment¹ include:

- **Neighborhood Development and Infrastructure Expansion**
 - **Stable housing that will positively impact the mental and physical health outcomes of families**, particularly our farmworker families who live in severely overcrowded conditions, and **mitigate the impact of COVID-19**. Overcrowded conditions directly correlate to the spread of the pandemic, particularly among essential workers such as farmworkers.
 - **Provision of safe and secure housing for all members of society**. Regardless of age, income, ethnicity, or health conditions, housing is a basic right that should be available to all residents.
 - **Stabilization of those who are at risk of homelessness**: More services must be offered to residents who are making less than 50% AMI, which results in higher housing security.
 - **Expansion of broadband infrastructure** (wireless, fiber, and other) in unserved and underserved areas at a reasonable cost to our residents. While projects must be financially

¹ See Appendix for Detailed Investment Plan

feasible for ISPs, it is also essential to provide free to low-cost internet service for those who need it.

- **Human Capital Development**

- **Attainment of 20,000 (center-based and home-based) licensed child care slots** in Monterey County.
- **Addition of 2,500 childcare entrepreneurs and workers.**
- **Affordable childcare available to all families**, targeting low-, moderate- and middle-income families so that none of these families pays more than 7% of their income.
- **Increase in the percentage of children whose comprehensive and holistic needs have been met upon entering Kindergarten from 25% to 75%**, as assessed by the School Systems Readiness Assessment.
- Creation of a new **Career Hub at Hartnell College** which will **centralize “earn-as-you-learn”** opportunities and provide **career preparation for students** across all disciplines and areas of the college.
- **Increase of 20% in enrollment for students of color** at Hartnell College. We also expect a **5% increase in persistence and graduation rates from non-White students in nursing programs.**
- **10% growth in student transfers to CSUMB's Bachelor of Science in Nursing program** after the formation of a more affordable and accessible Hartnell-CSUMB pathway.
- **Expanded job opportunities** for local youth, building on the momentum of regional aeronautics-related innovation.
- **Increase in confidence and skills of high school students, elevating graduation rates, and enabling them to attain industry certifications, transition to post-secondary education/training/work opportunities,** and become healthy contributing members of their community.
- **Increased employment** in existing and new businesses related to **childcare, AgTech, nursing, and aeronautics** with hundreds of local youth and retrained adults accessing high-road jobs.
- Expanded capacity for **Civic Academies, Mujeres en Acción, Center for Community Advocacy,** and other successful CBOs.
- More community **member engagement in leadership development activities** resulting in **increased community agency and power to affect change.**

- **Economic Opportunity Expansion**

- Increased access to and the number of **jobs that provide livable wage salaries and benefits.**
- Targeted **infrastructure investment** to support “high road” economic clusters and market drivers.
- **Improved access to technical assistance, capital and business loans to support entrepreneurship and new business creation.**
- **Expanded capacity at local CBOs** to support technical assistance and funding, resulting in a higher level of **employee ownership, higher earnings, improved financial stability, improved access to capital and business loans for new business creation.**
- **Cultural and linguistic appropriate capital support and legal assistance** to farmworkers for land acquisition, entrepreneurship.

- o Expansion of **new enterprise models, such as co-ops** that enable employee ownership and have shared values, not share value.
- o **Attraction of new and innovative capital investment** to build local revenue streams, as well as increase opportunities to access the market for both employers and employees.
- o **Increased banking and investment learning opportunities** for residents to grow savings, enable increased homeownership and build generational wealth through planned investment and savings.
- o **Expanded financial services support and debt relief**

The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated the state of our basic systems including housing, broadband, childcare, education, and access to wealth. Federal and State funding is allocated to repairing these broken systems. Our RRT work has brought to the forefront the necessity of revolutionary and transformational change while prioritizing the need for racial equity. **The time has come to revamp traditional structural racist systems while strengthening the economic growth of the region.**

Our hope with this Investment Blueprint is that there will be **much more intention around equity-centered and truly inclusive economic planning** going forward. The well-being of our communities² and the future of our economy depends on it.

This is the right time to intentionally and strategically fund these investments. We need to invest with both the short and long term in mind – simultaneously investing in housing, infrastructure, childcare, workforce, capacity building, new capital structures, and engagement strategies to ensure we build a solid foundation for a robust and accessible economy for all. We hope you’ll join us on this journey to achieve inclusivity and prosperity for ALL residents of the Salinas Valley.

² Please read “Solidarity Economics” by Chris Benner and Manual Pastor for more on this line of thinking.

Regions Rise Together: Salinas *Team Members*

Arturo Aguila** – Lead Organizer, COPA
Dan Baldwin* – President/CEO, The Community Foundation for Monterey County
Susie Brusa – CEO, Rancho Cielo
Katy Castagna* – President/CEO, United Way of Monterey County
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Tim McManus** – Supervising Organizer, COPA
Adriana Melgoza** – Director of Organizing and Education, Center for Community Advocacy
Rene Mendez – City Manager, City of Gonzales
Carissa Purnell** – Director, Alisal Family Resource Center
Raul Rodriguez – President/Superintendent, Hartnell College
Francine Rodd* – Executive Director, First 5 Monterey County
Jeff Wardell* – Chief Philanthropy Officer, Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System
Roxanne Wilson* – Executive Officer, Coalition of Homeless Services Providers

**member of Core Team*

***member of Community Engagement Working Group (and Core Team)*

Additional Acknowledgements

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Elvis Fraser – Team Lead
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Introduction

The Regions Rise Together initiative began in February 2020 with the support of [CA Forward](#) and the [James Irvine Foundation](#). Throughout the past 20 months, the [Monterey Bay Economic Partnership](#) (MBEP) has collaborated closely with community leaders and members to embark on the path toward a greater understanding of what inclusive economic development really means for the region, and co-creating a new reality with those communities who are most affected. **This work has created an opportunity for people to think differently about structures and systems that enable and perpetuate racial inequity; it also encourages people to think about their own role through that lens.**

While the onset of the global pandemic delayed this planning, the project commenced in the late summer of 2020, with **community engagement as a core priority** resulting in the following investment blueprints that are co-created and co-owned by the communities who will benefit from these investments. The overarching goals of the Regions Rise Together Salinas project include:

- Achieve inclusivity and prosperity for all residents in the Salinas Valley,
- Synchronize and leverage existing efforts,
- Enable and empower communities through the co-creation of investment plans, and
- Demonstrate that the Salinas Valley region is investment-ready and investment-worthy

Regions Rise Together (RRT) Salinas is a collaborative initiative that prioritizes inclusive economic development with an underlying core priority of advancing racial equity. Historically, economic growth has left out marginalized and vulnerable populations – Latinx, Black, Indigenous, and undocumented members of Salinas Valley – who remain unemployed or underemployed with low wages, and are suffering from social disparities that expose inequities. This group is faced with ongoing economic burdens and challenges.

This initiative also seeks to ensure that the design and implementation of programs address the barriers these populations face to **improve their standards of living such as lack of affordable housing and childcare, language barriers in service delivery, education opportunities, access to sufficient broadband, and programs to support undocumented workers in indigenous communities**, to name a few. To adequately understand and address these barriers and challenges, RRT includes the voices, perspectives, and needs of community members in the design and development of the investment plans. The focus of this initiative is not to dictate to the community its needs for success and prosperity, but rather to empower them to activate their desired future.

Racial Equity and the Theory of Change

The core building block of the Regions Rise Together initiative in Salinas is racial equity. The overarching goal of this plan is **economic transformation with equitable opportunities and outcomes for all residents**, regardless of race or socioeconomic status.

Planning, implementing, and ensuring accountability for a regional economic development and prosperity initiative that centers racial equity and inclusion requires a new way of thinking, acting, and developing. The

Sankofa Consulting team initiated the Salinas “Theory of Change” (TOC) to co-create the investment plans with specific outcomes in mind.

Crafting a TOC is vital for operationalizing programmatic elements into an actionable business plan and establishing the framework for investment priorities.

The process of developing a TOC enables the planning team to explicitly articulate how this change will occur to produce the desired outcomes and impact. Additionally, the TOC also ensures that the team will make clear, specific actions and interventions for the program to focus on. A best practice in developing TOCs is the importance of anchoring the choices and decisions in the best available evidence. Drawing on current data for socio-economic conditions of the region and successes or lessons learned from past efforts are among the evidence used to inform assumptions and choices of the RRT Salinas TOC.

The Core Team members met weekly to discuss primary and intermediate outcomes that these plans would focus on.

Primary outcomes:

- **Inclusive economic growth** (e.g., job creation and new businesses creation)
- **Shared economic prosperity** (including higher-paying jobs across all income levels and racial groups)

Intermediate outcomes:

- Improved **economic opportunities for people of color**
- Expanded and supported infrastructure to create the ability to **connect people with jobs**
- Improved individual capacities and competencies to respond to expanded infrastructure to **enable residents to take advantage of new job creation**
- Cultural competence, skills, and resources of service providers to support the implementation of **racially inclusive programs**
- Complementary support structures that align with opportunities for growth in:
 - Affordable, quality **childcare**
 - Early **childhood development** and K-16 education
 - Affordable and **safe housing**
 - **Health and wellness**
- Exploration of the **mindset of racism**, its root causes, and its manifestations in Monterey County and in RRT priority areas
- Continuous **engagement of the community** in RRT planning and decision-making
- Strengthened capacity and coordination among CBOs and intermediaries
 - Synergy and **collaboration/coordination** across the region

THEORY OF CHANGE

The value and importance of developing a TOC at a crucial starting point provides the opportunity for decision-makers to articulate the following:

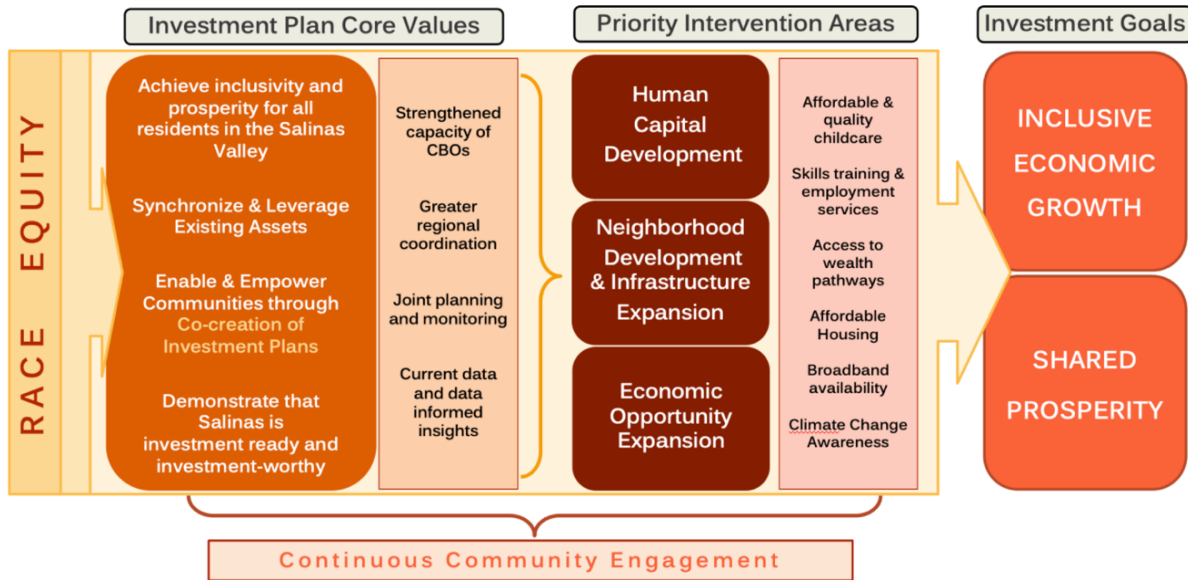
- A clear, aspirational, and shared vision of the changed condition they would like to achieve

- A set of intermediates steps or changes required, defining the logical relationship of each stage

- Underlying assumptions of relationship stages and desired outcomes

- Investment in and **leverage of existing programs/assets**
- Development of **regional partnerships**
- Continual **regional planning** and reflection, joint planning upfront

Salinas Regions Rise Together: Theory of Change



Background and Context

The Economic Reality of the Salinas Valley

Monterey County and the Salinas Valley are home to the largest agricultural market in the State of California, which generates just over \$11.7 billion, serving as the foundation of our local economy and supporting more than 64,000 jobs. Monterey County agriculture pumps \$1.33 million into the local economy each hour of every day. Despite supplying 90% of the lettuce consumed across the globe, many Salinas Valley families struggle on a daily basis to put food on their tables and to make ends meet. Vast disparities in earnings, income, and quality of life are key characteristics of the economic engine in Monterey County.

According to Impact Monterey County (2020), reviving our local and regional economies requires that we reshape them to better serve our population, and this is what the Regions Rise Together Initiative set out to accomplish: **seeking to create a more equitable framework to drive our local economic initiatives**. We are proposing investment plan priorities that will inform, inspire, and act to ensure the reshaping of our local economies based on data, but also **built on an equity framework to disrupt the cyclical poverty** that has become the reality for many workers throughout Monterey County.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the burden of financial insecurity to the forefront of discussions on economic reform, it also recognizes that the acute housing crisis in parallel with stagnant wages and limited access to education, high-road jobs, and skills training has existed for decades in this region. RRT focused on **data collection, longitudinal correlation of financial trends, and cross-sector collaboration** to

explore action steps to improve the quality of life of residents well into the future. We acknowledge the fact that our communities of color, immigrant neighborhoods, and pockets of community residents with limited education and language skills have historically been and continue to be the most negatively impacted. The 2019 Monterey County Impact Report reiterates that through surveys, community conversations, and key informant interviews, many participants described the challenge of keeping up with the cost of living while their wages remained relatively stagnant. Although some traditional economic indicators like unemployment and median household income seem to suggest broad economic improvement over recent years, a closer look reveals deep inequities and vulnerabilities that existed even prior to COVID-19³.

Monterey County has been a place of long-standing racial inequities, with certain areas of the county such as the Salinas Valley, and particularly East Salinas, experiencing the impact of these inequities more acutely. These inequities stem from persistent low wages and racialized social inequality that have caused instability for residents, with much of the population working in low-wage jobs such as agriculture and hospitality. While these inequities existed long before COVID-19, **the pandemic has exacerbated the situation among Latinx, Indigenous, Black, and low-income residents in the county.** A recent [Monterey County COVID-19 Pandemic Disparate Impact Report](#), with data through July 31, 2020, revealed that 93% of COVID-19 cases were in the Latinx population compared to 5% for Whites. The Latinx population experienced higher morbidity rates at 1,255.4 per 100,000 population. While Black and African American residents accounted for only 1% of the cases, the morbidity rate was also significantly high at 253.7 per 100,000 population. Race continues to be the number one indicator of outcomes and dictates the propensity (economic prosperity of communities).

The Intersection of Stagnant Wages, Education, and Cost of Living

The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) reports the **average Californian would need to work 112 hours a week to be able to afford to buy a two-bedroom apartment. The average tenant in Monterey County would need to earn \$71,720 annually to afford a two-bedroom unit.** Yet the US Census reports (2019) the average salary for a resident was only \$28,207, and the 2018 Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan reported that field workers earned a median of \$12.70 per hour with a mean annual income of \$25,000. Roughly half of the county residents rent their homes, and 56% of the renting population spends more than 30% of their income on rent and utilities. Data from secondary sources point to a crisis of affordability that stands in the way of progress for many (Monterey County 2019 Impact Report).

More than one in three households – 33% over 3.5 million families – do not earn sufficient income to meet their basic costs of living. – United Way, 2021

Legislation was written to limit barriers to accessing a quality, fair, and equitable education for students impacted by housing insecurity because they experience not only higher rates of mental health care concerns, but lower standardized scores, lower graduation rates, and low college acceptance rates, ultimately leading to lower earned wages and decreased life expectancy.

³Opportunity Insights Economic Tracker www.tracktherecovery.org

The Reality of Impact

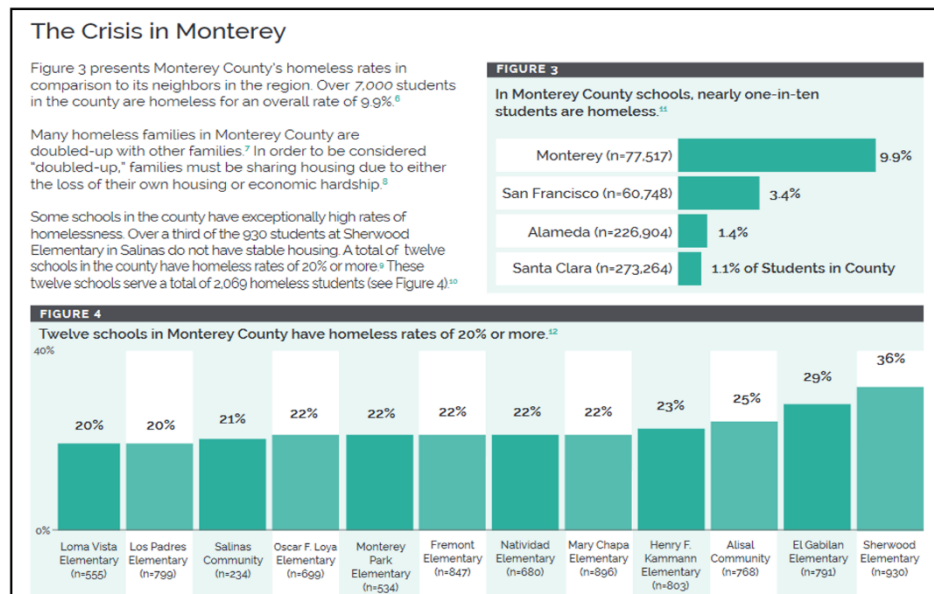
If we are not deliberate in addressing the financial disparities created by low wages that limit how Monterey County families access safe and dignified housing, the disparities will only continue to grow. **“While Latino households represent approximately 31% of households in California, 52% of Latino households have incomes below Real Cost Measure, the highest among all racial groups.”** (United Way, 2021) Salinas, which is one of the largest cities in Monterey County, is 79.3% Latino (US Census 2020) and one of the most impacted communities by this housing disparity.

The pandemic has exacerbated financial burdens, and in addition to a chaotic housing market, families’ limited funds were stretched into non-existence with **increased food prices, demands for childcare, reduced work in the hospitality and agriculture sectors, and inconsistent access to vaccines.** “We provide the food for all of our pantries in the county, and the need is so unprecedented,” said Melissa Kendrick, executive director of Food Bank for Monterey County. “Our numbers

have quadrupled,” said Kendrick, who called the situation “unbelievable...first we’ve had a pandemic requiring people to shelter in place and now so many individuals are now out of work. We were already a county that had very high levels of food insecurity and hunger.”

To address the inequities experienced by Monterey County residents, this plan requires **a continuum of solutions that move beneficiaries from surviving to thriving.** There are investments needed to address the immediate day-to-day survival challenges of residents in addition to structural changes required for long-term health and security. At the same time, it is important to continue to close racial equity gaps to protect and support our low-income populations. The investments will **create a safety net for the present time, as well as move us toward more fundamental socio-economic transformation that will enable individuals and communities to thrive well into the future.** To realize this impact requires a bold vision for transferring ownership to the people that currently have little or no political power and wealth. It is critical to have residents impacted by the inequities at the center of developing solutions for themselves. This approach increases the likelihood that the solutions will better reflect their lived and living experiences.

Current social and economic inequities were created, are perpetuated, in part, by systemic racism, and as such require solutions that eliminate or transform these forces. **Race, class, economic and social status are intricately connected and require root cause analysis as the basis of developing effective and**



Source: <https://www.pivotlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/montereyhomelessfosteryouth.pdf>

long-lasting solutions. For example, housing is the number one issue across Monterey County and the lack of housing affordability prevents communities from thriving. Neighborhood development and infrastructure requires investment in other areas such as job accessibility, transportation, broadband, access to quality healthcare, among others. Solutions to housing require robust sustainable solutions in other investment areas. However, to formulate effective solutions to the housing crisis, it is important to understand and recognize the impact of redlining and other policies had in creating and sustaining the housing problem for black and brown communities in the county. Better yet, it's important to have the affected communities articulate their understanding and their solutions.

Indigenous Communities in Monterey County

The Central Coast has the highest percentage of Indigenous farmworkers in California. The Indigenous communities come from the Southern States in Mexico, such as Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Chiapas, and from other parts of Latin America such as Guatemala. Even within Indigenous communities, there are significant cultural and linguistic differences. In the state of Oaxaca, there are sixteen different Indigenous communities with unique cultures and languages. In the Salinas Valley, the primary languages of Indigenous communities are Mixteco, Zapotec, and Triqui.

Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena (CBDIO) sought to **deliberately include the voices of our Indigenous farmworker communities in the Salinas Valley.** Indigenous communities faced discrimination in their country of origin that is carried over in the United States. In the farmworker hierarchy, the Indigenous communities have been at the bottom of social stratification. The lack of knowledge of the Indigenous communities' languages, culture, and needs increases their barriers to access services. For this reason, it was important to include a space for Indigenous farmworkers to share how they endured the COVID-19 pandemic, their priorities as we think of recovery, and how they can be included in the conversation and decision-making process.

Authentic Community Engagement

Monterey County is home to a rich agricultural industry and yet there are many residents, particularly in Salinas – the largest city in the Monterey Bay region – and the Salinas Valley, that do not have access to the level of wealth seen in other parts of the county. **The majority of residents experience economic hardship and have significantly less access to economic mobility and decision-making processes.** Organizations such as Building Healthy Communities (BHC), the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA), Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action (COPA), and Mujeres en Acción have been working to include resident voices in planning processes. The Alisal Vibrancy Plan created in 2019 is an example of a community-driven planning process that built in ways to remove barriers for participation by those most impacted by inequities in our community and who are not normally engaged in decision-making processes.

RRT strives to **embed community partners as a core principle in the approach**, ensuring the voices are heard. Not a “one and done”, RRT seeks to include community voices throughout the life of the initiative – design, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and holding implementers accountable for results.

Commitment to Elevating Community Voice

The formation of the Community Engagement Working Group (CEWG) created space for **an intentional effort to capture and incorporate the voices of those often left out of decision-making processes**. This approach meant centering racial equity not only in the engagement process but as part of crafting the final economic development plan.

To capture community voices, a total of six online community forum civic learning sessions were held, each facilitated by resident and youth leaders. BHC, Mujeres en Acción, Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO), and COPA met weekly during the three months leading up to the first session to create safe spaces to share and reflect on the impact of the pandemic on our families and community and to provide data and learning opportunities for those who attended.

Racial equity is achieved when race is no longer the indicator of outcomes or dictates how well someone fares in life. Commitment to racial equity requires power-sharing with residents by having them actively represented in leadership roles equal to that of their White counterparts. Residents in the Salinas Valley – particularly those who are low-income, undocumented, indigenous, monolingual speakers, farmworkers, and hospitality workers must inform the economic development plan and determine investment priorities. This requires us to understand the root causes of the persistent racial inequities and identification of the systemic changes needed to positively impact the lives of residents.

From disparities in earning across gender and race, to disparities in access to preventative medical care, the team designed deliberate content to give the history and background of the inequities that have been generationally normalized across Monterey County.

The Pivot

A crucial pivot in the RRT process took place in October 2020. Sankofa Consulting was in the process of conducting key informant interviews with a variety of leaders and sectors in the Salinas Valley region including those from agriculture (land, labor, technology), hospitality, climate change, construction, education, faith-based organizations, health care (public and private), housing, race equity, transportation, and water. **The race equity conversation emphasized the need for conversations with the community itself to find out explicitly what they need** – their voices needed to be represented more prominently in this process. This led to the creation of the Community Engagement Working Group (CEWG), a subset of the Core Team that initially met on a weekly basis.

The CEWG organized many house meetings, larger evening community convenings (with free childcare) resulting in over 500 community members sharing their concerns and offering their insights. Out of these conversations, six essential needs were articulated: (1) **better wages**, (2) **access to training**, (3) **access to affordable housing for the undocumented community**, (4) **debt relief**, (5) **offering/availability of appropriate language services when accessing local resources**, (5) **investment in their children**, and (6) **better transportation**.

Community members noted the lack of funds and financial resources to sustain their families, and with the pandemic, they saw a reduction in work hours and consequently their pay. Many community members suffer from mounting debt issues as their expenses pile up. They are seeing the cost of their food increase while

their income remains the same, causing more stress for families. Indigenous farmworkers also fear the impact that temporary, non-immigrant workers ([H-2A workers](#)) will have on their salary and work conditions.

Housing is also a big issue for the community, often resulting in overcrowding. In many cases, immigration status exacerbates access to the already limited affordable housing options. Indigenous community members with limited Spanish cannot navigate resources because institutions lack appropriate linguistic services. At the same time, they fear that their children are losing their native language. They want to see investment in culturally appropriate child care because they work long hours and spend little time with them. And they want to see more support for their children to access higher education. More accessible transportation is needed as a large number of women in these communities do not drive.



There were two methods of capturing the needs of the Indigenous community: through surveys CBDIO conducted in their Indigenous Communities Relief Fund in Monterey County and through in-depth conversations with community members. In the community meetings, there were a total of sixteen Mixteco, Triqui, and Zapotec community members who shared their experiences and what they see as a priority for their families and communities.

The CEWG community conversations captured the key priority areas that ultimately shaped what these investment plans would include⁴. In the forthcoming sections, we highlight investment areas and urgent needs within the Salinas Valley region. It is also important to note

that these plans will serve as a blueprint for other priority areas that intend to seek future public and private funding.

Investment Plan Overview

From the lived experiences of community members and the professional backgrounds and expertise of the Core team, these plans not only shed light on the areas for investment but also opportunities to lift one another up as a collective body – authentically listening to and holding the community accountable.

The focus areas for these plans include:

- Neighborhood Development & Infrastructure Expansion
- Human Capital Development
- Economic Opportunity Expansion

Within each of these segments, the investment blueprints focus on a subset of priority issues that seek further investment over the next decade. Please see the Appendix for the Detailed Investment Ask table.

⁴ The full CEWG report can be found [here](#).

Investment Areas: Total Investment Ask of \$1.7B



NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION

- Improve housing affordability and stability for residents and migrant workers
- Expand infrastructure accessibility and affordability
- Expand climate change awareness and resilience

INVESTMENT ASK: \$385M

HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

- Expand access to quality, affordable childcare and early learning
- Increase access to education and employment pathways
- Expand the leadership development ecosystem

INVESTMENT ASK: \$816M

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY EXPANSION

- Expand the number of high-road jobs across all education levels
- Expand the entrepreneurship ecosystem
- Create wealth pathways and access to capital

INVESTMENT ASK: \$515M

Community Solutions & Potential Impact

#1 Neighborhood Development & Infrastructure Expansion

Stable, clean, accessible, and **affordable housing**. **Taking care of those less fortunate** who are living out of their car, under a bridge, or in the forest. Ensuring that every household has **broadband internet connectivity**. These are the basic needs that must be met in order for our communities to move from surviving to thriving.



Taking action
to move
individuals
along the
continuum and
THRIVE!

(a) Affordable Housing for Farmworker Families

There are structural drivers to housing affordability and stability, which are rooted in the racial socioeconomics of our society. **Therefore, it is necessary to use a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens for analysis, and each solution must address the needs of Black and Indigenous people of color**

(BIPOC), and involve those most impacted, as part of the community engagement work. We need to insist on this and be intentional in this approach because it does not happen on its own.

Housing costs require a disproportionate share of most family budgets in California, but that is particularly true for struggling families, according to Census data. Households living below the Federal Poverty Line report spending a staggering **78% of their income on housing**.

Nearly 4 in 10 California households (38%), over 4.1 million households, are "housing burdened", defined as spending 30% or more of their income on housing, whether they own or rent.

Because earned wages are not sufficient to cover monthly housing costs, many families have chosen to cohabitate and share housing spaces. Monterey County has the second-highest number of homeless students under the McKinney Vento Act in the entire state of California, defined as families doubled or tripled up and those without inconsistent housing and access to basic utilities. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act authorizes the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program and is the primary piece of federal legislation related to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. It was reauthorized in December 2015 by Title IX, Part A, of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Factors that drive the housing market include:

- 1) An **increase of people coming into the Salinas area from San Jose**, where the cost of living is even higher, and the housing market is exhausted. The San Jose commuters can afford to pay the prices and are driving the market
- 2) Many **foreign investors buying property** in Salinas (and in California at large)
- 3) An overall **lack of multi-unit apartments**, allowing landlords to demand high rents
- 4) The city population grows by 50K during the farming season every year, yet the **infrastructure cannot accommodate it**

If the housing needs are not met, the farmworker community in particular will continue to live in overcrowded conditions, be at higher risk of COVID-19 infection and illness, and children will repeat the cycle of poverty.

There are steps we can take now to increase housing production. The [Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan of the Salinas Valley and Pajaro Valley](#) produced 57 recommendations. These recommended steps that make up the Action Plan focus on four areas: **Housing Types, Suitable Sites, Financing, and Regulatory Reform, which are needed to bring about the goal of producing 5,300 farmworker housing units in 5 years** in order to maintain the current access rate to affordable housing and stabilize the agricultural labor force.

There are General Plan and Housing Element updates that will be made over the next 2 years in Salinas and Monterey County. **For the next 10 to 20 years, every land use decision made will need to be in alignment with this plan or it will**

Of the nearly 434,000 county residents, 13.5% are over 65 years of age, with 13.3% living in poverty, 34% are immigrants, 68% identify as Hispanic/Latinx, and 15% households are "linguistically isolated."

not happen. It is imperative that the community be actively involved in the process that will produce this document. Involvement also implies education on how housing policy is produced, the underlying issues driving the housing crisis, how the pandemic has impacted housing, and who has been impacted more acutely. We must ensure there are pathways for buyers to the available inventory, otherwise, local first-time buyers will get priced out or lose opportunities to cash buyers/investors.

There are well-developed existing plans, such as the **Alisal Vibrancy Plan**, that came about through a long process with input from a resident Steering Committee, Working Group members, and the East Salinas Community working with the City. Such a plan provides a great model for ensuring community participation and ground-up planning. **The voices of the community integrated equitably with city staff to produce a plan that engages the needs and ambitions of the neighborhoods.** Some plans already include milestone metrics. The Salinas Plan, for example, sets the goal of producing 4,000 affordable homes within 10 years. Data, such as zip codes with high infection and hospitalization rates, can be used to help target resources.

(b) Housing the Unhoused

The depth of the homeless crisis extends far beyond what a layperson sees when noticing a tent on the side of the highway. People living without the protection of a home are constantly subject to trauma, harassment, and embarrassment, which may cause severe PTSD or other mental or physical conditions. **Once a person becomes chronically homeless, the cost of their homelessness significantly increases as does the ability to move them out of homelessness and into permanent stable housing.** The 2019 Point In Time count revealed there were 2,422 people in Monterey County experiencing homelessness, 23% of whom are chronic. Homelessness also increases public expenses associated with crisis services like shelters, hospitals, jails/prisons, not to mention the environmental impacts associated with trash and debris or pollution of levees and waterways.

Aside from the city of Salinas, the rural valley is considered a service-poor area. Composed of small cities with very little funding to support substantial programs, the few services available are annexed and difficult for the homeless to access. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, outreach workers worked closely with local jurisdictions to offer services and referrals directly to people living in encampments. However, outreach workers report the vast majority of the occupants are refusing housing services located outside of their home community, where many people experiencing homelessness have some type of support network or go to work and/or school. **Therefore, it is necessary for all jurisdictions, regardless of size, to embrace new services and housing options for people with little to no income.**

In 2020, the Lead Me Home Continuum of Care (LMH CoC) of the Coalition of Homeless Services Providers hired a nationally recognized firm, Focus Strategies, to work with a collaborative planning group that involved staff from the Counties of Monterey and San Benito and the City of Salinas to assess the severity of the homeless crisis in our region. The LMH CoC released a series of documents to report their findings including the Housing Market Analysis, where it was revealed that **Monterey County suffers from a severe housing shortage at 14 units per 100 extremely low-income (0-30% AMI) households and 28 per 100 very-low income (31%-50% AMI). Additionally, through predictive modeling, it is estimated that homelessness could be reduced by 50% in 5 years through increasing the performance of existing homeless services and housing production.** And although homelessness is generally caused by the lack of affordable housing, homelessness and housing are considered separate crises and should be handled accordingly.

Poor health is also a major indicator for persons experiencing homelessness. **58% of people experiencing homelessness claim to have a disabling health condition, such as a developmental disability, HIV/AIDS, or long-term physical or mental impairment that impacts a person’s ability to live independently.** Social Security and Disability Insurance are simply insufficient to cover basic needs, like food, clothing, telephone bills, and especially housing. 45% of people experiencing homelessness have medical conditions tied to substance abuse disorder (SUD), however, the addictions were not the cause of the person’s homelessness, rather an after-effect of the person dealing with the traumas they experienced since becoming homeless. This major gap between government assistance and the ability to sustain housing must be addressed by creating more extremely low to very low-income housing.

We must not only expedite the production of housing to address the unmet need but also consider the imminent wave of population growth before us. Should we not, those at the margins of society will continue to fall out of housing stability and chronic homelessness will continue to grow at an alarming rate.

Multiple efforts have taken place to ensure community voice is woven throughout the decision-making process. Input has been collected from all stakeholders, including people with lived experience, elected officials, county and city staff, neighborhood community members, and service providers through a variety of platforms like public meetings, focus groups, interviews, and surveys. All referenced interventions in this section are backed by documents where community voice was incorporated into the process and development of the recommendations.

Homelessness is a multifaceted issue with many root causes and variables to consider when working with the homeless population.

To truly move the needle, decision-makers must be provided with data that supports the need to ramp up services and address systemic issues that create pipelines to homelessness.

In 2019, the Coalition of Homeless Services Providers released their first racial disparities analysis, where data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) was compared to Decennial Census and Homeless Point In Time data. It revealed that while **African-Americans/Blacks are 12 times more likely to become homeless than a person who identifies as White, race itself doesn’t predict the person’s ability to get housed successfully from the**

homeless response system. To clarify, the homeless response system shows very little disparity in service provision; however, the disparity is prevalent in all other systems – education, criminal justice, employment, family services, etc. and the work must start there. In response to the Racial Disparities Analysis, United Way of Monterey County prioritized homeless prevention projects that served in areas where BIPOC residents are located. This is a perfect example of how data available to decision-makers can pivot efforts. Such evaluations take time and money, which has long-standing impacts on people living outdoors.

We are committed to the goal of **reducing homelessness by 50% within 5 years.** This can be established by a comprehensive three-pronged approach:

ONE: Slow down the pipeline to homelessness

Significantly increase homeless prevention efforts in high poverty areas of the Salinas Valley through:

- Increased access to **homeless prevention funding**
- Targeted and **culturally aware outreach** in schools, churches, etc.
- **Waiving certain policies** that discourage people of color from accessing services, (i.e. requiring a social security card or requiring the person needing assistance to be on the lease of the home)

TWO: Increase homeless housing units

Increase permanent supportive housing and extremely low-income housing by 655 units through:

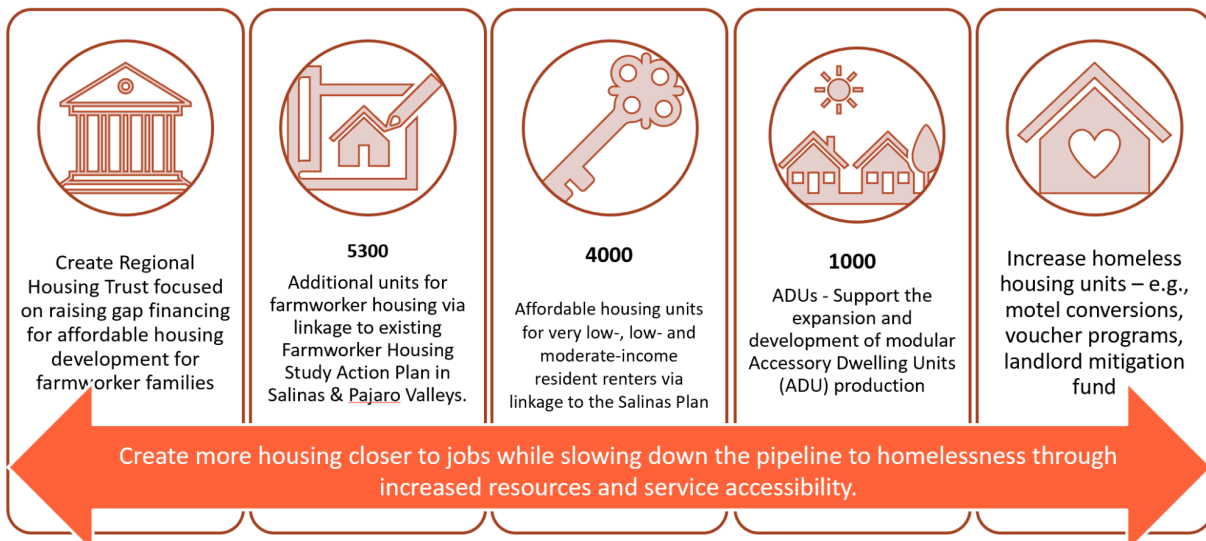
- **Converting motels** into single-room occupancy units
- Increasing **voucher programs**
- **Engaging with and educating landlords** on the importance of accepting vouchers and working with rapid re-housing organizations
- Creating a **landlord mitigation fund** to support landlord grievances

THREE: Serve people where they are while housing is built

Stabilize people living in encampments by:

- Adding **safe parking programs** in the Salinas Valley
- Increasing **sanitation services** (portable toilets, hand-washing stations, laundry, portable showers)
- **Mobilizing case management** to meet people where they are, rather than require them to travel to service-rich areas

Community Solutions



Potential Impact

FARMWORKER HOUSING FOR FAMILIES

- **Positive impact on the mental and physical health outcomes of families, particularly our farmworker families who live in severely overcrowded conditions.** The health and well-being of parents is beneficial to their children. The educational outcomes of children who live in overcrowded conditions are negatively impacted.
- **Stability in our agricultural workforce.** This will serve a critical challenge of our main local industry; a healthy workforce stabilizes the industry. It will also mitigate the need to bring in more H2A Visa workers.
- **Mitigation of the impact of COVID-19.** Overcrowded conditions directly challenge our community's ability to fight the spread of the pandemic, particularly among essential workers such as farmworkers.
- **Opportunities for homeownership.** By stabilizing rent affordability, families have a greater chance to move from renting to homeownership and not be trapped in a perpetual state of renting due to high rents and low wages.
- **Opportunity to build wealth to pass on to the next generation.** Paying an affordable rent or mortgage allows the chance to save money as well as buy a home, and this can all be passed on to one's children which will help to break the cycle of poverty.

HOUSING THE UNHOUSED

- **Mitigation of negative environmental impacts.** Millions of dollars are spent each year on cleaning up trash and debris from encampments and/or waterways, repairing structural damage to highway overpasses, etc.
- **Safety and security.** Regardless of age, income, ethnicity, health condition, housing is a basic right that should be available to all residents.
- **Improvement of the physical and mental health of our neighbors.** Those who experience homelessness also experience severe and ongoing impacts to their physical health, living in a constant state of high stress (survival mode). The mental health impacts of living in such conditions often lead to self-medicating or drug abuse, often leading to hospitalizations or incarceration.
- **Stabilization of those who are at risk of homelessness.** More services must be offered to residents who are making less than 50% AMI that will increase their housing security.

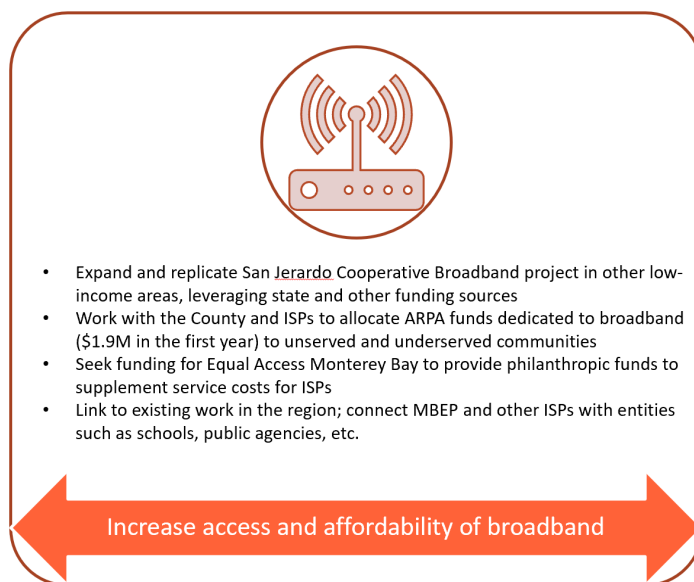
(c) Infrastructure Expansion

California is facing a digital crisis, with far too many residents left without adequate and affordable broadband service. The COVID-19 crisis has brought a **lack of internet service to the forefront due to the necessity of distance learning and remote working, telehealth care, and remote access to employment, economic and human services.** MBEP has recently launched a new effort to implement long-term solutions to provide broadband access for all residents of the Monterey Bay region: Equal Access Monterey Bay.

This effort is modeled after the success of **Equal Access Santa Cruz**, a partnership between Cruzio Internet, Community Foundation Santa Cruz County, and the Santa Cruz County Office of Education that **provides low-income families in need of reliable and affordable broadband for communities that cannot afford service at current rates.** The first Equal Access Santa Cruz project was completed in March 2021 at

the Buena Vista Migrant Center in Watsonville. Nearly 150 units were wired with premium internet service (100 Mbps download and upload) at no cost to the residents for the first two years. MBEP, in partnership with the Central Coast Broadband Consortium (CCBC), collaborates with local governments, County Offices of Education, school districts, and residents to identify projects that may be eligible for Equal Access. We work with ISPs in our region to define an infrastructure plan for those locations, whether it be fiber, wireless, or other technologies. For very low-income communities, the buildout costs and service costs are supplemented with philanthropic funds housed at the Community Foundation for Monterey County. In San Benito County, MBEP recently partnered with South Valley Internet, which is creating a nonprofit to replicate the Equal Access model, and they are naming their initiative Balanced Access.

Community Solutions



Potential Impact

- **Expansion of existing work** that is being done in the region to collaborate with entities such as schools, public agencies, the County Office of Education and Monterey County through MBEP, and ISPs
- Replication of the **San Jerardo Cooperative Broadband project** and the Equal Access model in other low-income areas, leveraging state and other funding sources as well as philanthropic donations
- **Allocation of ARPA funds** dedicated to broadband (\$1.9M in the first year) to unserved and underserved communities, providing high-speed broadband at reasonable rates
- **Increased philanthropic funds** through Equal Access Monterey Bay to supplement build-out service costs for ISPs
- **Additional coverage** to hundreds of residents for each project
- **Free to low-cost internet service** for those who need it

#2 Human Capital Development

What does it mean to have quality childcare? It means the needs of the whole child, family, and care and well-being system are considered. It means there is enough for all who need it, affordable and equal regardless of a family's ability to pay directly, and accessible near where the child lives or on a parent's commute. **Investing in quality childcare makes long-term economic sense, from a return on investment standpoint.** As the Nobel Prize-winning economist, Dr. James Heckman has published, there is a 13% return on investment for every dollar spent on providing public quality childcare. Where else can one find such a high rate of return?

A strong workforce pipeline is the backbone of any vibrant economy. How do we do a better job of **linking students, educators, and employers to create positive change**? We need to invest in collaborative approaches that bring new resources and programs to the region, amplify the impact of best practices, and support work-based learning to ease the transition of students to the workforce, to develop a strong workforce for our region.

We also need a constantly expanding base of trained **community leaders capable of identifying gaps and potential solutions in the economy, connecting with others who have previously been at the margins, and working with decision-makers to implement solutions.** Investments must be made in the community-based organizations that are identifying, training, and mentoring these leaders so they can sustain their participation in public life.

(a) Affordable & Quality Childcare

CURRENT CHILDCARE LANDSCAPE: THE BASICS

Population under 18 Years of Age

There are a total of about 115,000 minors in Monterey County. Of those, about 17,000 are two and under; 19,000 are ages three to five years, and 54,000 are between six and thirteen years. These are the age groups we focus on when we talk about childcare for this investment plan since it is generally considered most appropriate for children of these ages to have adult supervision at all times. This is a total of **90,000 children**, ages 0-13 years.

Capacity of Early and School-Aged Care

According to the state's Community Care Licensing, there are a total of **9,943 licensed childcare spots** in Monterey County. Licensed care (sometimes also called formal care) is either based in a center usually with multiple classrooms and age groups or based in family childcare homes where ages are mingled.

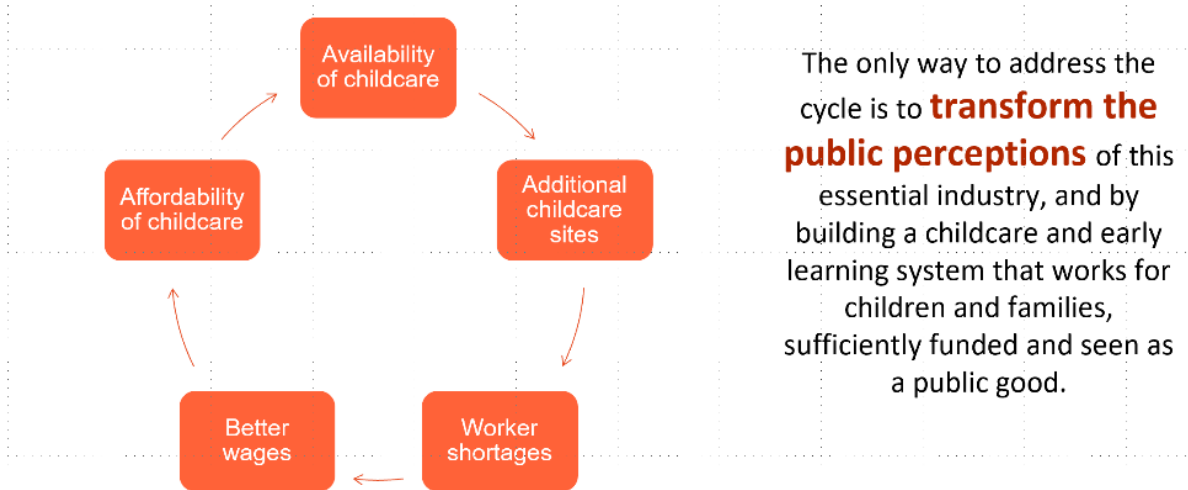
While there are 9,943 licensed spaces, it does not mean they are all in operation; some may be temporarily or permanently closed, for example, due to COVID-19, and not yet reported. There currently is no data collection system that can report how many childcare spaces are in operation in real-time, whether or not they are occupied. Of these 9,943 licensed childcare spots, 6,113 are for center-based care (493 are for infants and toddlers and 5,620 are for preschool-aged children), and 3,830 are for home-based care (all ages). There are 120 licensed centers and 320 family childcare homes. School-based expanded learning opportunities funding for school-age children, as provided by the Department of Education, is administered through each school district according to the school district's priorities.

We estimate the size of the **early childcare workforce for licensed care at 1,600**, with a majority of women of color. Credential requirements differ between types of childcare settings and positions held, from a few courses to a Master’s degree. Most center-based teachers have an Associate degree (some state preschools and Head Start require a Bachelor’s Degree).

Unmet Need for Childcare

Estimating the need for childcare is challenging and complex since every **family has different needs for**

Addressing a complex problem: The cycle of availability and affordability



different reasons that change over time – whether day to day or season to season. In addition, the schedules for early childcare and TK-12 schooling that are offered do not match with most parent or guardian’s schedules. Some parents prefer informal care to formal. When it comes to formal (i.e., licensed), some prefer home-based care and some prefer center-based care. Most parents rely on a mix of formal and informal over the course of a day or season. Quality care also includes support for the childcare workforce – living wages, benefits, adequate professional support (e.g., continuing education and reflective practice), and respect as an essential industry.

We estimate that we need **an additional 10,000 licensed childcare spaces in Monterey County**, double the current capacity. The availability of facilities, workforce, and affordability for parents are the primary barriers to increasing childcare in Monterey County (and most everywhere), especially in early care and learning. For school-aged care, the primary barriers are funding for expanded learning opportunities before and after school, and the workforce needed to support those programs.

Affordability

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) suggests that affordable childcare is defined as **family out-of-pocket costs of 7% or less of total household income**. The median annual income in Monterey County for families with children is \$58,819. That means the median cost of childcare should not be more than \$4,117 a year to be considered affordable. Currently, according to the most recent California Department of Education regional market rate survey for Monterey County, the median cost of care for an infant in a center is \$13,862.

State and federal subsidies for childcare exist for low-income families. For state childcare subsidies, for a family of 4, the maximum gross monthly income is \$7,441⁵. These subsidies are limited. According to the local childcare Resource & Referral Agency (Mexican American Opportunity Foundation), in the spring of 2021, there were just as many children on the waiting list for childcare vouchers as there were children served – approximately 1,300. In 2021, the state allocated more funding for subsidized childcare and preschool programs, as well as expanding transitional kindergarten. However, as of this date, the amounts are still not known and we know they will not be able to meet the need.

The message is clear: **people in our community need and want quality childcare that is affordable and accessible**. It consistently comes up during all types of community engagement: in the Impact Monterey surveys; in statistically significant polling for the investment of cannabis tax funds; in various city and county planning processes, whether related to COVID-19 resiliency, municipal planning, general early childhood development priorities, violence prevention, community health, or economic inclusion.

During the Regions Rise Together community engagement process, we heard the following investments are a priority:

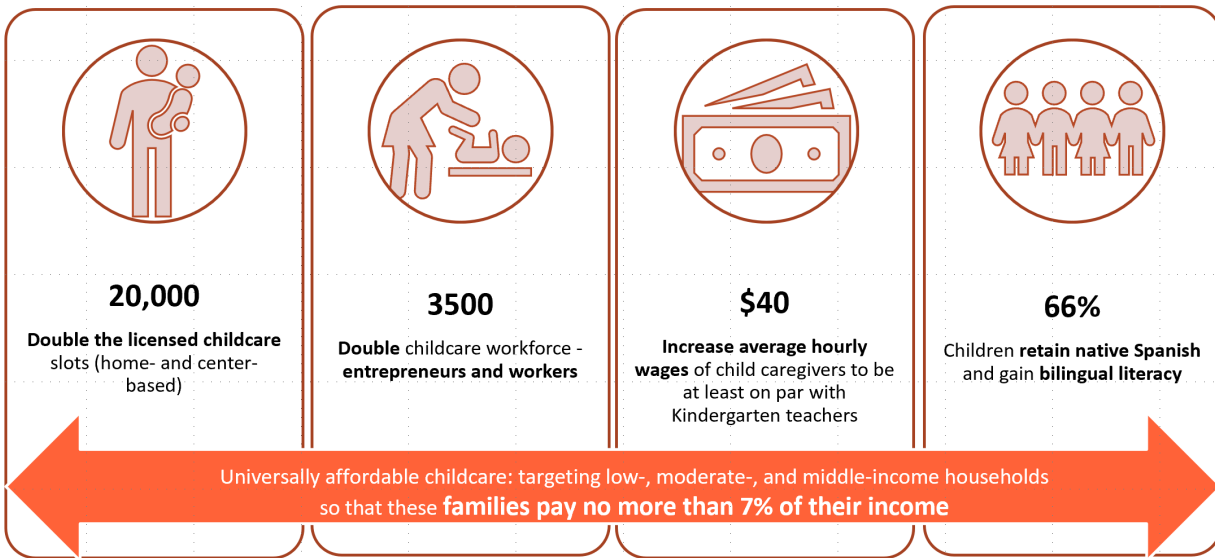
- **Mental health** for everyone
- The **well-being of children**
- **Culturally appropriate childcare** for parents who work long hours and spend little time with their children
- **Public transportation**, since a large number of women do not drive
- **Higher earnings** for childcare workers

Investing in childcare and early learning is investing in a thriving and just economy and community. Quality childcare is at the heart of a vibrant community, a place not only for caring for children but also a place for parents to connect to each other and other resources. It is a place where lifelong relationships and networks of social support begin. It allows the current workforce to show up ready to focus on jobs and is the first stepping stone for developing a strong future workforce.

The first three years of life are crucial for laying a strong emotional, and cognitive foundation for social and economic well-being. This strong foundation supports lifelong learning and resiliency in the face of adverse experiences throughout life, but particularly those experienced as a young child. Some examples of such experiences include the pandemic, wildfires, racism, poverty, and community, or domestic violence. Quality childcare provides a buffer for children and support for parents. Quality childcare is essential - whether from parents or guardians; informally through other family members, friends or neighbors; formally through licensed center-based or home-based childcare; or through expanded learning opportunities for school-aged children (e.g., after-school or youth development programs).

⁵ California Department of Education Subsidized Child Care (retrieved November 3, 2021)
<https://www.ece.ucla.edu/enrollment-tuition/california-department-of-education-subsidized-child-care>

Community Solutions



A Gordian Knot

As might be clear from the statistics cited above, addressing the shortage of childcare is like a Gordian knot – there is no easy solution. It is impossible to only address one issue at a time. To increase availability, you need more sites. To find more sites, you need to address workforce shortages. To attract more workers, you need better wages. In order to pay better wages, childcare will become more expensive. **To make childcare affordable for families, it needs to be seen for what it is – a public good that is needed for a thriving and just economy, and therefore must have sufficient public funding.** The only way to address this is by transforming the public perceptions of this essential industry, and by building a childcare and early learning system that works for children and families. This can only be done by addressing all issues at the same time. The specific recommended actions to expand access to quality, affordable early learning and childcare are multi-faceted and require deep, committed partnerships across sectors and disciplines.

Potential Impact

Economic & Social Justice

Our vision is to eliminate the vast disparities in health and well-being between people of color and white people. **Investing in childcare and early development lays the foundation for a resilient individual and a resilient community.** The impact of that foundation ripples out broadly to society and the economy in general. As calculated by Nobel Prize-winning economist Dr. James Heckman, investing in the systems that support the first five years of a child's life has a 13% return on investment. Research shows that bringing more resources into the early years of a person's life, before preschool, has long-lasting effects on the resilience of children. This is especially true for children who have significant adverse childhood experiences – such as lack of access to care, exposure to violence, poverty, racism, and a global health crisis like the current pandemic.

In the shorter term, our goals for childcare investments are as follows:

- **Doubling the number of licensed childcare slots in Monterey County to 20,000** (center-based and home-based).
- More than doubling the childcare and early learning workforce, adding **2,500 childcare entrepreneurs and workers**.
- More than doubling the **average wages of child caregivers** to be on par with kindergarten teachers **at \$40/hr plus benefits**.
- Making **childcare affordable** universally for all families, targeting low, moderate, and middle-income families so that **none of these families pays more than 7% of their income**.
- **Tripling the percent of children whose comprehensive, holistic needs have been met upon entering Kindergarten**, reaching 75%, as assessed by the School Systems Readiness Assessment.
- Ensuring that the 66% of children for whom **Spanish is their native language retain that language and gain bilingual literacy**.

Childcare is everyone’s business. Historically it has been seen as “women’s work.” Historical roots in slavery also meant that Black and Indigenous women of color often took care of the children. “The help” was paid low wages and the work was not seen as critical. Now we know better. We know that quality early childcare provides the social-emotional and cognitive skills our children need to succeed in school and life while also allowing parents the peace of mind to be able to do their best work. We need a massive mental model shift in our county to make quality affordable childcare the engine and catalyst for a healthy economy and to value the early childhood providers that can make it a reality.

(b) Career Pathways – AgTech, Nursing, and Aeronautics

AgTech Pathways

The Salinas Valley finds itself in a social and economic nexus between water shortage, labor shortage, and technological disruptions, coupled with field worker jobs that are low-paying and physically strenuous⁶.

About Hartnell College

Hartnell College serves the Salinas Valley, a fertile agricultural region 10 miles wide and 100 miles long. Focusing on the education and workforce development needs of communities in the Salinas Valley, **Hartnell College strengthens communities by providing opportunities for students to reach career and/or academic goals in an environment committed to student learning, achievement and success.** It draws most of its annual enrollment of 17,000 students from Salinas and surrounding communities. Of its diverse student body, approximately 85% are low-income, 86% receive financial aid, 40% are English language learners, 50% are from farm working families, 65% are first-generation college students, 73% are

Nearly 7 in 10 California households without a high school diploma or equivalent (68%) fall below the Real Cost Measure, compared to those with at least a high school diploma (47%), those with at least some college education (35%), and those with at least a bachelor’s degree (16%).*

⁶ * Statistics from the United Way study, *The Real Cost Measure in California 2021*, are referenced throughout this document.

Latinx, and 4% are disabled. Residents of the District are largely low-income, have low educational attainment, and experience high seasonal unemployment.

In response to the changes in agriculture technology, Hartnell College is developing a cohort-based **Agriculture Technology pathways program in engineering and mechatronics** (i.e. engineer technician). In addition, a farmworker advancement program has provided a blueprint for training current field workers in science, technology, and supervisory skills, in order to help them upgrade their job skills from field worker to entry-level manager, supervisor, or technician. This same model could be scaled to support the retraining of workers who will inevitably be displaced at some point in the next 3-10 years by automation.

Earn As You Learn

More specifically, Hartnell plans to establish three partnerships with agriculture technology employers in order to develop an **“earn as you learn” model for the agriculture technology field, co-created with industry partners and other key stakeholders**, including students and recent alums in the field. In addition, 15 agriculture technology employers will offer paid internship placements at their organizations, with 250 students placed in paid internships over the course of 10 years. Lastly, two new apprenticeship programs in agriculture technology or related industries (such as crop management, food safety, or plant science) will be established, resulting in a minimum of 200 participants (over a ten-year period) successfully completing and securing employment that pays at least \$18 per hour.

Hartnell College is developing multiple strategies to work together with government leaders, education leaders, industry leaders, and community-based partners to address these complex issues. If left unaddressed, the 25% of the population that works in agriculture could be sidelined and left out of the evolving workforce. If a strong workforce is lacking, local businesses will have to recruit from elsewhere or spend resources on training current employees, thereby marginalizing the community members most in need of stable jobs. Facing unemployment, those community members may require welfare, experience poorer health, and turn to crime, resulting in a drain on the social system.

Economic Impact

This initiative will reduce racial and ethnic economic disparities by **helping students of color find jobs in agriculture technology that provide sustaining wages in the Salinas Valley**. It will also establish an “earn as you learn” model in agriculture technology that can be replicated by other rural communities in California.

The 2016 study of the economic value of the college concluded that it creates a positive net impact on the regional economy and generates a positive return on investment for students, taxpayers, and society. With education, students are able to gain new skills, increase their earnings and become more productive workers. Thousands of these students stay for employment in the area. **The accumulated impact of former students currently employed in the local workforce amounts to approximately \$288.7 million in added income to the Salinas Valley economy, which is equivalent to 5,072 new jobs.**

From a taxpayer perspective, an estimated value of **\$175.8 million in added tax revenue** stems from the students’ higher lifetime earnings and the increased output of businesses. For every tax dollar spent on educating students attending Hartnell, taxpayers will receive an average of \$4.50 in return over the course of the students’ working lives. In other words, taxpayers enjoy an annual rate of return of 12.3%.

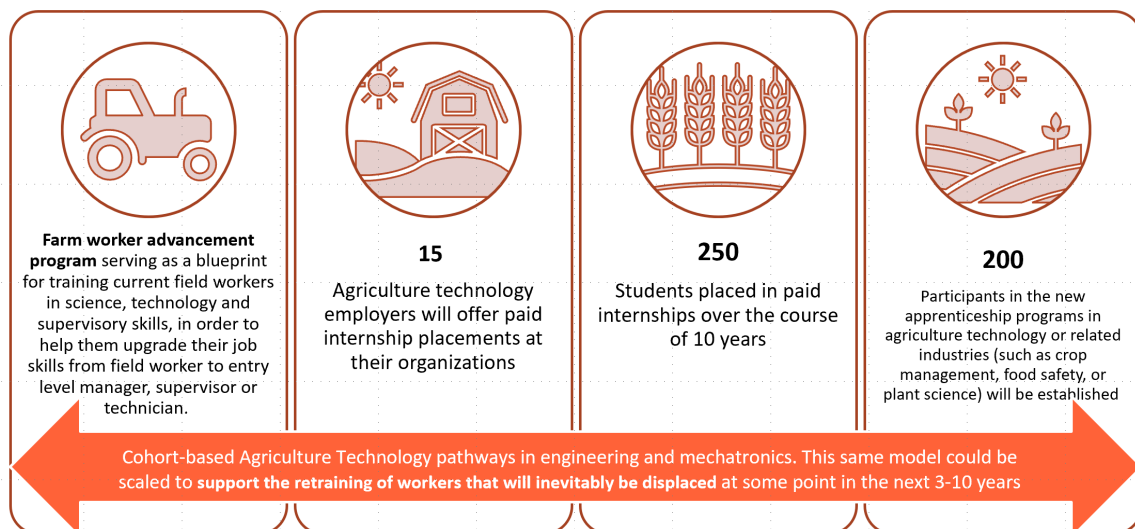
More broadly, the study showed that in the fiscal year 2014-15, operational expenses of the college, combined with the spending from its students and alumni, generated **\$334 million in added income** to the Hartnell College District economy. The additional income of \$334 million created by the college is equal to approximately 2.3% of the total gross regional product (GRP) of its district and is equivalent to creating 5,710 new jobs. As a comparison, this impact from the college is greater than that of the Monterey and San Benito counties' utility industry in the region.

Local Partnerships

Working alongside regional employers, Hartnell is fully committed to improving student employment opportunities subsequent to curriculum completion. Accordingly, the college and its foundation have become leaders in partnering with local industry to understand their human capital needs; to deliver curriculum and programs that are structured, directed, and informed by those current needs; and to ultimately design a pipeline for students to gain the knowledge, training, and experience to graduate as qualified candidates for medium-skill, middle-wage jobs. **Enablers thus include continued support from college departments, the establishment of the Career Hub, and existing partnerships with local employers.** An additional enabler includes strong relationships with local community-based organizations, such as the Center for Community Advocacy, Building Healthy Communities, Communities Organized for Relationship Power in Action (COPA), and Mama de Salinas Abogan, among others. Risks include bureaucracy and political perceptions of “apprenticeships.”

The creation of AgTech pathways will be done in tandem with the further development of the new Career Hub. Additional funding will sustain the Director of the Career Hub position and support outreach and co-design of “earn-as-you-learn” opportunities with faculty.

Community Solutions



Potential Impact

These efforts will feed into a **new Career Hub at the college**, which will centralize “earn-as-you-learn” and career preparation for Hartnell students across all disciplines and areas of the college so that students can **successfully increase their social capital and secure employment in high wage, high demand careers** in the Salinas Valley. The ag tech pathways will serve as models for standing up additional cohort-based pathways in other sectors, thereby developing the educated workforce more broadly and fueling the economic health of the region.

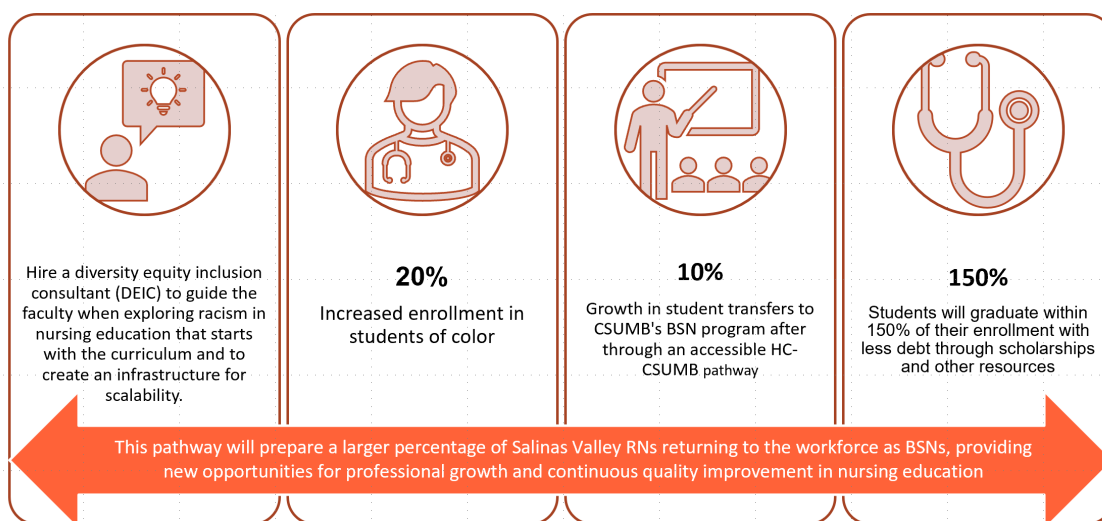
Nursing Career Pathways

In 2018, Health Impact invited Hartnell College (HC) to radically change nursing education by finding solutions to workforce issues such as diversity, pipeline barriers, and readiness to practice. This resulted in the **“5C” value-based curriculum (Competence, Collaboration, Caring, Curiosity, and Compartment)**, which focused on client-centered and consumer-based care.

Nursing faculty trusted that the innovative 5C value-based curriculum – with every learning option focused on social determinants of health (SDH) and education (SDE) – would connect the classroom with nursing practice in Salinas Valley. However, early data only shows a slight improvement in student learning outcomes. There remains a disconnect, a possible sign of unconscious racial bias by faculty: the assumption that students educated with the 5C curriculum and 50% of clinical experience in the community would report high levels of social-concordance with Salinas Valley clients and that Hispanic/Latinx students would report high levels of cultural- and racial-concordance with Hispanic/Latinx clients during community-based interactions. **Based on student learning outcomes and public health data, there is a need to identify possible racial biases and to course-correct now.**

The Salinas Valley area has high rates of hypertension, obesity, diabetes, drug abuse, trauma, illiteracy, and less monitoring of care. To address these disparities, Hartnell faculty and students need to better understand the causes behind SDH and SDE, historical biases in systems that contribute to local mortality rates that exceed state averages, and their role/responsibilities in addressing SDH and SDE. **The lack of a diverse faculty and the academically limited, predominately white RN workforce in the Salinas Valley clearly points to the need to examine and reflect on personal privileges, biases, and real and potential power imbalances between the faculty and future RNs before, during, and after interactions with clients.** Intellectually, faculty understand that culturally-, socially-, and racially concordant care is associated with optimal health and academic outcomes. Faculty need expert help to gain the requisite skills needed to prepare graduates to care for the underserved in the Salinas Valley. Otherwise, the fissure between healthcare service providers and clients may continue, resulting in the marginalization of those most in need of care.

Community Solutions



Hartnell College will (a) advance efforts to address systemic racism in curricula through the lens of social determinants of health (SDH) and education (SDE) relevant to students, their families, community, and faculty; and (b) tackle a SDE by resuming negotiations for creating an affordable Bachelor of Science in Nursing pathway to CSUMB.

Potential Impact

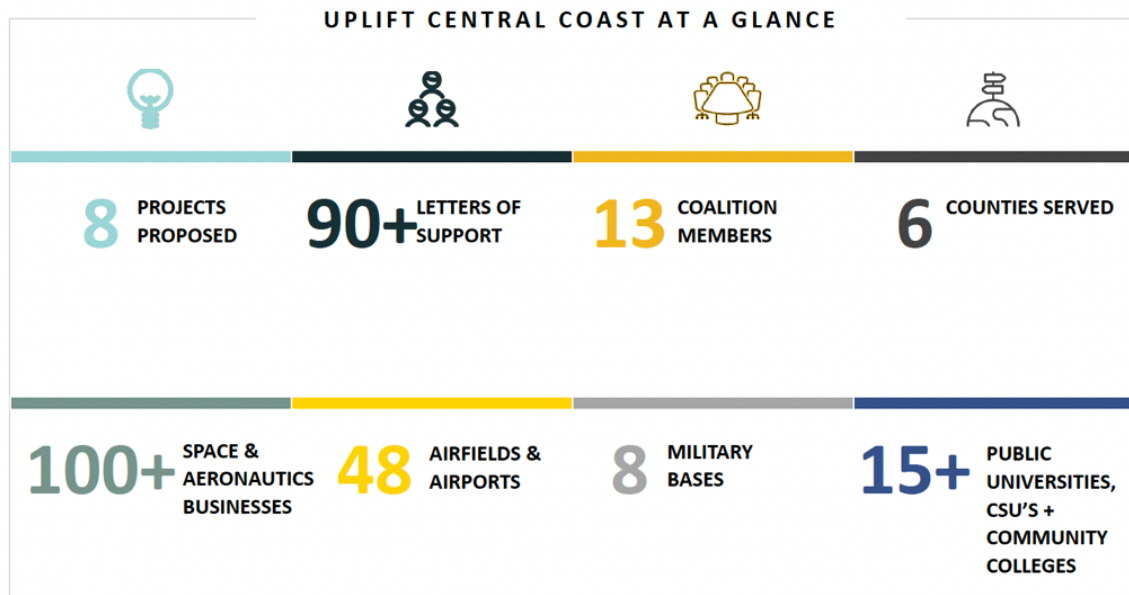
Hartnell College will establish a more racially diversified student body and newly hired faculty. The goal is an **increase of 20% enrollment in students of color, and a 5% increase in persistence and graduation rates of non-White students in our nursing programs.** We are also targeting **10% growth in student transfers to CSUMB's BSN program** after the formation of a more affordable and accessible HC-CSUMB pathway. To support students, costs related to mileage to rural clinics, online learning materials, and scholarships for low-income students will be covered. Resources will ensure that all students will graduate within 150% of their enrollment with less debt. Funding will support the college's goals of preparing a larger percentage of Salinas Valley RNs returning to the workforce as BSNs. Moreover, it will offer new opportunities for professional growth and continuous quality improvement in nursing education.

Aeronautics Career Pathways

The aeronautics industry cluster is emerging as one of the fastest growing and most economically promising sectors in our region. **It is critical that a culture around diversity, equity, and inclusion be instilled at the outset to overcome a historically discriminatory culture in STEM fields.** Historically, careers in science, technology, math, and engineering (STEM) have lacked diversity. Women and people of color have struggled to overcome workplace discrimination, assume leadership roles, and overcome racial and gender wage gaps.

Uplift Central Coast

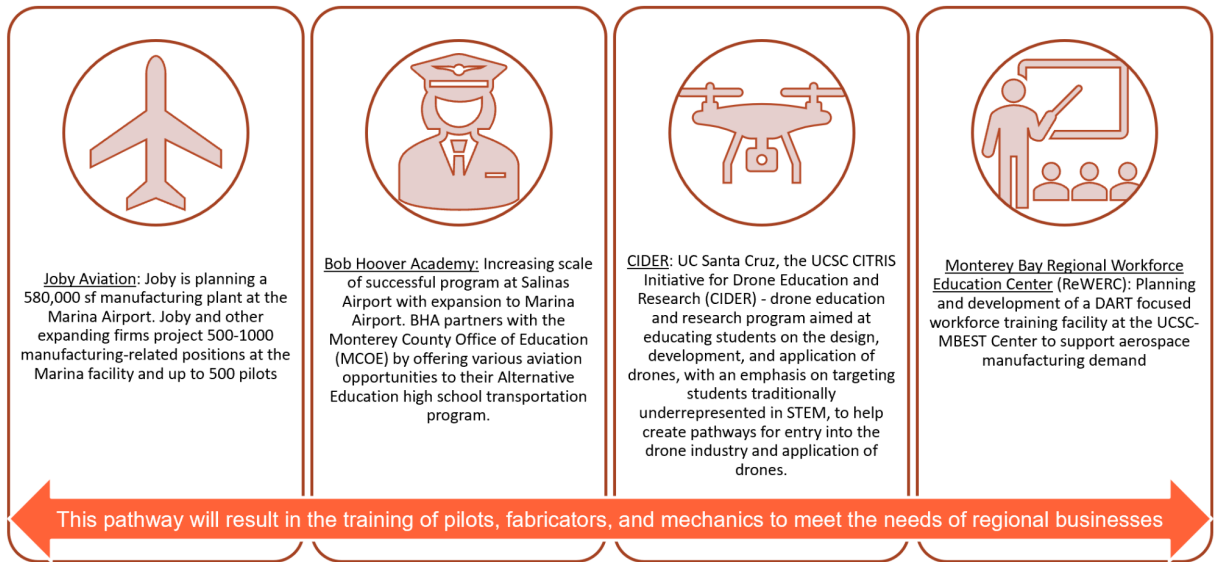
In October 2021, a trail-blazing coalition spanning six counties came together to advance space and aeronautics across the Central Coast. The goal is to create an aerospace technology corridor bridging the centers of the industry to the north and south. **This equity-centered effort references and links to our RRT initiative**, and paints a cohesive and vibrant vision for the future of the region by leveraging existing assets and new investment to catalyze industry growth and create thousands of well-paying jobs.



Led by REACH, the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP), and the Economic Development Collaborative (EDC) in Ventura County, the Uplift Central Coast coalition comprises a growing collection of industry, government, and education partners across Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties.

The coalition submitted a \$70 million grant application under the Biden Administration's \$1 billion EDA Build Back Better Regional Challenge that would **create nearly 10,000 jobs, catalyze growth for 150+ companies, spur more than \$500 million in investment, train and upskill 2,000 workers per year and reach more than 30,000 K-12 students per year.**

Community Solutions



Potential Impact

- **Continued leverage of ongoing collaborations** to increase opportunities for underrepresented groups throughout the region (e.g., Digital NEST and other CBOs).
- **Expanded job opportunities** for local youth, building on the momentum of regional **aeronautics-related innovation**.
- **Higher confidence and skills of students** through the Bob Hoover Academy, which will help increase high school graduation rates, teach students to fly the aircraft solo, provide industry certifications, ease the transition to post-secondary education/training/work opportunities. As a result, students become healthy contributing members of their community.
- **Increased employment in existing and new businesses related to aeronautics** with hundreds of local youth & retrained adults accessing high-road jobs.

(c) Leadership Development

Much of this section relies on the methodology pioneered and implemented by Communities Organized for Relationship Power in Action (COPA), a broad-based organization consisting of member institutions such as churches, congregations, synagogues, schools, and unions that have shared values of faith, democracy, solidarity and traditions of mutual obligation within the life of a community. COPA helps ordinary people develop leadership skills so they can engage effectively in public life and work together to make the Central Coast an even better place to live, work and raise our families. In this RRT initiative, we employed this model to engage the community as part of our CEWG efforts.

Community Engagement

A thriving economy depends on a robust and vibrant civic sector, engaged citizens working for the improvement of their community. This engaged citizenry (working through community-based institutions like non-profits, congregations, schools, labor unions, resource centers, etc.) can help make the government sector better at delivering services and the market sector more reflective of the values of the community.

The skills and practices of engaging in public life in this way must be learned and developed. People coming from privilege have opportunities to learn these skills from an early age, surrounded by others who are practicing them and connected to institutions where these tools are utilized.

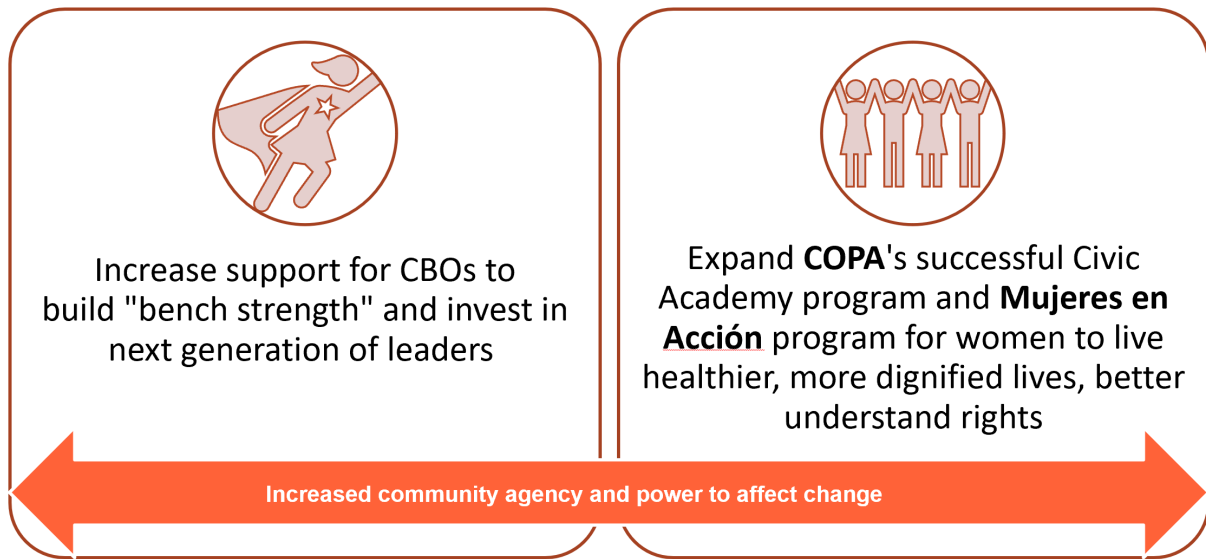
Putting racial equity at the center of a thriving economy in the Salinas Valley requires investment in the leadership development of residents who were not born into this privilege. This means significant investment in organizations that are identifying, training, mentoring, and developing potential leaders in communities most impacted by a legacy of white supremacy and the marginalization of communities of color. The work of truly mentoring people to develop their voice in the civic sector takes time, care, and respect. It is more than just mobilizing people to show up for something, or conducting “outreach” or “listening sessions.” It involves persistent work on a one-on-one basis with people who want to develop their own leadership on behalf of themselves, their families, and their community. It also requires attention to the interests of these emerging leaders, building the work around the concerns most central to these people, and not imposing a preconceived notion of what is good.

Civic Academy

One organizing tool is a “Civic Academy.” Developed by COPA, a Civic Academy has three key outcomes: **(1) the development of emerging leaders in the community, (2) the identification of new potential leaders, and (3) the expansion of a constituency around key concerns.** The process begins with COPA organizers working with emerging leaders around an issue of primary concern to them (e.g., jobs, healthcare access, housing affordability, etc.). These teams of leaders develop a short program on the issue and then work through their congregations or organizations to turn out 30-100 people for the Civic Academy. After teaching their audience of peers about the issue, they put people into small groups (“house meetings”) to share their own stories and experiences. Finally, the team of leaders teaches what we can do about it and recruits others to develop their own leadership and be part of the work for positive change.

These emerging leaders are critical assets to the regional economy. They know firsthand how the economy plays out in cities, neighborhoods, and households. This lived experience gives them a level of expertise in what is needed to strengthen and improve the economy, the details of which are often missed by decision-makers who are buffered from the impacts. Additionally, these **leaders have built up a network of relationships that they can activate so that resources, opportunities, and critical information can reach those who might ordinarily be left behind during economic shifts.** The more that these leaders can engage in public life, and continue to add new leaders to their ranks, the more we can move toward an inclusive and equitable economy. Community-based organizations, like COPA and Mujeres en Acción, are vital in this work. Their staff and organizers devote the majority of their time to mentoring emerging leaders, assisting them to improve the quality of life for themselves, their families, and their community. These organizations need to attract and retain talented staff who can do this work. Investments into the operating budgets for these organizations will hold this entire plan together as organizers work with emerging community leaders to realize all of these community solutions.

Community Solutions



Potential Impact

- Expanded reach of **COPA, Mujeres en Acción, CCA,** and other successful CBOs
- Increase in community members actively engaged in leadership development activities resulting in **increased community agency and power to affect change**

#3 Economic Opportunity Expansion

In this, our third and final foundational pillar of the Investment Plan Blueprint, we look at how we increase access to well-paying jobs, capital, and wealth pathways.

Expanding economic opportunity is more than just access to better jobs. It's creating greater fairness and opportunity for workers. It's seeking new and innovative ways to support entrepreneurs and new enterprise models that have shared values, not share value.

How do we do a better job in giving people the skills, information and resources they need to better support themselves and their families, creating more opportunities for entrepreneurship, and catalyzing more enterprise models that create employee ownership?

Multiple work plans such as the Alisal Vibrancy Plan, and Chinatown Revitalization have addressed this issue. One consistent recommendation is to highlight Latino heritage, history, and artistic culture through art, cultural events, and festivals to attract visitors, private investments, and generate more revenue and jobs. This would require investment in the coordination, promotion, and branding efforts that tells a neighborhood's cultural story, showcases recent area improvements, and advertises upcoming events, and promotes existing and new local businesses.

(a) Expanding High-Road Jobs *(in collaboration with Human Capital Development initiative)*

This priority area is focused on wealth and capital acquisition through **increasing access to and the number of jobs that provide livable wage salaries and benefits**. These opportunities can be leveraged with the existing local workforce by targeting specific industries. For example, providing value-added job training in agriculture, food and beverage, manufacturing, and production methods (hydroponics, green energy, etc.). A large component of expanding opportunity requires an evaluation of the current job markets and industry rate standards and measuring their efficacy in meeting the local cost of living needs in Monterey County. Past bodies of work show a discrepancy in earnings vs. cost of living, and conversations to improve worker benefits and wages will directly address the gap.

36% of households in California that are led by a person born outside the U.S. are below the Real Cost Measure, a figure which rises to 59% when the household is led by someone without U.S. citizenship

In addition to improving earnings and financial stability, **immigration policy plays a large role in the longevity and quality of the Monterey County workforce**. Supporting immigration protections and reforms would allow local employees across sectors to commit long-term to professional growth, in turn increasing the productivity, stability, and opportunity for expansion in local employer markets.

(b) Expand the Ecosystem of Entrepreneurship

In order to grow, build, and support innovative local entrepreneurship, this area aims to **improve access to technical assistance, capital and business loans to support new business creation**. For example, providing business education and technical assistance to local individuals interested in starting, growing, and sustaining a local business will set quality standards that not only prolong the longevity of a business but contribute long-term to the growth of the local economy. Attracting new and innovative capital investment

is a key area of need in order to not only build local revenue streams but increase opportunities to access the market for both employers and employees.

(c) Create Wealth Pathways *(in collaboration with Human Capital Development initiative)*

We believe that closing the wealth gap for BIPOC communities requires a **deep level of community engagement and education**, with multiple sectors at the table. Examples include banking and investment learning opportunities for residents to grow savings, tools and resources that enable increased homeownership, and building generational wealth through planned investment and savings.

Co-operatives are another example of a mechanism for community wealth-building and local job creation. Through co-operative ownership communities are able to retain stakeholder control and keep wealth and employment opportunities local. Profits which once went to financial centers go instead to co-operative members, who are more likely to spend it in their local community. This creates a local community “multiplier effect”.⁷ There are many successful examples of co-ops inside and outside the region that could be bolstered and replicated.

Implementing a diverse strategy to create more wealth pathways includes **supporting the many local community-based organizations currently committed to doing this work**.

Areas for investment include:

- Increased investment to accelerate access **jobs that provide livable wage salaries and benefits**.
- Targeted **infrastructure investment** to support “high-road” economic clusters and market drivers.
- **Improved access to technical assistance, capital and business loans to support entrepreneurship and new business creation**.
- **Expanded capacity at local CBOs** to support technical assistance and funding, resulting in a higher level of **employee ownership, higher earnings, improved financial stability, improved access to capital and business loans for new business creation**.
- **Cultural and linguistic appropriate capital support and legal assistance** to farmworkers for land acquisition, entrepreneurship.
- **Seed money** to support the development of **new enterprise models, such as co-ops** that enable employee ownership and have shared values, not share value.
- **Attraction of new and innovative capital investment** to build local revenue streams, as well as increase opportunities to access the market for both employers and employees.
- **Increased banking and investment learning opportunities** for residents to grow savings, enable increased homeownership and build generational wealth through planned investment and savings.
- **Expanded financial services support and debt relief** (example: community credit unions and CDFIs).

⁷ BCCM Discussion Paper: Co-operatives and Mutuals as Social Enterprises (retrieved Oct 17, 2021)
<https://bccm.coop/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BCCM-Social-Enterprise-Discussion-Paper-2020.pdf>

Community Solutions



Potential Impact

- Expanded **capacity of local CBOs** working in this area (EPCDC, Alba, Farmlink, KTA, etc.)
- Development of a **regional innovation hub focused on research and development** (e.g., leverage the legacy of the CSUMB Service Learning Department to create quantitative content and research across disciplines to leverage potential investment in those categorical areas)
- Increased **number and access to jobs** that provide livable wage salaries and benefits
- Improved **earnings and financial stability**
- More **employee ownership** through co-ops and similar enterprises
- Improved **access to capital and business loans** to support new business creation
- Attraction of **new and innovative capital investment** that not only build local revenue streams but increase opportunities to access the market for both employers and employees
- Increased **banking and investment learning opportunities** for residents to grow savings, enable increased homeownership and build generational wealth through planned investment and savings.

Concluding Considerations

We are at a historic moment. The pandemic has highlighted how fragile, fragmented, and under-resourced the basic systems of our society are: housing, broadband, childcare, education, and access to wealth. Funds are flowing in from federal, state, and philanthropic sources in once-in-a-lifetime amounts. From the American Rescue Plan Act to the State of California’s Community Economic Resiliency Fund, to the extraordinary commitment of philanthropy to equitable economic development, we are poised to restructure our existing systems in a revolutionary and transformational way while prioritizing the need for racial equity. **But if we continue to throw money into traditional models and investments, we will only perpetuate more structural racism.**

The Regions Rise Together Salinas work is part of a disruption happening in the traditional economic development world that will manifest itself in ways that we cannot know at this moment. Our hope with this Investment Blueprint is that there will be **much more intention around equity-centered and truly inclusive economic planning** going forward. The well-being of our communities, and (one could argue⁸) the future of our economy depends on it.

This is the right time to intentionally and strategically fund these investments. We need to invest with both the short and long term in mind – simultaneously investing in housing, infrastructure, childcare, workforce, capacity building, new capital structures, and engagement strategies to ensure we build a solid foundation for a robust and accessible economy for all. We hope you’ll join us on this journey to achieve inclusivity and prosperity for ALL residents of the Salinas Valley.



⁸ Please read “Solidarity Economics” by Chris Benner and Manual Pastor for more on this line of thinking.

Real Lives, Real Impact

An Example of Leadership Development

A Closer Look at a Successful Economic Self-Sufficiency & Leadership Development Program

Mujeres en Acción: History of the Organization

Mujeres en Acción is a peer-to-peer support and leadership development program that unlocks the full potential of low-income Latinx women in Monterey County. Through weekly capacity building and mentorship meetings and multiple opportunities to work in the community, *Mujeres* creates pathways for hard-working women to live healthier, more dignified lives. Their work also has a significant impact on the health, safety, and economic well-being of low-income, immigrant families. This is particularly important as 14% of Monterey County residents are undocumented, and 22% of Monterey County residents are not United States citizens, 80% of whom are Latinx⁹. Most of the women with whom *Mujeres* works are monolingual Spanish speakers, about half are single mothers (sometimes of children with special needs), and approximately 75% are undocumented. *Mujeres* believes that with sufficient access to knowledge, resources, and leadership opportunities, these women can transform their own lives and play a significant role in transforming their communities.

Mujeres started as a pilot program of the Action Council, funded by the Women's Fund of the Community Foundation of Monterey County in 2015. The program (formerly known as the Women's Economic Self-Sufficiency Pilot Program) was designed to offer learning opportunities and resources to women across Monterey County with an interest in improving their economic circumstances. The program began with cohorts in Castroville, Salinas, Soledad, and Greenfield. Through a participant-driven approach, the *Mujeres* meetings are tailored to the unique needs of 15-20 women per group. Session topics range from access to affordable childcare and education to leadership skills and self-esteem support, or any other issue that might help advance the economic mobility, agency, and self-sufficiency of the women. Over the past five years, the organization has grown into a trusted resource for the communities it serves and has supported almost 200 women and their families. These women are now deeply embedded in their communities and are often seen as trusted pillars of leadership, thus impacting the lives of those around them. *Please see the stories of two of the women in their own words.*

People and Constituencies Served

Mujeres establishes meaningful and trusted connections with the families and individuals with whom they work, with a unique ability to reach a segment of the population otherwise deemed as difficult to reach and engage. They were particularly effective in the effort to increase participation of hard-to-reach populations in the 2020 Census. Even through the pandemic, *Mujeres* has continued to meet the community's needs by adapting to a new set of challenging circumstances imposed by COVID-19. Their deep knowledge of the community and unprecedented ability to be nimble and creative is what makes their work so groundbreaking.

For example, *Mujeres* has worked alongside the *Community Emergency Response Volunteers of Monterey County* (CERV) to help the county's vulnerable populations better prepare for emergency situations, virtually through Zoom, outreach through fliers in nearly 200 frequented shops across Monterey County, and phone calls to thousands of families in the region. They targeted a wide range of venues, including supermarkets,

⁹ Monterey Bay Economic Partnership Economic Workbook Report (last updated January 2019) <https://mbep.biz/data-insights/economic-data/>

bakeries, restaurants, laundromats, beauty salons, liquor stores, candy shops, butcher shops, gas stations, money exchange places, and other local "mercados" to post a total of 230 posters across the county. Posters included basic information on emergency and disaster preparedness (in English, Spanish, and Filipino), and invited viewers to learn more through a *Listos* link. In addition, *Mujeres* staff made over 3,000 calls to families affected by COVID-19 to share information, identify the needs of each family and connect them to basic, urgent services. Phone calls were made in Spanish, English, and Mixteco to best address their cultural and linguistic needs. Many of the families *Mujeres* reaches, particularly those in South County, are farmworkers in rural areas with little access to resources, where residents don't often receive critical information. The phone calls that *Mujeres* made ensured they were informed and prepared.

In addition to the Census, disaster preparedness, and COVID-19 community outreach, education, and support, *Mujeres* members have been active in community engagement efforts such as the Earned Income Tax Credit campaign, housing (preventing evictions), parent advocacy in schools, and racial equity organizing, among others.

Though *Mujeres* has received funding from foundations and public institutions for project-focused support, they have stretched the limits of what is possible to achieve with their existing capacity. Operating and capacity-building support is needed to strengthen the organizational infrastructure, staffing, and programs to continue the work and make a deep impact in a sustainable way.

Realizing the Potential of *Mujeres en Acción*

The pandemic has drastically impacted the high-need communities *Mujeres* serves, as well as their own families. Many members of *Mujeres* have seen a dramatic decrease in income (in some cases, up to 90%) due to COVID-19 related layoffs or the need to quarantine. Social distancing requirements have eliminated most informal jobs, and a decrease in crop purchases has left many agricultural workers in Castroville, Salinas, and South County unemployed. This has proven to be devastating to families, preventing them from purchasing critical supplies for survival as well as from paying for housing and other basic expenses. The issue is compounded by the challenges of their immigration status; 76% of the women that *Mujeres* works with have expressed fear about accessing governmental services due to their status.

For many women and families, *Mujeres* has provided a lifeline to urgently needed support. But *Mujeres* is still a nascent and small grassroots organization with very limited financial resources. Current grants from foundations and public agencies have supported *Mujeres* with targeted, short-term, program-specific funds. To broaden its reach in the community and sustain its work, *Mujeres* will need to expand capacity by building a strong and sustainable infrastructure, increasing its staff, and securing funds to continue to provide employment and educational opportunities for its members, as they grow their leadership and support families in their communities.

Since 2015, *Mujeres'* peer support and economic justice model was built on the assumption that small regional groups of women interested in their financial security and the well-being of others could transform themselves, as well their communities. Four groups with an average of 15-20 members each were created in Castroville, Salinas, Soledad, and Greenfield, and most have continued to work together over the past five years. Staffing for the organization has consisted of a half-time coordinator and local area facilitators, women in the program who have grown confident in their leadership, who are paid a small stipend to support each group. In the early stages of the program, funding was also available for childcare, food, scholarships for women pursuing their education, or other basic expenses to enable the women to stay in the program and pursue their goals. However, as funding for these components diminished, the support systems had to be significantly cut or eliminated.

Budget

Mujeres was supported by the Community Foundation for Monterey County (CFMC) Women's Fund with a budget of \$438,000 for 3 years. After the CFMC shifted priorities *Mujeres* operated with a budget of merely \$100,000 a year through the support of another regranting program. Since its inception, *Mujeres* has not been fully funded by CFMC or any other foundation. Action Council has filled some gaps, but their support is not sufficient enough to cover the real cost of operating this type of program.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

In the past 5 years *Mujeres* has accomplished the following:

- 24 women received their high school equivalent diploma
- 3 women graduated from CET as medical assistants
- 10 women obtained their drivers' license
- 49 women found a job
- 60 women attended business courses that included budget and credit literacy
- 20 women enrolled in community college
- 4 women graduated from community college and 1 from a university
- 90% of women have participated in multiple leadership trainings
- 60% of women have participated in positive discipline classes
- 90% of women have taken English classes

In Their Own Voice: The Women of *Mujeres En Acción*

Celsa's Story¹⁰

Celsa started with the first cohort of Mujeres en Acción on April 2015. She is a monolingual Spanish speaker immigrant, single mother of 4 children between the ages of 5 and 14. I remember her as a quiet, petite, soft-spoken woman who after a while in the group said,

"I always knew I had something to say but did not know where or how to say it but now I know. For me, Mujeres en Acción is a group where I learned I belong and how to believe in myself and believe all I was capable of achieving. Mujeres is like a family where I found moral, economic, and professional support. Thanks to the group I could believe in myself and think about starting my own business. I believed, and I did it. I believe I will accomplish more because now I believe in myself, and know there are others who believe in me. The goals you set for yourself, and with a lot of effort, you can achieve them."

After all the work Celsa put into her growth, she graduated from ALBA in November 2019. She planted her first half-acre, in April she expanded to one acre, and in November 2020 she planted two and a half acres. She has had many challenges but never gives up, but rather takes the challenges as opportunities to learn.

Alma's Story

"My name is Alma Oliveros. I'm 25 years old. I live in the County of Monterey in a small town called King City. I am a single mother of a beautiful 6-year-old daughter. I started my journey with Mujeres en Acción in 2015, so I was about 19 years old and my daughter was only a couple of months old. Before starting to be a part of Mujeres, I was not in a good place in life. I was unsure of what I wanted to do, all I knew is I wanted to do better for myself and my family. I was very emotionally unstable, suffered from depression, anxiety, a lack of self-confidence. I had just graduated from King City High and started to work in the fields. I soon joined Mujeres en Acción together with my mom. The first time I walked into

¹⁰ See link to Celsa's story in the [Washington Post](#)

that room I felt happy. It was a group of women of all ages that wanted the same thing, to do better and to have opportunities to grow. We all came from small towns, and we were all considered low-income women. They had childcare for us when we attended our group meetings. This was beyond helpful as I would have been unable to attend if this wasn't the case.

Maria Elena was our leader at this time; she was beyond helpful and kind. The group gave me the opportunity to start school to become a medical assistant as they helped me pay for childcare until I was done with school. I was not sure that this is all I wanted in life though. Mujeres en Acción, took us to Hartnell college to see what our options were, a lot of the women in our group including my mom did not have their high school diploma or GED. Thanks to this they were able to connect with HEP and get their GED. That for me was incredible alone but it did not stop there. I was also able to start my pre-requisites for my nursing degree. We also had a business course given to us to expand our knowledge on building our own business one day. A credit advisor also came to speak with us and give us valuable information. Thanks to that valuable information I can now say, I had the opportunity to buy a brand new car. This was huge for me as I have reliable transportation now.

Another great course given to us to expand our knowledge was positive discipline. This was perfect for me as I was a new mother and I was doing it on my own, this taught me so much that helped me and my daughter to create a healthy relationship. Through all these workshops and courses and meetings. I can honestly say it changed me for the better. I was now able to speak in public, I had developed leadership skills, and I feel physically and mentally healthier. Having support from the other women Maria Elena and the group itself was life-changing. We had an event toward the end of our journey in Mujeres en Acción that I will never forget. This day a new young woman came to be and that was me. I was no longer slouched, looking at the ground, feeling bad for myself and what life had thrown at me asking why me, crying all the time, feeling hopeless. No, from that day on I was walking with my head up high smiling and being thankful for life and the people I had around me and to enjoy this new young woman that has so much to give and offer now back to her family and community.

After Mujeres ended, I worked as a medical assistant for the county of Monterey in Salinas for about 4 years. Unfortunately, due to the daily commute, and always being far away from my daughter I had to make a difficult decision and leave my career. After this, I worked in a kitchen in King City, for seasonal field workers feeding about 550 men for breakfast, lunch, and dinner where my mom was the supervisor. I joined to help my mom and get new experiences as I knew I wanted to do more. This is a seasonal job as I stated before and not where I see myself for the rest of my life, so I was stuck. I reached out to Maria Elena and expressed to her that I wanted to rejoin Mujeres en Acción and explained to her what was going on. Quickly after this, I was once again given support and an amazing opportunity. I will now be working as a coordinator for the CHW program giving back to the community. I will forever be grateful to Mujeres en Acción as I would not be who I am or where I am today. I went from being in the most vulnerable state in my life to feeling accomplished and looking forward to continued growth.”

Appendix A: Detailed Investment Ask

Project	Lead Partner(s)	Description / KPI metric	Total
Neighborhood Development & Infrastructure Expansion (\$385M)			
Regional Housing Trust	County of Monterey, City of Salinas, Monterey Peninsula Housing Coalition	Provide gap financing for affordable housing development. Create 5,000 permanent affordable homes to relieve overcrowding and affordability across Monterey County.	\$1M
ADU Production Incentives & Prefab ADU Manufacturing Facility	United Way MC, MBEP, City of Salinas or Gonzales, industry partners	Support the development of 1,000 ADUs county-wide	\$27M
Employer-Sponsored Housing for Farmworkers	MBEP, CCA, GSA	Support 2,500 additional beds for farmworkers through grower-initiated projects.	\$10M
Housing Advocacy	MBEP, BHC, COPA, CCA, Mujeres En Acción	Create and enforce Community Benefits Agreements directly resulting in 1,000 new housing units	\$25M
Coalition of Homeless Services Providers Programs	CHSP (lead agency of CA-506 MC Continuum of Care)	<i>Please refer to Monterey County's CA-506 Continuum of Care</i>	\$287M
Support of Community Opportunity to Purchase Act	City of Salinas	Paired with funding to qualified nonprofits; 10 buildings, each with 5 units (50 households)	\$2M
Habitat for Humanity	Habitat for Humanity Monterey Bay	Expansion to Salinas; establish ReStore Program in Salinas to assist with housing rehabilitation	\$1M
Local Housing Lab	CSUMB in partnership with UC Berkeley's Turner Center for Housing Innovations	Creation of Lab to connect academic/ policy research and new ideas to advance innovative solutions to housing affordability	\$2M
Legal Services Expansion	Echo Housing, CCA, CRLA Watsonville Law Center	Capacity building for tenant protection services; hire one attorney for each organization to expand support	\$10M
Equal Access Monterey Bay	CFMC	Funding for projects that provide broadband access to underserved communities	\$20M
Human Capital Development (\$816M)			
Childcare and Early Learning	Bright Beginnings, First 5	Double the number of childcare slots to 20,000; increase number of childcare workers to 2,500	\$516M
AgTech, Nursing, Aeronautics Pathways	Hartnell, Bob Hoover Academy	AgTech: 5,000+ new jobs Nursing: 20% increased enrollment in students of color; 10% growth in student transfers to CSUMB's BSN program Aeronautics: Local workers trained/upskilled to fulfill thousands of flight and manufacturing-related positions coming to region	\$100M
Leadership Development Programs	COPA, CCA, BHC, Centro Binacional, Mujeres en Acción, Village Project	Expansion of Civic Academy and investment in next generation of leaders; support for community-led grassroots advocacy and local leadership development	\$200M
Economic Opportunity Expansion (\$515M)			
Debt Relief Resiliency Fund	CFMC CDFIs	Creation of fund to support economic clusters and market drivers including financial services support and debt relief	\$100M
Community Support Programs	El Pájaro CDC, BHC, CCA, Mujeres en Acción, ESO Ventures	Provide capital to triple the current number of community members supported	\$50M
Community Accountability Scorecard	CFMC	Creation of Scorecard to support the expansion and recruitment of high road jobs with businesses within priority sectors, minimum wage requirements, committed to equity, etc.	\$50K
CBO Capacity Building	CFMC	Increased capacity of targeted CBOs	\$50M
Micro Venture Capital Fund	CFMC with CDFIs	Accelerated talent attraction, facilities, project seed funding (both loans and grants) to increase # of BIPOC owned start-ups	\$70M
Seed Money for Co-op Development	TBD	Creation of new enterprise models, such as co-ops that enable employee ownership while addressing community needs	\$6M
Business Navigators	Monterey County	Increased capacity for BIPOC entrepreneurs	\$24M
Small & Micro Business Loans	Slow Money N. California, ESO Ventures, SCCV	Improved access to capital and business loans to support new business creation	\$60M
Patient Capital Fund	TBD	Creation of flexible capital (low-interest debt, equity) available to companies to expand or relocate to the Salinas Valley	\$100M
South County Worker Center	Labor Center and Centro Binacional	Establish Center with training component (a la Santa Cruz, Kern County)	\$55M
TOTAL INVESTMENT ASK			\$1.7 B

Appendix B: Sources

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