



STRATEGIES FOR PHILANTHROPY

Philanthropy has a powerful role to play in supporting more equitable policy development, advocacy and direct services needed to ensure that undocumented individuals are able to achieve economic security, equity, and justice. **Data reveals that nationally, only 1% of philanthropic funding goes to grant-making specifically for immigrant-related issues,⁸⁴ and only a fraction of that addresses economic security.** Success requires dedicated, trust-based, flexible, and committed funding to create a robust ecosystem that can support policy, culture, and narrative change, powerful organizing and leadership development.

The following section highlights specific philanthropic investment strategies along with examples of organizations engaged in those efforts which can support the longer-term economic security of undocumented immigrants and ensure that undocumented individuals are able to achieve economic security, equity, and justice.

[Appendix B](#) provides a robust list of organizations across California working on a variety of intersectional issues around economic security for undocumented individuals.

INVEST IN GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING AND BUILDING IMMIGRANT WORKER POWER

Worker centers and day labor centers are central to the economic security, workforce development, and rights of undocumented workers.⁸⁵ Worker centers bring workers and employers together to negotiate hiring, educate workers on their rights, transform low-wage industries, help workers navigate the labor market, and conduct grassroots organizing to build worker power among low-wage and immigrant workers.⁸⁶ There are currently more than 30 worker centers and/or day labor centers across California.⁸⁷ Some are organized around a specific industry while others may be organized around a specific geographic location or population. Investing in these types of centers support the collective power of low-wage workers, many of whom are undocumented immigrants, to improve and enforce labor standards across industries, recognize and leverage workers' skills and competencies, and amplify worker voice.



COMMUNITY-BASED EXAMPLES:

The Day Worker Center of Mountain View was formed in 1996 and provides leadership development, job placement, and direct services for undocumented day labor workers in the Mountain View community. The Center receives funding from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation and the Los Altos Community Foundation, among others. Located in the Silicon Valley, with access to some of the most affluent communities in California who often employ day labor and domestic workers, the Day Worker Center works to flip the power dynamic by engaging employers to learn about the wealth of skills, knowledge, and talent that workers have. For example, workers teach Spanish as a Second Language classes to employer students, and the center organizes employers to be advocates for immigrant worker rights. In addition, the Day Worker Center provides job training, career services, and supportive services to workers, and organizes workers around progressive, pro-immigrant, and pro-worker policies.

Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) is a grassroots organization founded over 30 years ago with a mission of promoting personal transformation and building community power for social and economic justice. MUA provides one-on-one peer support and direct services, leadership development, as well as community education to promote economic security, including workers' rights, job readiness training, and workshops for domestic workers, many of whom are undocumented. With over 500 grassroots members who are immigrant women from around the San Francisco Bay Area, MUA has also built significant worker power and has helped organize and mobilize their base to win powerful campaigns for immigrant, workers' and women's rights. Importantly, MUA also takes leadership development to heart by hiring members into staff positions. Funders have included the Blue Shield Foundation, Walter & Elise Haas Fund, and the California Wellness Foundation.

INVEST IN UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS GROUPS' CAPACITY BUILDING FOR POLICY ADVOCACY

Many organizations have been building membership bases and coalitions, and advancing campaigns for years, often with limited resources due to funding and capacity constraints. Partnerships between policy advocacy organizations and immigrant & workers' rights groups are key to building powerful coalitions that can sustain pressure and accountability in the political and policy making space. Campaigns can sometimes take years to be successful, which require long-term support. Robust investment in this work can yield sustainable gains for immigrant justice to address the exclusions raised in earlier portions of this publication and permanently enshrine inclusive policies that can withstand the whims of politics and political polarization.

COMMUNITY-BASED EXAMPLES:

The Regional Capacity Building Project (RCBP), a project of California Immigrant Policy Center, helps to support and build collective power across nine regional immigrant rights coalitions, which organize and advocate for policy change at the local, regional and state level. Primarily funded by The California Endowment, RCBP members work to build both their internal capacity (by growing their membership base, funding, and leadership talent) and their networked capacity (by building coalitions within regions and connecting coalitions across regions) to strengthen the power and reach of California's immigrant rights movement.⁸⁸ Each member coalition has helped generate new policy ideas based on issues facing their specific communities, has been critical to passing and implementing pro-immigrant policies, and has ensured effective implementation and accountability by being a trusted voice in their community. The ***Contra Costa Immigrant Rights Alliance***, funded by the Y&H Soda Foundation, and the ***San Joaquin Immigrant Integration Collaborative***, which currently only receives funding through RCBP membership, are two members that have been active in statewide campaigns to promote expanded access to food assistance and healthcare, as well as local campaigns to expand funding for legal representation in detention and deportation proceedings and to create a local non-police crisis response program, respectively.

Trabajadores Unidos/Workers United (TUWU), based in San Francisco, was formed in 2002 as a multi-racial and bilingual membership organization dedicated to improving the quality of jobs for workers in San Francisco. With funding from the James Irvine Foundation and the San Francisco Foundation, TUWU has been able to greatly increase its policy advocacy capacity. As a coordinating member of the ***Safety Net for All Coalition***, TUWU organizes its worker members to lead and advance a powerful statewide legislative and budget campaign to win unemployment benefits for excluded immigrant workers. Funding from the James Irvine Foundation allowed TUWU to hire a coalition manager, organize retreats to build out campaign strategy, and coordinate direct actions and lobby visits in Sacramento and the Bay Area. With funding support from ReWork the Bay, a project of the San Francisco Foundation, TUWU joined with Chinese Progressive Association, Dolores Street Community Services, and worker centers across the region to survey 1400 workers about their economic priorities, resulting in the ***Bay Area Essential Workers Agenda***, a policy platform for an equitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This past year, TUWU, along with the entire coalition, led a local campaign that successfully secured increased funding for workers' rights outreach and education and \$100,000 in seed funding for an earn and learn workforce development pilot program.

INVEST IN ORGANIZATIONS THAT SERVE THE DIVERSITY OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Changes in geography and demographics of immigrant communities means that greater investments are needed in organizations that can meet changing needs. Investments are needed in organizations that include serving an increasingly diverse demography of undocumented individuals.

COMMUNITY-BASED EXAMPLES:

African Advocacy Network (AAN) was formed 13 years ago in San Francisco and focuses exclusively on serving African and Afro-Caribbean immigrants of all statuses with legal services, case management, know-your-rights trainings, and community building. AAN staff members fill a large gap in language access, serving clients in English, French, Spanish, Amharic (Ethiopian), Tigrinya (Eritrean), Haitian Creole, and other languages from the African diaspora. AAN is one of the few organizations that is able to do outreach and education to local Black immigrant communities when state laws are passed, such as AB 60, which allowed many undocumented Californians to get drivers' licenses. Funded in part by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, AAN is now also focusing on helping local Black immigrant community members work to create their own systems of support and wealth-building by addressing local gaps in entrepreneurship and business development.

Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO) was created by Indigenous farmworkers in 1993 to serve the unique needs of Indigenous migrant communities residing in California. CBDIO is uniquely positioned to serve the diverse language and cultural needs of Indigenous migrant communities, with staff who speak six Indigenous languages and 13 unique variants of those languages, such as Mixtec (seven variants), Zapotec (two variants), Triqui (two variants), Chatino (two variants), Amuzgo and Tlapaneco (indigenous language from the state of Guerrero). With programs in Fresno and Madera in the Central Valley, and Greenfield in Monterey County, CBDIO staff provide linguistically appropriate and culturally sensitive workshops, education, training, counseling, and outreach on issues ranging from workers' rights to public benefits and civic participation. CBDIO also organizes its Indigenous farmworker communities to build their own power, leadership, and advocacy capacity, by participating in local and statewide coalitions and campaigns. Funders include the California Endowment and the David & Lucille Packard Foundation, among others.

INVEST IN WORKER OWNERSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Investing in worker-owned business models, including co-operatives, as well as entrepreneurship, is a powerful way to support undocumented workers to earn better wages and build wealth, while also having more agency and a say in their work. Co-operative businesses in particular can help transform industries that have a history of exploiting workers by demonstrating an alternative model and making the business case for providing higher quality jobs, while promoting worker ownership and shared economic prosperity.

COMMUNITY-BASED EXAMPLES:

Prospera, based in Oakland, helps low-income immigrant women to launch their own businesses across the Bay Area region. With funding from the San Francisco Foundation, Y&H Soda Foundation, Latino Community Foundation, and others, Prospera serves more than 200 Latina immigrant entrepreneurs per year by providing comprehensive, culturally specific training and technical assistance in Spanish to help them launch, grow, and sustain successful co-ops and/or businesses. Many of

Prospera’s participants are undocumented and 80% are low-income. The organization has been nationally recognized as a leader in the field of co-op development in low-income immigrant communities, and combines culturally based cooperative and popular education with state-of-the-art business and leadership development tools that are usually out of reach for low income women. Additionally, Prospera works to help participants manage their well-being while also managing their business, by providing peer networking opportunities, coaching, and opportunities to collaborate with each other. In response to COVID, Prospera also created a community-governed Latina Entrepreneur Resiliency Fund to help 40 participants cover basic needs.

Ayudando Latinos A Soñar (ALAS) is a Latinx-centered community-based organization formed in 2011 and based in Half Moon Bay. ALAS offers a Food Justice program to support the nutritional needs of farmworkers, and through their Economic Vitality Program, they offer training and education on entrepreneurship, budgeting, marketing, and how to talk with business loan officers. Over the past several years, ALAS has provided staff time and training to support a new initiative, Rancho San Benito, which is creating a cooperative for local farmworkers, many of whom are undocumented. In San Mateo County, farmworkers earn an average of \$25,000 a year. For undocumented workers, it’s often much less. However, according to one of the founders, when a farmer is in charge of their own land, one acre can potentially earn a farmer between \$60,000 and \$100,000. With funding from the County of San Mateo, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and others, the organization was able to lease 76 acres of land through the Peninsula Open Space Trust. This land will allow farmworkers to use the acreage to farm and sell their crops, and will serve as an educational space for farmworkers to learn about land management, sustainable farming practices, how to start new cooperatives, and the principles of running a farm business. Rancho San Benito, which recently became its own 501(c)3 organization, will be providing farmworker participants with marketing and initial overhead costs, such as equipment and supplies.

The CLEAN Carwash Worker Center has been organizing and supporting Los Angeles County carwash workers, many of whom are undocumented, for 15 years through know-your-rights training, employer outreach, skills training, and advocacy. This year, the organization incubated and launched Clean-Wash Mobile, a new worker-owned cooperative car wash business that aims to transform the carwash industry, which has a legacy of worker abuse, wage theft, and workplace injuries. The co-op will ensure that workers receive higher wages, safer working conditions and a more stable path to long-term economic security. With startup funding from California’s SEED Grant, the co-op will service fleets of cars owned by nonprofits, governments, and large businesses, and recently announced their first contract with St. John’s Community Health, one of the largest non-profit healthcare providers in Los Angeles County.

FUND WORK TO CHANGE HARMFUL NARRATIVES AND CULTURAL NORMS THAT PERPETUATE ECONOMIC EXCLUSIONS AND INEQUITIES

Cultural norms and narratives are at the heart of how policies and programs are created, implemented, and enforced. They are also key to galvanizing public support for bold policies that are otherwise challenging to create. Given that significant narrative challenges govern our current debates around the economy, immigration, and the intersection of the two, messaging testing is needed to help us better understand—and confront—harmful narratives, and change hearts and minds to support more inclusive economic policies for undocumented immigrant communities.

COMMUNITY-BASED EXAMPLES:

[The Immigrant Strategic Messaging Project \(ISMP\)](#) is a partnership of national, statewide, and local movement leaders, communicators and researchers that investigates American attitudes toward immigrants and develops evidence-based messaging strategies to change conversations and break through polarization. The group led the first ever deep canvass on immigration issues and has conducted extensive testing of video and TV ads, and recently released a comprehensive guide to immigrant messaging research and guidance to support advocacy efforts and policies that support undocumented immigrants.⁸⁹ Funding comes from the California Wellness Foundation and the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr Fund.

[The Southern Border Communities Coalition](#), a program of [Alliance San Diego](#), brings together 60 organizations from San Diego, CA to Brownsville, TX to ensure that border enforcement policies and practices are accountable and fair, promote policies and solutions that improve the quality of life in border communities, and support rational and humane immigration reform policies affecting the border region. One of their projects, [Border Lens](#), is a data, research and story hub created by the Coalition to provide a comprehensive view of the southern border region – from the people who live and work there to humanize issues at the border. Funders include the Marguerite Casey Foundation and the Annenberg Foundation.

FUND COMMUNITY-GROUNDED RESEARCH

Because of the precarious circumstances facing people who are undocumented, and the fact that the majority of economic and demographic data is based on records that – rightly so – do not ask about citizenship status, research on undocumented immigrant communities can be difficult, and more research is needed. Community-grounded research is an important way to build trust, ensure that the right questions are being asked in the most appropriate way, and that recommendations are most responsive to community needs. Often, new and important insights can be uncovered. Plus, participating in community-grounded research can be an incredibly empowering experience for everyone involved.

COMMUNITY-BASED EXAMPLES:

[The University of California Merced Community and Labor Center](#) was founded in 2020 and is the largest labor center serving a rural region in the United States. With funding from the UC Merced Foundation and others, the Center leads community-grounded research and public education to inform the development and/or passage of major state policies, including unemployment benefits, tax credits, expanded paid leave protections, and workplace health and safety standards for undocumented workers. With additional funding from the California Department of Public Health, the Center conducted the largest ever academic study on the health and work experiences of the nation's most disadvantaged workers—agricultural workers. Over 70% of agricultural workers are non-citizen, and most are undocumented. The [UC Merced Farmworker Health Study formed and engaged a Farmworker Community Advisory Board \(CAB\)](#) consisting of over two dozen of the state's leading farmworker organizations, and a labor union. CAB partners conducted over 1,200 in-depth interviews with farmworkers in six languages to better understand how to improve the agriculture industry from a workers' perspective. Specific areas of inquiry included economic security issues such as employer compliance with wage and hour provisions, compliance with workplace health and safety training, and workforce development and access to benefits. Issues such as these had never been asked about in previous farmworker health studies.

FUND PILOTS, TESTING, AND NEW MODELS THAT SUPPORT ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE UNDOCUMENTED

Funding innovation through pilots that address structural and systemic issue is critical to understand how a specific program or policy can support undocumented individuals, and identify opportunities and challenges for bringing a new idea to scale. One burgeoning area for investment in new models is around local, targeted, guaranteed income programs designed to close gaps in the safety net for undocumented immigrant communities, which can include specific industries or geographies.

COMMUNITY-BASED EXAMPLES:

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Mission Asset Fund (MAF)**, a financial services nonprofit, quickly pivoted to create a Rapid Response Fund (RRF), similar to the UndocuFund that was created in Sonoma in response to the Tubbs fire in 2017, and other “UndocuFunds” that have been created since then. MAF was able to distribute one-time funds ranging from \$500-\$1000 to 55,000 individuals and 7,000 low income college students, including undocumented individuals and students. The findings from the RFF led to the creation of MAF’s pioneering Universal Basic Income (UBI)+ program, which includes a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) that will study the impacts of undocumented immigrant households receiving \$400 a month in cash assistance with no strings attached, as well as financial services, for various lengths of time (12 months versus 24 months), as they try to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. With funding primarily from MacKenzie Scott as well as the Walter & Elise Haas Fund, the UBI+ program prioritizes low-income immigrant families with young children who remain excluded from federal support. While the majority of the participants come from MAF’s RFF, San Mateo County, Daly City, and the City of Coachella have formed public-private partnerships with MAF to have additional community members participate. This program will serve as a testing ground to inform what guaranteed income for undocumented immigrant families could look like at scale. MAF also receives support from Citibank, JP Morgan Chase and the Sobrato Family Foundation.

SUPPORT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION TO ENSURE MEANINGFUL IMPACT

Policies and programs are only as good as the extent to which they actually provide meaningful change in peoples’ lives. Oftentimes this requires effective outreach and education as well as navigational services to help people become aware of and access services, especially as services are expanded to include undocumented individuals, due to traditional exclusions from these types of supports. For example, funding for outreach can help people know about and successfully enroll in newly expanded Medi-Cal or CalFresh benefits, while funding for free tax preparation services can help people apply for and renew their ITIN and file their taxes in order to access state tax credits. Additionally, funding for program and policy evaluation can help communicate successes and uplift organizations that have been doing important economic security work for decades, while also helping organizations, advocates, and policymakers understand continued challenges and opportunities for improvements.

COMMUNITY-BASED EXAMPLES:

The California Protecting Immigrant Families Coalition (CA PIF) is composed of over 75 organizations across the state, including grassroots community-based organizations, policy advocates, and service providers working to address the chilling effect caused by misinformation and misunderstanding of the public charge rule in immigrant communities.⁹⁰ CA PIF's Outreach and Communications workgroup leads in creating training and resources that help service providers and community-based organizations communicate the intricacies of immigrant public benefits access with a coordinated messaging strategy. The workgroup has developed novel immigrant health curricula to assist communicators and trusted messengers across the state, including modules and fact sheets. With funding from the national Protecting Immigrant Families Campaign, the workgroup has also authored several community-facing documents and social media toolkits, engaging ethnic media outlets, and supporting language access for Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, African, Caribbean, indigenous, and Central European immigrants and refugees.

Philanthropy has a powerful role to play. Philanthropy can lead and reinforce a just and equitable economy by explicitly investing in and supporting more equitable policy development, advocacy and direct services to ensure that undocumented individuals are able to achieve economic security, equity, and justice. Data reveals that nationally, only 1% of philanthropic funding goes to grantmaking specifically for immigrant-related issues,⁹⁰ and only a fraction of that addresses economic security. **Success requires dedicated, trust-based, flexible, and committed funding to create a robust ecosystem that can support policy, culture, and narrative change, powerful organizing and leadership development.** Through this type of robust interconnected infrastructure & support systems people who are undocumented will have the opportunity to not only live financially secure lives but also begin to build and retain assets for future generations who are the bedrock of an inclusive and thriving California.