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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 30, 2023

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The CIELO Fund at IECF Announces \$280,000 in Inaugural Grants for Latino Led and Serving Organizations Throughout the Inland Empire

25 organizations serving the IE's Latino Community supported by first round of grantmaking

Funding will invest in projects focused on economic mobility, educational equity, civic engagement, health equity, and immigrant services

Riverside, CA – The Inland Empire Community Foundation (IECF) announced today awarding \$280,000 to 25 recipients for its first-ever CIELO Fund grants. The [Cultivating Inland Empire Latino Opportunity, or, CIELO Fund](#) supports nonprofit organizations and initiatives that are led by – and serve – Latinos in Riverside and San Bernardino counties and strengthen their core systems and operations. Individual grants ranged from \$5,000 to \$20,000.

“Our inaugural CIELO Fund grantees are a group of truly inspiring organizations doing impactful work daily to uplift Latinos in the Inland Empire,” **said Jesse Melgar, CIELO Fund Founding Chair and IECF Board Member.** “These organizations are working to create economic opportunity, close education and civic engagement gaps, support immigrants, and improve access to health care for Latinos in communities throughout Riverside and San Bernardino counties. We are proud to invest in these two dozen innovators and remain inspired by the more than 100 deserving organizations who submitted applications this round. The overwhelming response and interest underscores the need for further investment in the Latino organizations, leaders, and communities who call the Inland Empire home.”

Latinos are now the majority of the Inland Empire, making up 51.5% of the population. With this growth comes increased opportunity but also areas where disparities persist. The CIELO Fund’s Leadership and Grantmaking Committee commissioned a report in 2022 with UC Riverside to identify where funding might carry the greatest impact. Using the findings from the [Aqui Estamos: A Data Profile of Latinos in the Inland Empire Report](#), the CIELO Fund centered

their funding decisions on nonprofits focused on: economic mobility, educational equity, civic engagement, health equity, and immigrant services.

The inaugural CIELO Fund grantees are:

- Alianza Coachella
- Asociacion de Emprendedores
- California Immigrant Youth Justice Coalition
- CARECEN - San Bernardino
- Casa Blanca Home of Neighborly Service
- Centro Del Inmigrante
- CHIRLA - San Bernardino
- Desert Sun - Coachella Latino Voices Initiative
- East Coachella Valley for Change
- Escuela de la Raza
- Galilee Center
- GANAS - Genuine. Animate. Navigate. Assist. Succeed.
- Get in Motion Entrepreneurs
- Highlanders Boxing Club
- Inland Empire Future Leaders Program
- Inland Empire Latino Lawyers Association (IELLA)
- Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective
- Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice
- KVCR/NPR - IE Latino Voices
- La Red de Provedoras
- Ontario-Montclair Promise Scholars
- Read with Me
- San Bernardino Community Services
- TODEC Legal Services
- Unidos for La Causa

IECF received 110 submissions during the initial application period – many of which represent first-time applicants to the foundation. The CIELO Fund Leadership and Grantmaking Committee comprised of community leaders worked to select the recipients.

The CIELO Fund was [launched in 2022](#) by IECF Board Member Jesse Melgar as one of eight signature funds commemorating IECF's 80th anniversary. The CIELO Fund hosted a kickoff event during Latino Heritage Month with more than 200 community and nonprofit leaders in attendance. The Fund has raised nearly half a million dollars thanks to the major support from foundations, local businesses, and dozens of individuals who believe that strengthening philanthropic infrastructure for the Latino community is vital for the region's success. This includes major support from the Weingart Foundation, California Wellness Foundation, James Irvine Foundation. The CIELO Fund is also made possible thanks to the generous support from founding donors: Jesse Melgar & Angel Rodriguez, Ofelia Valdez Yeager & Ley Yeager, Ronn Ruiz & Ramon Cordova, Violeta Aguilar, Paulette Brown Hinds, and more than three dozen others.

“CIELO is a terrific example of what we can do in the IE when we decide to make change, in partnership with the communities who are driving their own solutions,” said **Michelle Decker, IECF President and CEO**. “Our Latino community is in so many ways thriving and giving so much to our economic, cultural, and community resilience, but CIELO stands to remind us of so much more work to be done. It is an honor to work alongside board members and volunteers, like Jesse and the CIELO Grants and Leadership Committee to build and share this funding.”

“This community grant award from the CIELO Fund is significant to our efforts as a grassroots organization,” said **Juan Pedro Valencia, President of La Red de Provedoras**. “It means that we will be able to establish a professional website and will allow us to help promote business success, leadership, and community collaboration for our members of La Red Network of Family Child Care Providers.”

Added **IE Immigrant Youth Collective Director Angel Fajardo**, “This fellowship that CIELO is funding will allow IEIYC youth leaders to increase their capacity and commitment to our regional issues in environmental justice, labor, employment, and health equity. This work is a crucial step in transforming the IE to a region with larger opportunities that nurtures talent and trailblazers.”

For more information or to donate to the CIELO Fund, visit www.iegives.org/cielofund.

Access photos here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/1S7bACD1KwT5XwQx5>

About the Inland Empire Community Foundation

Founded in 1941, the Inland Empire Community Foundation is the oldest and largest community foundation in Inland Southern California. We partner with individuals, families and corporations to help them achieve their charitable goals. Since inception, we have given out over \$100 million in grants and scholarships. For more information visit the IECF’s website at www.iegives.org. Be a part of our conversation on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

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