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**CIELO Fund Reaches $3 Million Milestone to Advance Opportunities for Latinos in the Inland Empire, Launches $500k CIELO Endowed Fund**

*In 3 years, the CIELO Fund has granted $1.5M, awarded $300K in scholarships, published original research, and amplified Latino voices through major media partnerships*

RIVERSIDE, CA – In recognition of Latino Heritage Month, the Inland Empire Community Foundation announced today that the [CIELO Fund](https://www.iegives.org/funds/cielofund/) has raised over $3 million since launching in 2022 to support Latino-led and Latino-serving organizations, and allies throughout the Inland Empire. In total, the CIELO Fund has invested nearly $1.5 million into the region’s Latino community through grantmaking, scholarships, narrative change initiatives and original research. This includes $1.2 million in grant awards to 100+ grassroots organizations and initiatives, and $300k+ in scholarships to students.

To ensure the vital grantmaking work continues for generations, the CIELO Leadership and Grant Committee also established the CIELO Endowed Fund in 2025 with an initial investment of $500,000, a lasting resource made possible through the generosity of many donors over the years and the visionary support of the James Irvine Foundation.

The CIELO Fund also released a summary of a new report produced by the UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Institute looking at [Key Facts and Worker Voices: The Latino Workforce in California’s Inland Empire](https://latino.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Latino-Workforce-in-CAs-Inland-Empire-Executive-Summary.pdf).

Notably, the CIELO Fund has once again partnered with KVCR/NPR on the popular [*IE Latino Voices*](https://www.kvcrnews.org/ie-latino-voices) radio segment, [The Desert Sun](https://www.desertsun.com/story/life/entertainment/people/2025/06/27/cielo-fund-grant-empowers-key-latino-initiative-palm-springs-area/84228901007/?gnt-cfr=1&gca-cat=p&gca-uir=true&gca-epti=z116447p000350c000350e007500v116447b0083xxd118365&gca-ft=152&gca-ds=sophi), while also collaborating with [CalMatters](https://calmatters.org/) and the [Los Angeles Times’ Latino vertical, *De Los*](https://www.latimes.com/delos/newsletter/2025-01-31/de-los-cielo-fund-inland-empire-coverage-latinx-files), to further spotlight Latino causes across the region.

“At a time when many Inland residents are facing fear and uncertainty, The CIELO Fund is stepping in by providing support to local organizations and students,” said **Jesse Melgar, IECF Board Chair and CIELO Fund founding chair**. “We’ve raised $3 million to-date and we’re planning for long-term, sustained impact by launching a $500k endowed fund that will keep this work going for years to come.”

“Inland Latino residents are experiencing fear like we haven’t seen in decades based on recent federal actions. We are witnessing a growing mental health crisis among students and workers who feel they might be targeted because of how they look, how they speak, or where they work. Yet, even in this moment of uncertainty, we are also seeing something powerful — a renewed sense of unity, purpose, and resilience across our community,” said **Elizabeth Romero, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Governmental & Community Relations, UC Riverside**. “The energy, passion, and support we have received remind us that we are not alone, and that when we stand together, we can turn fear into action and isolation into hope. We know the impact of this moment will be felt for many years, even decades. That is precisely why the work of the CIELO Fund will continue to matter — not only to respond to today’s challenges, but to help build a stronger, more compassionate Inland Empire for generations to come.”

“The CIELO Fund exists because a group of regional leaders saw a gap in investment in our diverse communities and decided to step up. We didn’t wait for permission. We knew someone had to take the first step. In three years, we’ve been met with generous support from individual donors, business and civic leaders, and foundations here at home and beyond the Inland Empire, helping raise more than $3 million for local nonprofits and student scholarships. But today’s challenges demand that each of us do more. We invite our neighbors to join us in helping secure the resources our communities and students need to live with dignity and opportunity," said **Angel Rodriguez, co-founder of the CIELO Fund and Associate Vice Chancellor of Government Relations, Strategic Communications & Grants for the San Bernardino Community College District**.

“The early support we’ve received has truly laid the foundation for the CIELO Fund’s success,” said **Brie Griset Smith, CSPG, Chief Development Officer** at IECF. “Now we’re harnessing that momentum to bring in more donors to uplift Latino communities and spotlight the opportunities ahead in the Inland Empire.”

**Building a Culture of Philanthropy**

The CIELO Fund has raised $3 million thanks to investments from the California Endowment, the Weingart Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the California Wellness Foundation, the California Healthcare Foundation, The Chavez Family Foundation, the S.L. Gimbel Foundation Fund, and support from dozens of corporate and institutional donors. The Fund has also been strengthened by more than 100 individual donations.

**Media Partnerships**

The 2025 grantmaking included media partnerships to elevate positive regional narratives through original and effective programming. The CIELO Fund is continuing to support KVCR’s IE Latino Voices segment which it helped co-design and launch in 2023. It is also supporting an innovative partnership with the LA Times’ Latino vertical, *DeLos*, to support special coverage of the Inland Empire.

**Community Led**

The CIELO Fund Leadership and Grantmaking Committee consists of Inland Latino leaders who live and work in the region. This includes university presidents, college district chancellors, several vice chancellors, community-based organizational leaders, leaders in academia, and corporate leaders.

For more information, visit iegives.org/cielofund

***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 build a culture of philanthropy. Over the past 25 years, we have given out over $225 million in grants and scholarships. For more information visit the IECF’s website at* [*www.iegives.org*](http://www.iegives.org/)*. Be a part of our conversation on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.*

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