

EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

**For Black Workers, Learners, and
Businesses in the Inland Empire**

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PREPARED FOR
Youth Action Project

PREPARED BY
Bienestar Community Economics



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SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Tremaine Mitchell, Joseph Williams, Jonathan Buffong and everyone at the Youth Action Project for your leadership and commitment to improving the lives of the Black community in the Inland Empire. None of this would have been possible without your vision and leadership. As the driving force behind the initiative, YAP structured the project, managed its execution, convened stakeholders, and secured funding. By leveraging their deep-rooted relationships, reputation for integrity, and commitment to equity, YAP played a foundational role in ensuring the research remained grounded in the lived experiences of Black learners, workers, and business owners.

Thank you to all of the regional partners who came together (see appendix F) to provide insights, partnership, and a collaborative spirit to this effort.

Additional thanks to the Cooperative Economic Empowerment Movement (CEEM) and the legacy of Dr. Reggie Webb whose efforts to bring Black parity to the U.S. economy inspired the leaders in the region to come together to establish an effort for Black parity in the Inland Empire.

ABOUT YOUTH ACTION PROJECT

Youth Action Project (YAP) empowers young people by providing workforce development programs, post-secondary education support, and soft skills training to help them build successful futures. Through its core programs—Young Leaders Incorporated (YLINC), Young Scholars, and Young Workers—YAP equips students with leadership skills, academic support, and hands-on career exploration opportunities. By fostering education, leadership, and employment readiness, YAP helps youth navigate their paths toward meaningful careers and economic independence.

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IF PATHWAYS TO PARITY COULD SPEAK

“If you walk with me, together we can change the broken and build together a new future that allows access, equity, power, and ownership.”

Dear Reader,

This report brings together the combined research of three partners. Our approach to supporting the Youth Action Project and the Pathways to Parity effort is grounded in the values and equity-centered approaches each of our organizations hold.

Beverly Scott & Associates is an infrastructure sector practice committed to advancing equity, inclusion, “shared prosperity,” and healthy and sustainable outcomes for historically underutilized groups and high-needs communities through smart reinvestment in American infrastructure.

The Inland Empire Black Worker Center’s mission is to build a Black Worker-led movement that successfully organizes for quality jobs, economic and social mobility, and advocates for policies through cultural practices that ensure Black Workers, their families, and the community thrives.

Bienestar Community Economics works to create an equitable, inclusive, and prosperous society where everyone has the tools and resources they need to thrive. We focus on finding new and innovative ways to improve and empower our communities and economies.

Each of us conducted research to address the questions guiding the High Road Training Partnership (H RTP) planning and Pathways to Parity convenings. Together, we analyzed the data and information gathered through a series of sense-making sessions that led to the synthesis of the research data and development of the recommendations.

Nguzo Saba and Black economic principles that identify a conceptual paradigm for building racial unity, building communities for transformation, and leveraging trust, cooperation, and accountability to do so, were discussed throughout the processing of the research data and synthesis that led to the development of our recommendations.

We present this report as a starting point for further research and action. It reflects the opportunity to bring a discussion about jobs and workforce development to the broader racial equity imperative required to grow an inclusive economy that creates systems of access and economic opportunities for the Black community.

Sincerely,
Beverly Scott, PhD
Nosakhare Thomas, PhD, DMin, MBA
Ana Bertha Gutiérrez, MPA, MEd

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pathways to Parity initiative aims to achieve Black parity and promote economic opportunity in the Inland Empire (IE), addressing long standing systemic barriers to education, employment, and wealth-building for the Black community.

Led by the Youth Action Project (YAP), this effort began convening and launched research in the region's priority sectors, clean energy, transportation, and cybersecurity, to understand how to leverage High Road Training Partnerships (HRTPs) to dismantle systemic barriers and foster an inclusive regional economy that ensures Black residents can thrive. This report outlines a strategic approach to foster inclusive economic growth for Black learners, workers, and business owners in the IE.

The research partners—Beverly Scott & Associates, the Inland Empire Black Worker Center (IEBWC), and Bienestar Community Economics—in collaboration with YAP, established three core goals: preparing workers and businesses for high-demand industries, fostering multi-employer workforce development, and improving economic opportunities for Black residents. Using a mixed-methods approach that included focus groups, surveys, interviews, and secondary data, each partner provided complementary insights tailored to their specific audience.

The research and analysis was guided by a Transformative Paradigm lens, emphasizing social justice, racial equity, and inclusive economic development. The Afrocentric Nguzo Saba principles were central to the work, underscoring

mentorship, self-determination, and collective work as critical factors for achieving Black parity and fostering economic justice in the region.

FINDINGS

Culturally Competent Approaches: Participants highlighted the importance of culturally competent instruction and trauma-informed practices that support Black learners and workers, ensuring inclusive environments and responsive program design.

Racial Equity: Addressing racial equity was identified as a critical factor in overcoming systemic barriers to education, employment, and business development, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies to enable career mobility for Black residents.

Mentorship and Professional Networks: Expanding access to Black mentors, role models, and professional networks was seen as essential for guiding career development, providing support, and helping Black workers navigate the workplace.

Access, Awareness, and Basic Needs: Participants stressed the need for comprehensive supportive services, as access to stable housing, childcare, and transportation is foundational to successfully entering and advancing in the workforce.

Earn-and-Learn Pathways for Job Training:

Interviewees underscored the value of paid training and earn-and-learn models, which allow Black workers to gain skills without sacrificing financial stability, helping break the cycle of low-wage employment.

Entrepreneurship and Wealth Building:

Embedding entrepreneurship training into education and workforce programs was seen as an opportunity to create pathways for Black residents to build wealth and achieve economic independence.

Industry Partnerships: Strengthening partnerships with key industries was identified as vital for connecting Black workers to quality jobs and increasing procurement opportunities for Black-owned businesses.



The Afrocentric Nguzo Saba principles were central to the work, underscoring mentorship, self-determination, and collective work as critical factors for achieving Black parity and fostering economic justice in the region.

Ecosystem Building: Strengthening connections among community-based organizations, education providers, and industries was identified as essential for creating a supportive ecosystem that bridges gaps in access to opportunities.



STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGY 1: BUILD AN ECOSYSTEM THAT SUPPORTS BLACK LEARNERS, WORKERS, AND BUSINESS OWNERS

Formalize, Resource, and Fund the Ecosystem of Connectors Across the Region:

Strengthening the ecosystem of connectors across the networks of organizations in the regional ecosystem is necessary to produce coordinated action and systems that can advance a Black parity and equity agenda.

- Fund community-based organizations (CBOs) as critical connectors to the Black community
- Build data capacity
- Develop a resource directory
- Connect industry to trusted resources that can reach the Black community
- Enhance funding access and support for grant applications
- Leverage existing organizations
- Leverage community benefits in development projects
- Encourage innovation and experimentation
- Increase CBO involvement

STRATEGY 2: CREATE WEALTH BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH BLACK BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

Increase procurement opportunities:

Connecting small businesses to public sector support programs and services can lead to economic growth for small businesses.

- Advocate for supplier diversity programs to increase procurement opportunities
- Create technical assistance (TA) to support small businesses in applying for procurement opportunities

Increase number of Black-owned businesses:

Expanding Black entrepreneurship can build wealth within the Black community, serving both as a strategy to combat hiring discrimination and as a means to create long-term asset growth.

- Embed entrepreneurship into other training and educational opportunities
- Establish pathways to High Road business creation or expansion
- Increase technical assistance and access to capital
- Utilize natural resources in the Inland Empire (IE)
- Increase involvement from Black Chambers of Commerce
- Support worker cooperative development and employee ownership transitions
- Expand networking opportunities that prioritize and make visible Black entrepreneurs

STRATEGY 3: DEVELOP CAREER PATHWAYS THAT ADDRESS ACCESS, AWARENESS, AND BASIC NEEDS FOR WORKERS**Improve Earn-and-Learn Pathways:**

Developing education and training pathways can lead to jobs and paid training opportunities.

- Integrate with existing programs
- Establish rapid upskilling opportunities

Develop Support Services for Workforce Trainees:

Improving support services and financial stability can lead to more equitable access to education, training, and employment opportunities.

- Develop services for meeting basics needs like housing and food security, childcare, and transportation
- Expand programs for justice-impacted individuals

Increase Career Pathways Awareness and Access:

Creating entry points for Black learners and workers to advance their career or enter the workforce involves expanding access to training, mentorship, and clear pathways that align with high-demand industries, while also addressing systemic barriers to ensure equitable opportunities for success.

- Include Black voices in recruitment and retention efforts
- Identify career pathways
- Develop culturally competent career awareness opportunities for K-12 students
- Build mentorship opportunities
- Cultivate continuous learning
- Address information gaps
- Engage key community stakeholders
- Increase engagement in science and energy for youth
- Create a centralized career pathway information hub
- Ensure representation in key decision-making spaces
- Connect industrial strategies to community needs
- Focus on emerging technologies

EQUITY PRIORITY 1: BLACK PARITY IS A FOUNDATION FOR ACHIEVING RACIAL EQUITY

The Pathway to Parity initiative aims for Black economic empowerment in the Inland Empire by establishing Black parity as a foundational goal, laying the groundwork for broader racial equity. By integrating racial equity into workforce and clean energy development, the initiative ensures fair access to resources, career pathways, and opportunities, driving meaningful and sustainable change for the Black community.

EQUITY PRIORITY 2: PROMOTE BLACK REPRESENTATION AND MENTORSHIP IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

Achieving inclusive economic development requires a strong presence of Black leadership in decision-making roles, High Road Training Partnerships, and community initiatives. By positioning Black leaders as champions and mentors, strategies can be shaped by lived experiences, Afrocentric principles, and a commitment to systemic change.



INTRODUCTION

The Black-White wealth gap has existed for generations and is a product of hundreds of years of policies that have created systems designed to disadvantage the ability of Black Americans to build and maintain wealth.¹

Pathways to good jobs are seen as levers for economic and social freedom, yet access to good jobs remains a challenge for the Black community in the U.S. The concept of racial parity seeking to bring equality across racial and ethnic groups stems from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a policy rooted in bringing Black parity to employment.² **Black parity** in the United States refers to the goal of achieving equal social, economic, and political outcomes for Black Americans and the African diaspora in the U.S., as compared to their White counterparts. This includes closing gaps in areas such as income, wealth, education, employment, health, and housing.³ The goal of bringing Black parity to the American workforce, and the intertwined nature of employment and freedom,⁴ have pushed

scholars and practitioners to develop strategies and approaches that address the systemic barriers that prevent Black communities from experiencing parity in the U.S.

In Southern California’s Inland Empire (IE) region⁵, covering San Bernardino and Riverside counties, efforts to improve economic, environmental, and health inequities have brought together coalitions and collaborations working toward economic justice and equity. The **Pathways to Parity** initiative was developed to focus on addressing inequities Black IE residents experience by expanding access to quality jobs⁶, career pathways, and wealth-building opportunities for Black workers, learners, and businesses. Led by the Youth Action Project (YAP) in collaboration with the Cooperative Economic

1 Weller, C. E., & Roberts, C. (2021, March 23). *Eliminating the Black-white wealth gap is a generational challenge*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/eliminating-black-white-wealth-gap-generational-challenge/>

2 Mollica, P. W. (2020). The unfinished mission of Title VII: Black parity in the American workforce. *Journal of Gender, Race & Justice*, 23(1), 139–164. <https://jgrj.law.uiowa.edu/sites/jgrj.law.uiowa.edu/files/2022-11/The%20Unfinished%20Mission%20of%20Title%20VII-%20Black%20Parity%20in%20the%20American%20Workforce%20.pdf>

3 Chaia, A., Julien, J. P., Pérez, L., Pinder, D., Stewart, S. III, Williams, D., & Yancy, N. (2022, July 21). *Mapping the road to prosperity and parity for Black and Latino residents across America*. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/bem/our-insights/mapping-the-road-to-prosperity-and-parity-for-black-and-latino-residents-across-america>

4 Mollica, P. W. (2020). The unfinished mission of Title VII: Black parity in the American workforce. *Journal of Gender, Race & Justice*, 23(1), 139–164.

5 As a result of our research, it became clear that there is a need for further study into the geographic areas in the region with the large concentrations of Black residents and economic need like the High Desert and the Ebony Triangle which some defined as the intersections of the 10, 15, and 215 freeways, covering cities such as San Bernardino, Rialto, Fontana, Moreno Valley, and Victorville. Despite their significant presence, these cities face persistent disparities in education, employment, and economic mobility.

6 The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and Department of Commerce have partnered to identify “Good Jobs Principles” – The eight principles identified of good jobs are articulated in a framework found here: www.dol.gov/general/good-jobs/principles.

Empowerment Movement (CEEM) and inspired by the legacy of its founding leader, Reggie Webb, this effort began convening and launched research in the region's priority sectors, **clean energy, transportation, and cybersecurity**, to understand how to leverage High Road Training Partnerships (HRTPs) to dismantle systemic barriers and foster an inclusive regional economy that ensures Black residents can thrive.

YAP convened an initial steering committee⁷ to research, learn, and discuss what is needed to increase High Road Training Partnerships (HRTPs) in the region for these priority sectors and industries, and what it will take to create pathways to careers in these industries for Black IE residents. Over the course of the planning period, YAP conducted a series of convenings bringing together workers, community stakeholders, industry, education, government, and other organizations that work in or are impacted by these industries.

Intentional economic choices are key to setting the conditions for racial and economic justice. The Nguzo Saba principles (unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith) serve as a connective thread between the research and recommendations. Black economic principles that identify a conceptual paradigm for building racial unity, building communities for transformation, and leveraging trust, cooperation, and accountability to do so, are important differentiators in how the research team processed the research data that led to the development of the recommendations in this report.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

This report summarizes the research, findings, and recommendations from the Pathways to Parity initiative. It provides a roadmap for advancing Black economic prosperity through HRTPs and career pathways in the three priority sectors: Clean Energy, Cybersecurity, and Transportation.

1. The **Research Methodology** section introduces the research partners, outlines the mixed-methods approach, and highlights the equity-centered framework guiding data collection and analysis.
2. **The Challenge: Systemic Barriers to Black Economic Prosperity** details how income and systemic disinvestment has impacted Black economic and wellbeing outcomes, both nationally and within the IE.
3. **Harnessing the Inland Empire's Potential** describes existing Black leadership assets and people power present within the IE that are ready to be engaged in these efforts. It also synthesizes existing economic development opportunities in the key sectors—Clean Energy, Cybersecurity, and Transportation—highlighting opportunities to connect Black learners and workers to opportunities that advance inclusive growth.
4. **Findings: Enabling Career Mobility** summarizes themes and findings from the community about what is needed to enable career mobility for Black learners, workers, and business owners in the IE.
5. **Pathways to Parity: Looking Ahead** outlines a set of strategies, recommendations, and activities on how to advance the Pathways to Parity initiative and improve outcomes for the Black community. It also discusses next steps to plan and guide the implementation of these strategies.
6. A **Detailed Technical Appendix** provides additional context of the economic landscape of the Inland Empire, labor market information, career pathways, and examples of other resources relevant to the Pathways to Parity initiative.

This report is designed to provide both a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by the Black community in the Inland Empire and a set of strategic solutions to address them.

⁷ Cooperative Economic Empowerment Movement, Inland Empire division (CEEM), Inland Empire Black Worker Center, Introducing Youth to American Infrastructure (IYAI), and Youth Action Project

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The research presented in this report focuses on understanding the challenges to and opportunities for building pathways to economic opportunity for Black workers and businesses in the Inland Empire.

Beverly Scott & Associates, the Inland Empire Black Worker Center (IEBWC), and Bienestar Community Economics (the research partners) collectively designed and conducted the research and developed the recommendations presented in this report. The research partners worked with YAP to develop a series of research questions to advance its work around three core goals:

1. Develop a regional strategy to prepare workers and businesses for opportunities in targeted, high-need industries
2. Foster inclusive, multi-employer collaboration for sustainable workforce development
3. Improve economic opportunities for Black residents and workers in the IE through the informed and collaborative creation or connection to career pathways

Each research partner conducted complementary research using a mixed methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data from focus groups, surveys, interviews, and secondary sources. Research partners contextualized findings for their respective audiences while applying culturally competent approaches.

Below, we summarize the focal areas for each research partner.

- **Beverly Scott & Associates:** Explored national and regional workforce trends in clean energy, transportation, and cybersecurity; conducted *Indaba* sessions, surveys, and interviews with C-suite leaders. The Indaba sessions provided important qualitative context regarding the serious and persistent matter of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) by elevating the voices and personal journeys, lived and learned experiences, observations, and insights of Black Americans working and studying in these targeted infrastructure sectors and career areas.
- **Inland Empire Black Worker Center:** Conducted local focus groups, interviews, and analysis of survey data to understand Black learners' and workers' views on infrastructure, the job opportunities in each of the target sectors, entrepreneurship, and the barriers and opportunities experienced.
- **Bienestar Community Economics:** Conducted research to understand the local, regional, and state landscape for



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

- What is the economic landscape for Black Workers in the IE? What contributes to or hinders educational and workforce advancement, specifically for Black workers? What opportunities exist for Black-owned businesses?
- What education and workforce partnerships currently exist, and how do organizations work together? To what extent do existing partnerships intentionally address the economic barriers of Black workers?
- How do the target industries (clean energy, transportation, and cybersecurity) currently train, hire, and support Black workers?

DEVELOPING A REGIONAL STRATEGY

- What are best practices to improve career pathway mobility for Black workers in the target industries (in the IE and beyond)?
- What activities and strategies are needed to effectively address economic disparities for Black workers and business owners?
- What additional capacities, resources, or TA do organizations and/or employers need to meet worker development needs (specifically for low-income Black workers)?
- What role does the local policy context and/or local/state funding opportunities play in advancing a regional strategy?

LESSONS TO INFORM FUTURE WORK

- What lessons from this phase of the Pathways to Parity partnership can help strengthen the collaborative's future systems change work?
- What else is needed to shift the regional ecosystem to support Black worker advancement and equity?

economic and workforce development in clean energy, transportation, cybersecurity, and infrastructure. Research included topics informing the local industry analysis, education and workforce needs, cross-sector partnerships and collaborations, and access to entrepreneurship and procurement opportunities in the target industries.

RESEARCH LENS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The research partners applied several important lenses to guide the collective process:

- Researchers utilized a **Transformative Paradigm lens**, a social science approach that intentionally advances social justice by elevating the voices of those being impacted by the research.⁸ This method is especially relevant when working with culturally complex communities as it incorporates gender, racial equity, and intersectional analysis in the research and evaluation. We applied equity-centered principles in data collection, analysis, and facilitation.
- The economic principles at the core of our work emphasize **inclusive economic development**, advocating for individuals and communities to become active economic actors rather than passive ones. That is, intentional economic choices are key to setting the conditions for access and racial and economic justice.
- Finally, the **Nguzo Saba principles** (Figure 1) serve as a connective thread for Black-led and -serving organizations in the IE and were leveraged during sense-making sessions to synthesize the research data and develop recommendations. The Indaba interviews and the recommendations coming from the

8 Mertens, D. M. (2020). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (5th ed.). SAGE.

national research bring an Afrocentric lens⁹ to education and community development. This application emphasized the strategic importance of mentorship, social capital networks, cultural resilience, mutual aid, and cooperation. Black economic principles,¹⁰ which focus on building racial unity, transforming communities, and fostering trust and accountability, were instrumental in shaping the recommendations and imperative for Black leadership in the region.

The following definitions describe the key concepts and frameworks used throughout the report, offering a shared understanding of the principles driving the research, analysis, and recommendations.

1. RACIAL EQUITY, JUSTICE, AND DEI:

- **Black parity in the United States:** Refers to the goal of achieving equal social, economic, and political outcomes for Black Americans and the African diaspora compared to their White counterparts. This includes addressing systemic barriers in areas like income, wealth, education, and employment.
- **DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion):** A framework promoting fair treatment and full participation of all people, especially those historically underrepresented or discriminated against. It focuses on providing resources according to need to ensure equity and creating inclusive environments that celebrate and appreciate different perspectives and experiences.¹¹
- **Racial equity:** Ensuring all racial and ethnic groups have equitable access to opportunities and resources by eliminating racial disparities. In the context of workforce development, it

involves removing systemic barriers, such as discrimination in hiring and career mobility.

2. AFROCENTRIC AND DECOLONIAL FRAMEWORKS

- **Afrocentricity:** An intellectual framework and cultural perspective that centers African values, history, and experiences in shaping one's worldview. The concept of Afrocentricity was articulated by Dr. Molefi Kete Asante in the 1980s, emphasizing the need for people of African descent to reclaim their own narratives and approaches, free from the dominance of Eurocentric ideologies. Afrocentricity seeks to reposition African people and their cultures at the center of discourse about their lives, rather than being viewed through the lens of external (primarily Western) cultural perspectives.¹²
- **Afrocentric community development:** A model that centers African cultural values and historical experiences in shaping community growth, leveraging networks, social capital, and economic cooperation.
- **Decolonized mindset:** An approach that rejects colonial influences in economic, social, and political frameworks, instead promoting collective empowerment and cultural reclamation. In the workforce context, this can mean advocating for racial justice and worker exploitation remediation.
- **Indaba sessions:** INDABA/Indaba is a word from the Zulu Bantu peoples of southern Africa that refers to an informal community meeting of leaders to discuss a serious topic, to raise matters of concern for discussion. In the context of economic development, it represents a method of elevating Black voices in critical discussions.

9 Fairfax, C. N. (2022). Principles and practices in African American community development. In L. Rapp-McCall, K. Corcoran, & A. R. Roberts (Eds.), *Social workers' desk reference* (4th ed., pp. 827–833). Oxford University Press.

10 Anderson, Claude. (2001). *Powernomics: The National Plan to Empower Black America*. PowerNomics Corp of America.

11 Adapted from APA's equity, diversity, and inclusion framework

12 Khokholkova, N. (2016). Afrocentricity: The evolution of the theory in the context of American history. *Social Evolution & History*, 15(1), 111–125. https://www.academia.edu/34098963/Afrocentricity_The_Evolution_of_the_Theory_in_the_Context_of_American_History

- **Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles of Kwanzaa):**

The Nguzo Saba principles are guiding values and principles connected to the celebration of Kwanzaa, and can be incorporated into daily life and practice beyond December.¹³ These principles, defined in Figure 1, can be used to guide economic justice efforts in Black communities.¹⁴

- **Self-determination:** The principle of a community or individual defining its own identity, pursuing goals, and determining the means to achieve economic, social, and political autonomy. For Black communities, this concept is deeply tied to overcoming systemic oppression. According to the Nguzo Saba principles, Kujichagulia (self-determination) means to “define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.”¹⁵ Kujichagulia encourages development of personal and cultural identity rooted in agency and autonomy.¹⁶

3. INSTITUTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS:

- **Anchor institution:** A large organization, such as a university or hospital, deeply rooted in a community and capable of driving economic growth. Anchor institutions can collaborate with local businesses and workforce development programs to deepen or scale initiatives.
- **Industry partner:** A business or organization that collaborates with community-based organizations or educational institutions to create workforce development pathways and

job opportunities. These partnerships are essential for connecting Black workers to quality jobs and procurement opportunities.

4. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS:

- **High road training partnerships:** An initiative launched by the State of California in 2017, establishing a framework for employers, workers, and labor representatives to work together to improve opportunities for economic mobility.¹⁷ High road jobs are high quality with good wages, benefits, and career advancement opportunities.
- **Opportunity youth:** Young people aged 16-24 who are not in school or working.¹⁸ Workforce programs often target this group to provide them with pathways to economic opportunity through training and education.
- **Social capital:** The networks of relationships and trust within a community that help individuals access resources, opportunities, and support. Social capital is critical for career mobility, mentorship, and community-building.
- **Social determinants of health:** Conditions in which people are born, grow, live, and work that impact their health outcomes.¹⁹ In the context of workforce development, these determinants also influence economic mobility and access to job opportunities.

13 Hocker, K. (2021, December 21). *Nguzo Saba: The seven principles of Kwanzaa*. University of Rochester School of Nursing. <https://son.rochester.edu/newsroom/2021/nguzo-saba-principles-for-kwanzaa.html>

14 Pennsylvania State University. (1967). *The Afro-American council: Its work and its history*. Penn State University Libraries. <https://digital.libraries.psu.edu/digital/collection/blackhistory/id/16/>

15 Pennsylvania State University. (1967). *The Afro-American council: Its work and its history*. Penn State University Libraries. <https://digital.libraries.psu.edu/digital/collection/blackhistory/id/16/>

16 International African American Museum. (2023, December 26). *Kujichagulia: Embracing self-determination in the spirit of Kwanzaa*. <https://iaamuseum.org/news/kujichagulia-embracing-self-determination-in-the-spirit-of-kwanzaa/>

17 California Workforce Development Board. (n.d.). *High road training partnerships*. <https://cwdb.ca.gov/initiatives/high-road-training-partnerships/>

18 Youth.gov. (n.d.). *Opportunity youth*. <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/opportunity-youth>

19 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Social determinants of health*. <https://www.cdc.gov/public-health-gateway/php/about/social-determinants-of-health.html>

FIGURE 1. NGUZO SABA PRINCIPLES**UMOJA (UNITY)**

Efforts that seek to maintain unity whether in the family, the community, or the nation

KUJICHAGULIA (SELF-DETERMINATION)

Defining and speaking for ourselves, rather than being defined by or spoken for, by others

UJIMA (COLLECTIVE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY)

Working collectively to build-up the community and solve problems

UJAMAA (COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS)

Supporting our businesses and entrepreneurial efforts so that our communities thrive

NIA (PURPOSE)

Grounding our work and collective efforts in the purpose of restoring our traditional greatness

KUUMBA (CREATIVITY)

Generating beauty through creative and artistic endeavors that establishes mutual benefit to the community

IMANI (FAITH)

Having faith in the community power to be resilient even during the struggle for justice

Source: Hocker, K. (2021, December 21). *Nguzo Saba: The seven principles of Kwanzaa*. University of Rochester School of Nursing. <https://son.rochester.edu/newsroom/2021/nguzo-saba-principles-for-kwanzaa.html>



THE CHALLENGE: SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO BLACK ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Efforts to address the problem of building pathways to economic prosperity for the Black community have not produced systemic change, and as the U.S. economy continues to grow, creating systems that allow for communities to capture the benefits of that growth remains a challenge.

Economic health and wellbeing disparities impacting the Black community are rooted in the U.S. history of slavery and the legacy of Jim Crow policies that have created systems of oppression.²⁰ National and regional data highlight that income inequality disproportionately affects the Black community, as seen in key economic and wellbeing indicators like poverty, unemployment, and business ownership. This national data snapshot underscores the unequal access to economic opportunities faced by Black Americans:

- The concentration of U.S. wealth is largely held by White households despite making up less than 64% of the population.²¹ Assets across other racial categories are much smaller in proportion.²²
- In 2022, the U.S. Black poverty rate was 19.5%, unemployment was at 5.9%, and business ownership was marginal at 2.7%,²³ far below other demographic groups (Figure 2).
- Data reported in 2019 found that “Black households had 14.5 percent of the wealth of White households, with an absolute dollar gap of \$838,220” on average.²⁴
- A large disparity persists between Black households, whose average income in 2020 was \$47,870, compared to Asian and White households whose average incomes were \$94,903 and \$74,912, respectively.²⁵

20 Althoff, L. (2023, July 17). *The long shadows of slavery and Jim Crow: Uncovering the economic impact on Black Americans*. Hoover Institution. <https://www.hoover.org/research/long-shadows-slavery-and-jim-crow-uncovering-economic-impact-black-americans>

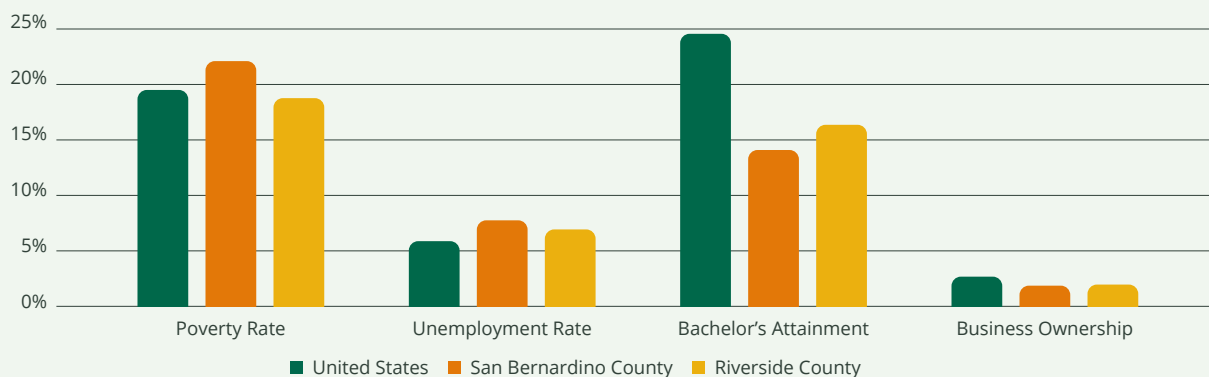
21 United States Census Bureau. (2024). Selected characteristics of people at specified levels of poverty in the past 12 months [Data table]. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2022.S1701>

22 USAFacts. (2024). Wealth inequality across races: What does the data show? Bureau of Labor Statistics data. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://usafacts.org/articles/wealth-inequality-across-races-what-does-the-data-show/>

23 United States Census Bureau Annual Business Survey, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/>

24 Weller, C. E., & Roberts, C. (2021, March 23). *Eliminating the Black-white wealth gap is a generational challenge*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/eliminating-black-white-wealth-gap-generational-challenge/>

25 Bowdler, J., & Harris, B. (2022, July 21). *Racial inequality in the United States*. U.S. Department of the Treasury. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/featured-stories/racial-inequality-in-the-united-states>

FIGURE 2. U.S. AND COUNTY-LEVEL OUTCOMES FOR BLACK COMMUNITIES

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau: Income and Poverty in the United States: 2022, American Community Survey, Annual Business Survey, Survey of Business Owners; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: Local Area Unemployment Statistics; California Employment Development Department: Labor Market Information Division

REGIONAL CONTEXT

In the IE region, the data follows national trends and, in some cases, shows even more concerning disparities:

- Poverty rates for the Black communities in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties are at 22.3% and 18.9%, respectively. The IE has higher poverty rates than the national average.
- In the IE, unemployment rates are higher than the national average.²⁶ In 2022 in the IE, bachelor's degree or higher attainment was 11 percentage points lower than the national average, and unemployment rates are highest for non-bachelor's degree holders.²⁷ Only an average of 2% of the IE population own a business.²⁸
- Regional poverty data (see Figure 3) points to a Black community disproportionately experiencing greater poverty than other ethnic groups, largely due to institutional racism and systemic disinvestment. Individuals in impoverished communities have limited access to resources that support health and wellbeing, including housing, healthy food, quality education, and good jobs.²⁹
- Gaps in wealth and wealth-building opportunities both nationally and regionally mean that the Black community is more vulnerable to economic shocks, as evidenced by pandemic data that showed the widening of the U.S. Black-White wealth gap and the stark differences in each group's ability to recover.³⁰

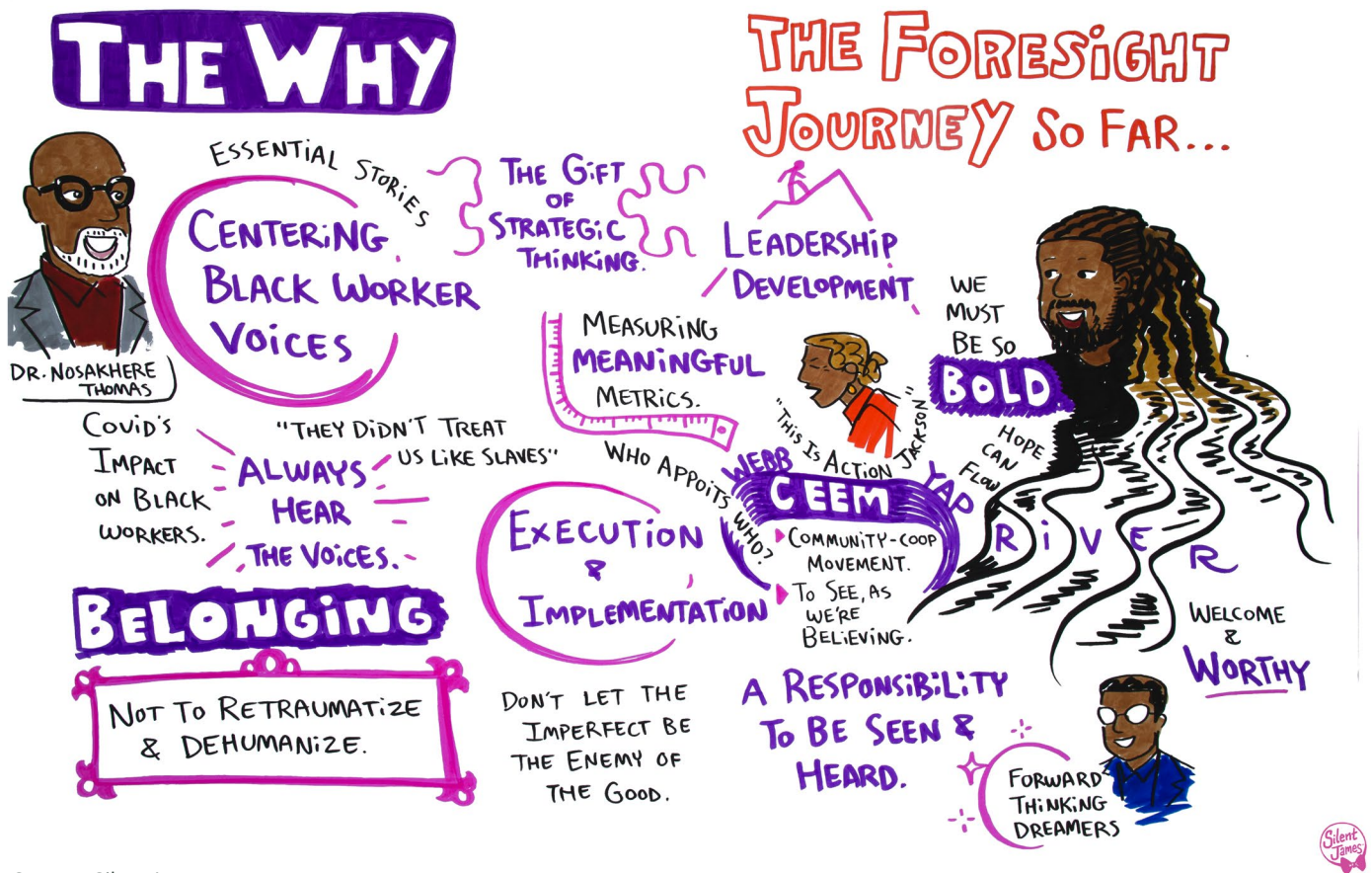
26 California Employment Development Department. (n.d.). *Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA labor force statistics*. [https://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/file/lfmonth/rive\\$pds.pdf](https://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/file/lfmonth/rive$pds.pdf)

27 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, 2022 (Table DP02)

28 Perry, A. M., Seo, R., Barr, A., Romer, C., & Broady, K. (2022, February 14). *Black-owned businesses in U.S. cities: The challenges, solutions, and opportunities for prosperity*. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/black-owned-businesses-in-u-s-cities-the-challenges-solutions-and-opportunities-for-prosperity/>

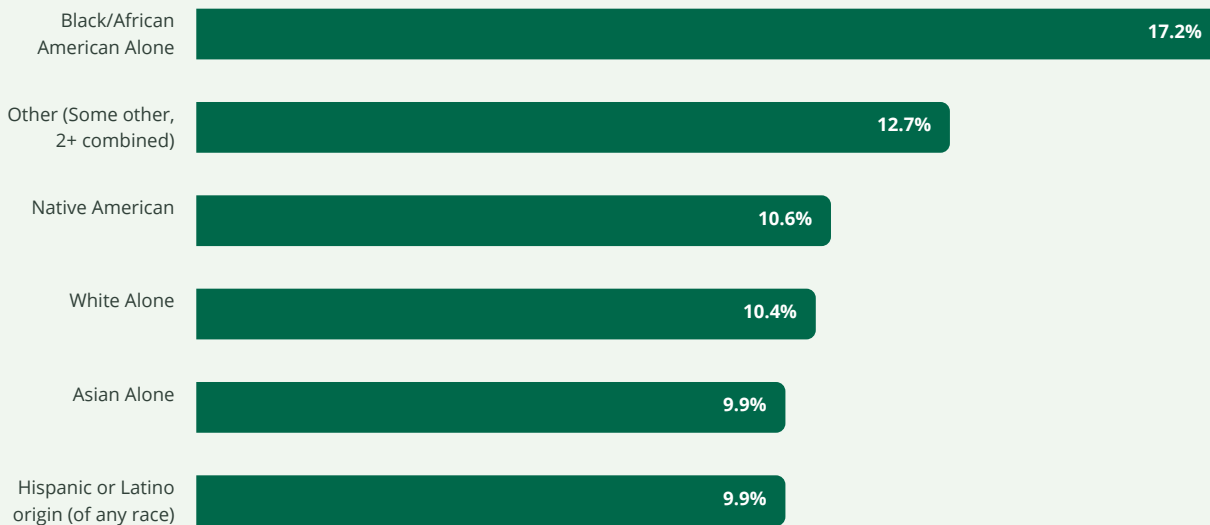
29 Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). *Poverty: Literature summary*. Healthy People 2030. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/poverty>

30 Perry, A. M., Rothwell, J., & Harshbarger, D. (2021). *The Black-white wealth gap left Black households more vulnerable*. The Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/the-black-white-wealth-gap-left-black-households-more-vulnerable/>



Source: Silent James

FIGURE 3. POVERTY STATUS IN THE INLAND EMPIRE BY RACE, 2022



Source: Healthy People 2030, <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/poverty>

Wealth gaps in the IE are less widely known because many of the indicators used to assess them are not found in one place. Data capturing the wealth gap in the region is needed to provide baselines and inform target setting to understand the progress and impact of efforts to close it. More information on outcomes data and the economic landscape in the IE can be found in Appendices A and B.

The data that exist demonstrate that the challenge of improving Black workforce participation for the IE region and nationally must be approached with strategies that address systemic barriers to employment and education

and include holistic individual, household, and community wellbeing measures. Increasing Black workforce participation must be part of a larger equity imperative that works to address barriers to accessing basic needs, maintaining financial stability, and creating a path toward accumulating enough assets to build wealth.



Wealth gaps in the IE are less widely known because many of the indicators used to assess them are not found in one place.



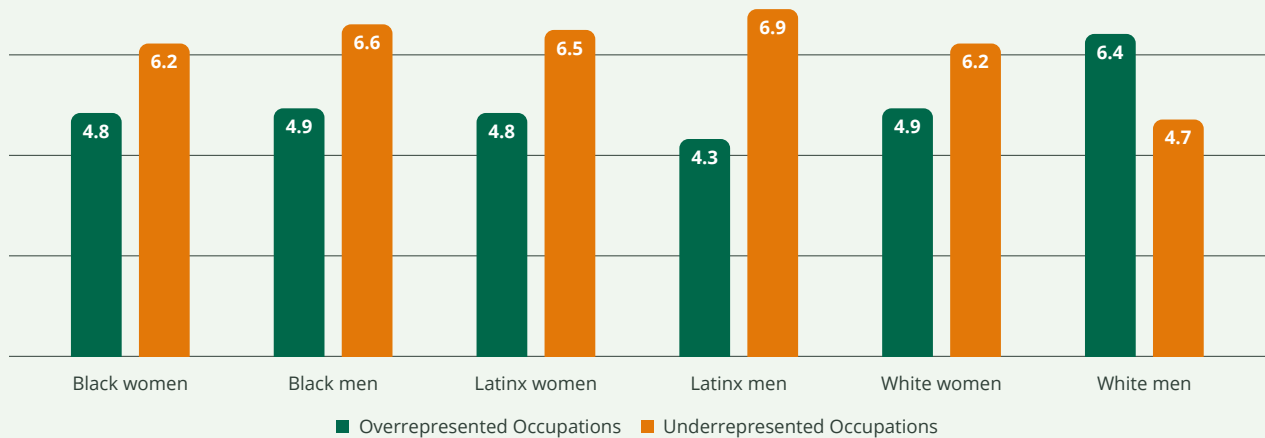


CLOSING THE GAP: PATHWAYS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND EARNINGS PARITY FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Pathways to economic opportunity in the U.S. are closely tied to access to quality jobs and educational attainment. Wage gains and household income improvements are primarily driven by increases in education, with the highest returns seen in those holding bachelor’s or postgraduate degrees.³¹ Educational attainment plays a critical role in earnings, as demonstrated by research showing that achieving parity in education and earnings for Black individuals could result in a \$4.2 trillion increase in potential lifetime earnings, with an additional \$1.8 trillion if both education and earnings parity are reached.³² In California, the disparity in educational attainment between Black and White adults results in a missed potential net lifetime earnings increase of \$438 billion for Black adults.

Black men and women are disproportionately represented in lower-quality jobs, limiting economic opportunity. Black women are overrepresented in lower-wage sectors, earning an average of \$39,952 compared to \$66,553 in higher-paying roles in which they are underrepresented. Black men face a similar gap, earning \$39,074 compared to \$68,525.³³ These disparities highlight the need for creating pathways to quality jobs to improve economic outcomes and achieve greater parity for the Black community. Figure 4 shows that as the job quality score increases, representation of Black men and women in those jobs decreases, clearly showing the inequities facing the Black workforce in the U.S.

FIGURE 4. AVERAGE JOB-QUALITY SCORES IN OCCUPATIONS FOR WHICH GROUPS ARE UNDER- OR OVERREPRESENTED



Source: Adapted from Urban Institute³⁴, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/job-quality-and-race-and-gender-equity.pdf>
Notes: Occupational crowding data from American Community Survey 2020 Year Estimates. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2023. Data for job quality sources are from the following: American Community Survey (ACS), BLS Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Employment Projections, Current Population Survey (CPS), Current Population Survey-Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS-ASEC), O*NET OnLine, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS), Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS).

31 Carnevale, A. P., Strohl, J., Campbell, K. P., Gulish, A., Cheah, B., Nyhof, E., & Fix, L. (2024). *Learning and earning by degrees: Gains in college degree attainment have enriched the nation and every state, but racial and gender inequality persists*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/CEW-attainment-gains-full_report.pdf

32 Carnevale, A. P., Strohl, J., Campbell, K. P., Gulish, A., Cheah, B., Nyhof, E., & Fix, L. (2024). *Learning and earning by degrees: Gains in college degree attainment have enriched the nation and every state, but racial and gender inequality persists*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/CEW-attainment-gains-full_report.pdf

33 Biu, O., Katz, B., Adu-Gyamfi, A., & Scott, M. (2023). *Job quality and race and gender equity: Understanding the link between job quality and occupational crowding*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/job-quality-and-race-and-gender-equity.pdf>

34 Biu, O., Katz, B., Adu-Gyamfi, A., & Scott, M. (2023). *Job quality and race and gender equity: Understanding the link between job quality and occupational crowding*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/job-quality-and-race-and-gender-equity.pdf>

HARNESSING THE INLAND EMPIRE'S POTENTIAL

Strategies to address the barriers presented in the previous section and achieve Black parity will require a coordinated effort that bridges California's policy and workforce development landscape with the unique existing assets in the Inland Empire region.

California's current policies and investments are geared toward catalyzing a clean energy transition. HRTPs that train workers for quality jobs and inclusive economic development planning across the state's regional economies, combined with historic federal infrastructure investments,³⁵ have created an opportunity to develop a more systemic approach to train, hire, and ultimately improve outcomes for the Black community. There are two significant opportunities to advance Black parity tied to the clean energy transition.

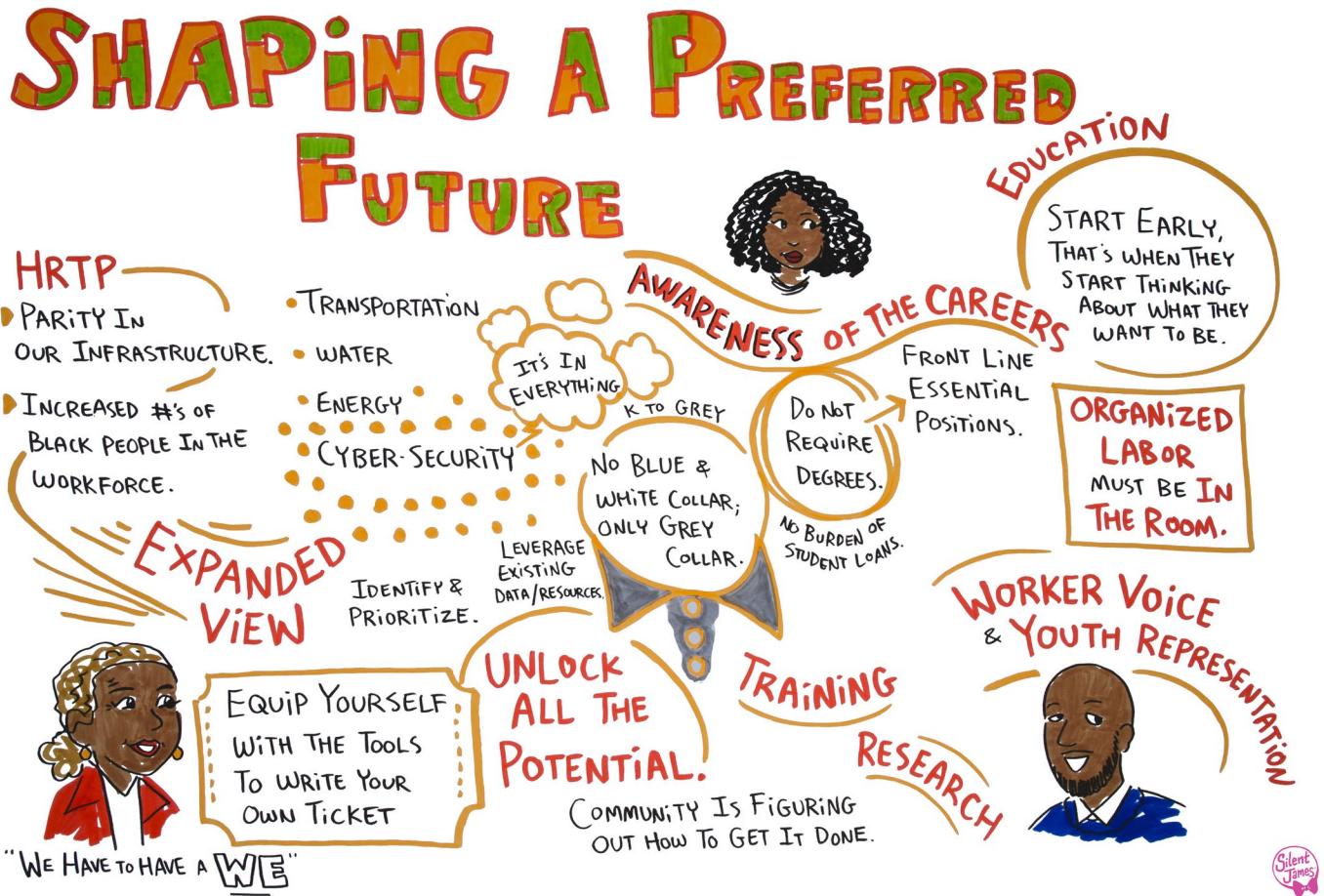
1. Strong organizational and community networks are already making headway on a Black equity agenda in the region. These groups are identifying ways to expand opportunity and actively advocating for better access to education and quality careers for the region's population of Black learners and workers.

2. Existing efforts to develop quality jobs and foster entrepreneurship within the key sectors of clean energy, transportation, and cybersecurity present the opportunity to create career pathways that harness the skills and potential of Black learners and workers.

TAPPING INTO BLACK COMMUNITY POWER IN THE IE

The Inland Empire has a wealth of existing community assets and Black leadership that, if effectively leveraged and resourced, are well-positioned to catalyze an inclusive economic agenda that expands access to quality education and training and prioritizes wealth-building opportunities for the Black community. Existing institutions, organizations, and semi-connected networks are already working on various facets of a Black equity agenda. Examples include:

³⁵ Based on the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) formula, California expects to receive \$41.9 billion over 5 years from Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 through FFY 2026. \$30 billion will go to the Department of Transportation projects, and \$6.48 billion to Climate, Energy, Power, Building, Manufacturing, and Water. Other policies like the Inflation Reduction Act and the American Recovery Act have also provided historic levels of public investment in clean energy infrastructure and access to broadband.



Source: Silent James

- Supporting and mentoring Black youth.** Education and youth focused organizations such as Umoja, Blu Education Foundation, National Black Grads, and YAP currently serve Black IE youth, working to create educational opportunities, provide mentorship, and foster interest in diverse career pathways. The region also benefits from committed Black leadership advocating on school boards, state government, local elected offices, and in other settings.
- Centering Black workers and organizing for job quality.** The IEBWC, established in 2021, and High Desert Black Worker Center focus on worker training, worker organizing to advance quality jobs, and creating economic mobility for Black workers. IEBWC, in partnership with Inland Empire Works, has launched a Water Industry pre-apprenticeship program designed for communities experiencing disinvestment and Black IE residents.³⁶
- Engaging the Black community through faith.** Organizations such as COPE and other faith-based institutions play a critical role organizing the Black community around improving quality of life and community connection in the IE, with a focus on various issues, such as education, health access, and community safety.

36 Sohail, O., Thomas, D., & Wangari, L. (2023). *Unlocking Potential: The Inland Empire Black Worker Center's Transformative IE Works Program*.

- **Creating access through post-secondary education and career technical education.** Institutions including Cal State San Bernardino, UC Riverside, the Claremont Colleges, multiple community colleges, and various training programs already serve many of the IE's Black learners. Additionally, dedicated scholarships and programs, such as the JW Vines Medical Society, support greater diversity in professions in the region.
- **Advancing racial equity by investing in Black-led organizations.** Funder partners have prioritized funding Black-led organizations since 2020 through the Inland Empire Community Foundation's Black Equity Fund. To date, the fund has raised over \$5 million and made grants to 71 Black-led organizations working to uplift the Black IE community.

These partners, community-based organizations (CBOs), and community assets serve as essential bridges across sectors, geographies, and institutions, connecting the Black community to emerging economic opportunities through trusted relationships. Many act as nodes across networks in the region and are already coordinating or working with each other (see Figure 5 for more details about this existing ecosystem). While much of this work is currently unpaid and ad-hoc, there is a clear opportunity to formalize and fund these networks, leveraging their power to drive sustained impact in the Black community. This can enhance Black learner and worker engagement with and participation in the growing quality job sectors, produce more expansive leadership pipelines, and ultimately support broader goals of Black parity.

FOSTERING INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN KEY SECTORS: CLEAN ENERGY, TRANSPORTATION, AND CYBERSECURITY

Investing in education and training within the Black community not only supports economic parity in the IE, but also cultivates a skilled workforce ready to lead in the transition to clean energy jobs. The IE has focused on inclusive regional economic development since 2019, leveraging resources from the state's Jobs First policy investments.³⁷ These efforts aim to connect industrial policies and local communities through shared strategies, promoting greater economic inclusion across racial and demographic lines. Previous studies³⁸ highlight the region's economic growth potential in the sectors of clean energy, transportation, and logistics, which are essential for producing quality jobs and fostering local business development through cluster-based economic development strategies.³⁹ Sector-specific opportunities include:

- **Developing industry clusters tied to clean energy, transportation, and logistics.** Industries like Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) have historically driven significant economic growth (see Figure A4) at the cost of creating harmful environmental conditions for local communities and dangerous conditions for workers.⁴⁰ There are now efforts to move toward sustainable logistics focusing on the electrification of the transportation sector and the development of infrastructure needed to facilitate a clean energy transition. The intersections between the transportation sector and clean energy industry position the IE to be competitive in capturing funding and investments to create the needed electrification infrastructure.

37 Jobs First formerly Community Economic Resilience Fund

38 Shearer, C., Shah, I., & Gootman, M. (2019, February). *Opportunity industries: Exploring the industries that concentrate good and promising jobs in Inland California*. Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Full-Report_Opportunity-Industries_Inland-California_Final_Shearer-Shah-Gootman.pdf

39 Schmidt, A., Dow, M., & Seth, S. (2022, April). *IEGO cluster learning report*. Jobs for the Future (JFF). https://www.jff.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/IEGO_Cluster_Learning_Report.pdf

40 California State University, San Bernardino. (2018). *Inland Empire state of work: 2018 annual report*. Inland Empire Labor Institute. <https://www.csusb.edu/sites/default/files/AnnualFullReportSENT.pdf>

This presents the opportunity to transition to more renewable energy sources that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve environmental and health inequities.

- **Meeting growing cybersecurity sector demands.** The cybersecurity industry presents economic growth and development opportunities in the IE given that cybersecurity needs span multiple sectors and various institutions. Institutions such as Cal State San Bernardino have already developed strong education and training programs to position individuals to meet this demand, and are working to create more inclusive opportunities for all learners in the region. Research and development opportunities connected to cybersecurity innovations also provide opportunities for entrepreneurship and commercialization of new technologies.
- **Strong regional networks advancing economic growth in key sectors.** This includes the Inland Empire Growth and Opportunity (IEGO) collaborative, which

works as a regional economic development organization to transform the region into a global hub in the priority industries and a leader in clean technology and supply chain activities. It also includes the Inland Empire Renewable Energy Network (IREN), which is promoting the development and adoption of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies in the Inland Empire.

There is a clear opportunity to better connect and integrate Black-serving organizations and Black learners and workers with the emerging clean energy training and careers coming from federal and statewide investment in the clean energy transition. Funding the Black organizations and leaders already serving the IE's Black community has potential to support workers and learners to transition more effectively into higher quality jobs and career pathways with greater earning potential and opportunity for wealth building. Appendices C and D provide labor market information and career pathway maps that illustrate the potential earning opportunities in the three priority sectors—clean energy, transportation, and cybersecurity.



CLEAN ENERGY JOBS, RACIAL EQUITY, AND THE INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

In the Inland Empire region, efforts to create an inclusive regional economy show up through bi-county initiatives and collaborations, place-based collaboratives, centers that study and advocate for vulnerable populations, and industry-focused advocacy to eliminate workforce and environmental justice inequities. On June 23, 2020, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a resolution declaring racism a public health crisis and pledging to dismantle racism through strategies that increase workforce diversity, using a racial equity lens to examine existing county policies and practices “to promote and support efforts that prioritize health for people of color.”⁴¹ Bi-county collaboration through the

Inland Regional Energy Network (IREN), a Joint Powers Authority prioritizing the clean energy transition across both counties, provides another asset to connect the IE community to jobs, business opportunities, and economic development opportunities.

The combination of federal and state policies, local and regional collaborative efforts focused on economic inclusion, and the articulated priority to address racism as a means of improving public health outcomes created the unique opportunity for YAP to design a series of convenings to discuss what is needed to improve outcomes for the region's Black community.

41 San Bernardino Board of Supervisors. (2020). *Inland Empire economic outlook report*. <https://sanbernardino.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=8632951&GUID=F8A8D44B-6D2D-4807-AEF8-8B77100E8FE0>



FINDINGS: ENABLING CAREER MOBILITY

The research partner data collection process further explored the systemic barriers, challenges, and community assets identified in the preliminary literature review, with an emphasis on understanding and identifying what it will take to enable career mobility for the IE's Black community.

This section outlines a summary of findings from this research, presenting information collected by each partner as well as the shared analyses produced by the collective research team. Data sources include:

1. Primary and secondary research from each partner
2. Local and regional convenings focused on understanding the opportunities for Black learners, workers, and businesses in the IE
3. Focus groups with workers, students, and educational partners
4. Interviews with stakeholders across industry, education, community leadership, and workforce and economic development

Participant perspectives highlighted the challenges and opportunities in the target industries and informed development of recommendations that can serve as the foundation for advancing strategies to drive greater economic opportunity and parity for the IE's Black community.



"No question that young people have capacity. It's a question of how quickly we dim their light and make them lose interest [in education]."

Education Leader

Although the Nguzo Saba principles (referenced earlier in Figure 1) did not initially guide the research design process, during the analysis and sense-making phase, the team found that key findings align closely with certain principles and illustrate the values that are essential for fostering economic empowerment and resilience in the Black community. Throughout this section of the report, we spotlight how findings illustrate Nguzo Saba principles and practices.

Culturally Competent Approaches: Interview and focus group⁴² data highlighted the importance of providing approaches to education and

42 The IE Black Worker Center hosted focus groups with Black workers (data can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ly2t2Oel01gwcVGji9PcT2Xp9Y1c4yFE/view?usp=sharing>); Bienestar Community Economics hosted focus groups with educators and interviews with a variety of stakeholders; YAP hosted focused groups with community youth.



Source: Silent James

training that are culturally competent where the instructors create inclusive classrooms, engage in understanding the communities they are working with, and leverage that knowledge to inform their instructional practices and program design choices.

- Focus groups cited the need for culturally competent instruction and trauma-informed practices to support people participating in workforce programs.
- Industry and community stakeholders talked about existing efforts to attract and retain Black talent, underscoring the need for networks of Black professionals who can support each other in navigating and succeeding in the workplace. Underlying the challenges they described is the absence of culturally competent approaches in workforce and employer-led talent management programs.
- National research findings encouraged applying a social justice lens in analyzing sector jobs, their value, and how workers can use their talents to solve problems in the

Black community and of global concern, like climate change. This approach to workforce and economic development serves to mobilize groups under a racial equity and social justice purpose and is aligned to principles that are galvanizing to the Black community.



Collective Work and Responsibility (Ujima) in Practice: Participant perspectives illustrate how systems and institutions should position Black leaders, learners, and workers to support one another to amplify their collective talents. Through this collective effort, the Black community can contribute solutions to societal problems, from local community improvement to addressing global climate change.



Racial Equity: The role of racial equity as an enabler of career mobility came up in almost all the convenings, focus groups, and interview data. Discrimination was cited as a systemic barrier to educational success and economic inclusion in the IE. Mobilizing efforts and intentional strategies that address this issue are paramount for success.

- Interview and focus group data described the presence of discrimination and bias across education, workforce development, and business development. Discrimination in hiring, securing contracts, access to business networks, labor hiring, and education systems were noted as barriers to improving the economic opportunity for Black learners, workers, and businesses. Multiple references to the political climate and anti-Blackness in the region overall stymie the institutional, program, or county-level efforts to acknowledge and address racism.
- This was also discussed in the context of justice involvement and how significant that barrier is in accessing employment opportunities. In



“We ran into a large number of Black owner operators, very small fleets, who were trying to access incentives... We saw there was not a lot of support built into these mandates for small owner operators. We really saw it as a big equity issue... These folks were mostly people of color and a lot of them were Black who had built up remarkable businesses who were being told they needed to change the fleet but had no support to do so.”⁴³

Labor Leader

⁴³ Paraphrased for clarity

one focus group, the participants described the need for an underground railroad for hiring and posed questions about what type of strategies can incentivize employers in hiring justice-involved individuals, rather than shutting them out completely from the economy or keeping them stratified in low-wage, low-quality work.

- Inclusion and representation in key spaces (e.g., energy networks and councils, advanced manufacturing councils, political positions) also came up as an enabler for the Black community to be active actors in building and growing their local and regional economy. Many described the need for Black people to see themselves in the vision of how to grow their local economies and communities.
- Achieving Black parity was seen as a baseline rather than the end goal. Many described the lack of familiarity with the concept of Black parity yet were open to the concept as a starting place for greater educational and economic equity work. There was consistent agreement in the desire and need to show and connect Black people to multiple points of entry to employment, procurement, and wealth-building opportunities. Respondents noted that this would give Black people in the region hope that they can plug into opportunities for career mobility within the IE.

Mentorship and Professional Networks:

The data highlighted the need for more access to mentors, role models, and professional



Self-Determination (Kujichagulia) in Practice: The opportunity for the Black community in the IE to define the assets and challenges they are experiencing, and speak for themselves rather than being defined and spoken for by others, serves as a unifying principle in the Pathways to Parity effort. The local and national research reinforced the imperative for Black leaders and organizations to create a vision and approach that their community could see themselves in, and move strategies and actions in line with that vision and their voices in the region.



“Until we begin to have deep conversations about school culture and society and the culture and treatment of Black students, we will never have the resources to diversify [and improve outcomes].”

Education Leader

networks who can provide guidance and support throughout their careers.

- Focus groups and interviews highlighted the importance of connecting learners and workers to Black role models, mentors, professional sponsors, leaders, and instructors. Survey and interview data highlighted the lack of exposure among learners/workers to Black or diverse industry professionals and representatives in their schools and communities that look like them.
- Indaba sessions identified recurring perspectives on hiring challenges. This included a lack of early career awareness about the broad range of potential career opportunities and that Black youth require a “See Me, Be Me” exposure to Black industry professionals. The Indaba session participants also noted that “mentors/navigational help” was the single biggest difference between those who hit a proverbial mid-career “wall” and those who did not. Respondents also emphasized that rising Black professionals, workers, and leaders must lift others as they climb and seek deeper aspirations beyond material gain.
- There is a need for trusted messenger networks that can bridge the gap between education, industry, community-based organizations, and policymakers to ensure that education is work-relevant and problem-solving.

Access, Awareness, and Basic Needs: The relationship between basic needs and access to economic opportunity were recurring topics in the focus groups, interviews, and survey data. Respondents called for improving access to and awareness of opportunities like quality job training and education and career pathways that lead to higher earnings, and emphasized the role that basic needs and financial stability play in the ability for learners and workers to access and succeed in these programs.

- There is a lack of awareness and access to career information and resources, particularly in STEM fields across age groups (youth, adults, older adults). Interview and focus group data called for use of Black and other diverse “Worker Voices” in recruitment and retention efforts and early education and exposure to diverse professionals.
- Respondents talked about experiencing a basic needs crisis where people with low education and who are undocumented are “funneled to lowest-level jobs.”
- The need for comprehensive supportive services that enable success was consistently discussed in the national and regional interview and convening data across all



Unity (Umoja) in Practice: Participants described the need for mentorship and role models as part of the larger opportunity to bring the power of Black unity and collective strength to the education, workforce, and economic work. Racial unity, leveraging trust, cooperation, and accountability are needed to drive an effort for Black parity in the region.



“The importance of supportive services [for learners and workers to succeed] cannot be overstated.”

Industry Leader

stakeholder groups including industry. Local convenings and focus groups surfaced a recurring call to improving wrap-around services during and post job training, and efforts to provide bridge/transition support.

- Communities of color struggling to make ends meet see climate change as “an issue of privilege,” pointing to the priorities for meeting basic needs as foundational for access to education and training for the clean energy industry or entrepreneurship, which requires access to capital.

Earn-and-Learn Pathways for Job Training:

Interview and focus group data described the economic challenges associated with taking part in unpaid training and education, citing that those employed in low-wage jobs are not able to give up their earnings to take on unpaid training or education. Financial resources are needed to get a job and take on training. Loss of income for many in low-wage jobs can lead to substantial economic destabilization that impacts their ability to meet their basic needs (e.g., housing and food security) which, in effect, traps people in low-quality and lower-wage jobs.

- Respondents described the existence of a “school to warehouse” pipeline in the IE, where students can get a job at a warehouse in the region without additional education or training, but concerns about job quality,⁴⁴ safety, and the environmental impacts of jobs in the TDL sector present a formidable barrier for economic advancement or mobility.

44 UC Riverside: IE Labor and Community Center, CSIUCR, Plug In IE, & IE Labor Institute. (2024, February). *State of work 2024*. The Diversity Lab. https://pluginie.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/TDL_State_of_Work_2024_MainReportOnly.pdf



Purpose (Nia) in Practice: The national research elevated the opportunity to draw from the rich history and engineering innovation that came from African civilization, as a way to bring purpose and pride into recruitment of Black workers into transportation, infrastructure, and clean energy careers. Shifting from viewing this work as a traditional workforce initiative to a strategy that is part of a collective effort to restore the greatness of the Black community is a more resonant approach.

Entrepreneurship and Wealth Building:

Expanding opportunities for business ownership was presented as an untapped opportunity for the Black community to build wealth in the region.

- Focus groups described opportunities to embed entrepreneurship training with clean energy, transportation, and cybersecurity training and certificate/degree programs to develop a pipeline of entrepreneurs who could leverage their work experiences along their career progression as a pathway towards wealth building. In one example, pairing HVAC certificate training with entrepreneurship training and support was noted as a way of establishing an on-ramp to the emerging clean energy industry for those without a bachelor's degree.
- Some respondents emphasized that increasing the number of Black-owned businesses in the priority sectors could be a strategy to address discrimination in hiring in addition to serving to build assets that can lead to wealth.



Cooperative Economics (Ujamaa) in Practice: The history of CEEM's leadership in establishing Black-owned small businesses and building wealth inspired the initial focus on both workforce and wealth-building strategies to improve economic outcomes in the Black community. Participant reactions to the dismal data on Black business ownership highlighted the need to prioritize strategies that can create an ecosystem of support for Black businesses and entrepreneurs. Creating a culture of support for Black businesses and entrepreneurs are catalysts that can drive economic cooperation among them.

Industry Partnerships: Developing industry partnerships that connect the local workforce to quality jobs and local businesses to procurement and subcontracting opportunities requires long term and sustained efforts that begin with expanding the reach of existing initiatives that can serve the Black community.

- Deepening the reach of the Inland Empire Community Foundation's **Black Equity initiative** and SCE's Networkers program are starting places for continued partnership with a central industry partner in the region's clean energy transition.
- SCE's **Supplier Diversity Program** presents another important opportunity to connect existing and new local businesses to the resources they offer.

Ecosystem Building: Our research identified existing connections between those who serve the Black community in the region, and institutions and organizations that are playing a role in the growth and development of the priority sectors or industries. Community-based organizations (CBOs) that are already working with and trusted by Black learners, workers, and businesses are in the best position to connect the community to quality job, business, and training opportunities in priority industries. They can offer the mentorship



“[We] need folks that can bring [an] equity lens and support services. Recognize that CBOs are integral players and need to be on everyone’s grants.”

Labor Leader



“So when I know that something is happening at the community college or in the trades, I can call someone at the high school and say, ‘Can you allow me to come on campus and talk to your students? Can you connect me to the parents so we can get the word out?’ ... That network is very much an asset to our students, but it is informal and needs to be formalized ... If we created intentional pipelines, it would move the needle, especially for African American students. A formal connection would make school less intimidating ... [The Black student] community needs the warm handoff.”

Education Leader

that is crucial to helping students navigate the relationships between education and employers and support business development for existing, new, and potential Black businesses.

Figure 5 is an ecosystem map of the IE’s existing network of partners and actors advancing a Black parity and equity agenda. It highlights the connectivity across different stakeholder groups and identifies many of the groups already doing important and aligned work to support Black learners, workers, and businesses. It can also serve as a baseline to better understand how the network changes and grows over time. Key takeaways from the current map include:

- Though there are connections between the different groups represented, only CBOs are connected to both the Black community and all the other stakeholder groups. They are critical conduits for sharing information, expanding access to opportunities, and advancing shared equity agendas.
- CBOs that serve the Black community need to be funded appropriately to deepen and focus their impact. Strengthening and resourcing this ecosystem can enhance its capacity to bridge



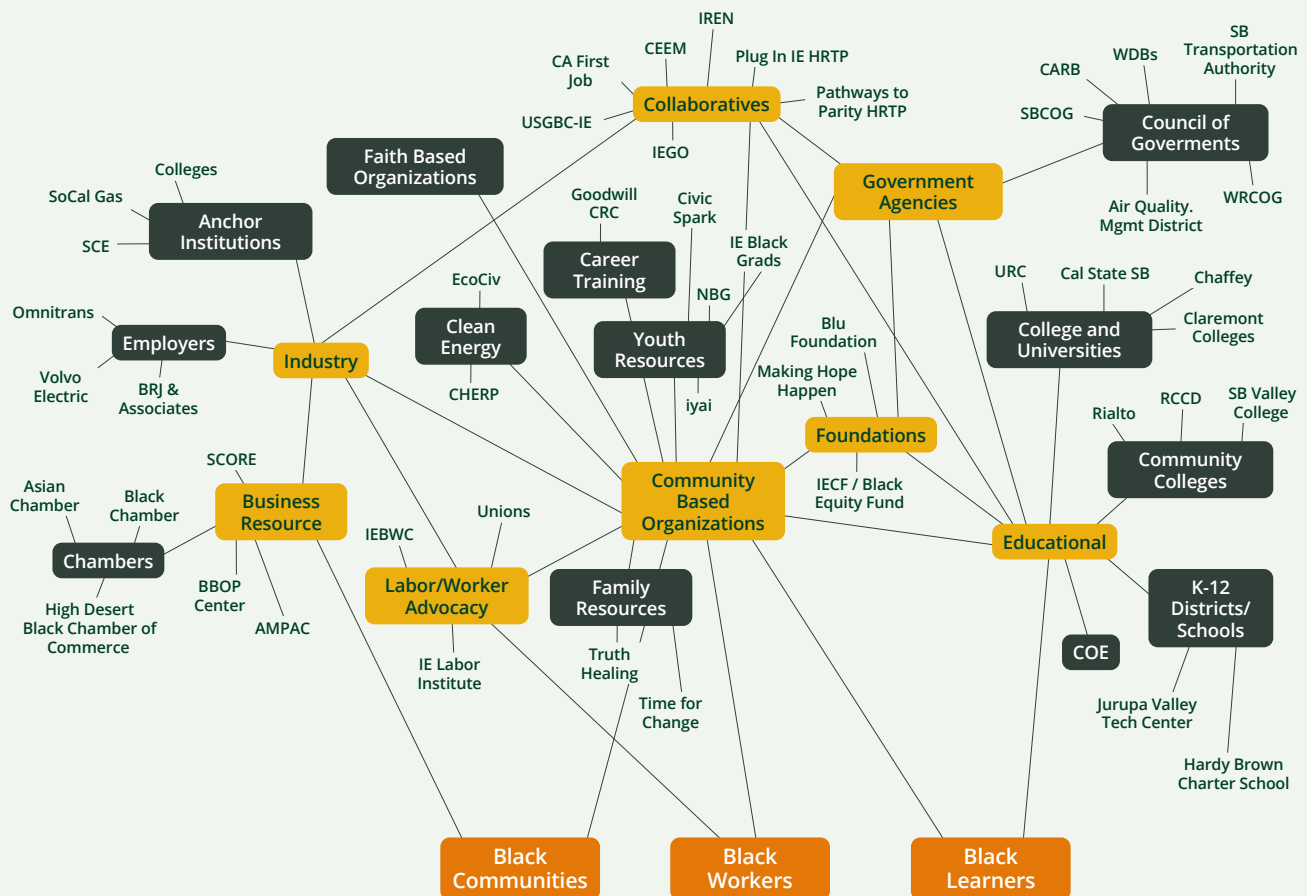
gaps in access to opportunities, empower Black learners and workers with the skills needed for high-growth sectors, and create pathways for sustainable economic mobility and business growth within the Black community.

- The ecosystem of organizations, institutions, and information to clearly access career pathways is very convoluted. There are many different entry points and navigation paths. Many respondents noted that it is difficult to map who is working with whom and who is doing what, which in turn makes it challenging to effectively refer and connect learners and workers to potential opportunities.



Collective Work and Responsibility (Ujima) in Practice: One of the largest assets in the region is the networks of leaders and CBOs already working together in formal and informal ways. Deepening and resourcing this work will not only serve to build up this community but also equip them with the time and resources to solve shared problems.

FIGURE 5. INLAND EMPIRE ECOSYSTEM MAP



Please note: This is not a comprehensive map, rather a starting place. The groups listed in the map came from interview data, focus group and convening information, and secondary research. These organizations were either named, referenced, or part of initiatives or activities that came up in our research.

PATHWAYS TO PARITY: LOOKING AHEAD

The research findings reveal a strong commitment to strengthening the regional economy and achieving Black parity among Black leaders, workers, learners, and allies across sectors.

Interview and focus group data highlight the urgent need for a comprehensive regional strategy that addresses systemic barriers to education, employment, and business ownership for the Black community. Currently, no regional strategy exists that primarily focuses on building Black wealth and economic opportunity.

As a step towards developing that regional strategy, this section outlines three key strategies, along with corresponding recommendations and potential activities, to guide the Pathways to Parity collaborative in its future efforts. Initial focus groups and convenings were driven by a desire for proportionate representation of Black individuals in the workforce, education, business, and leadership. Achieving this requires targeted educational opportunities, equal access to resources, and systems that connect Black residents to employment, procurement, and wealth-building pathways.

1. Build an Ecosystem that Supports Black Learners, Workers, and Business Owners
2. Create Wealth-Building Opportunities through Black Business Ownership

3. Develop Career Pathways that Address Access, Awareness, and Basic Needs for Workers

This section also identifies two equity-driven priorities that should be woven into each strategy.

1. Black Parity is a Foundation for Achieving Racial Equity
2. Promote Black Representation and Mentorship in Leadership Roles

STRATEGY 1: BUILD AN ECOSYSTEM THAT SUPPORTS BLACK LEARNERS, WORKERS, AND BUSINESS OWNERS

RECOMMENDATION: Formalize, Resource, and Fund the Ecosystem of Connectors Across the Region. Strengthening the ecosystem of connectors across the networks of organizations in the regional ecosystem is necessary to produce coordinated action and systems that can advance a Black parity and equity agenda. The research uncovered a compelling opportunity to formalize and fund the ecosystem of partners who are working to support the Black community in the region, which is often unpaid and ad-hoc at present.



POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- **Fund CBOs as critical connectors to the Black community:** Support college counselors, trustees, educational leaders, industry professionals, student groups, community leaders, and community-based organizations (CBOs), who are already collaborating but stretched in capacity. Providing funding can help formalize programs and systems that increase access to opportunities for the Black community (see Figure 5 for a diagram of this existing network).
- **Build data capacity:** Develop high-quality data and metrics to better understand population outcomes in the region (e.g., the wealth gap) and establish a baseline to track progress on the activities identified in this report. Collaborate with key stakeholders involved in Pathways to Parity to identify core metrics and necessary data sources.
- **Develop a resource directory:** Create a directory of information and resources as an immediate step to efficiently connect Black learners, workers, and businesses across the IE. Establish a central point of contact to help navigate this information and support users in accessing opportunities.
- **Connect industry to trusted resources that can reach the Black community:** Formalize partnerships between industry and trusted community-based organizations that have a proven track record of supporting Black learners and workers. Invest in collaborative infrastructure to sustain coordination among CBOs, community leaders, educational institutions, and industry partners.
- **Enhance funding access and support for grant applications:** Raise awareness of available funding opportunities and provide technical assistance to help organizations and small businesses identify suitable grants, develop competitive applications, and secure funding. Invest in partnership development and offer consultant support to guide organizations in securing workforce development grants and contracts for Black workers.
- **Leverage existing organizations:** Build on the efforts of organizations like the U.S. Green Building Council, AmPac Community Lending Programs, and the Inland Empire Regional Chamber of Commerce to deepen their impact in serving the Black community in the IE.
- **Leverage community benefits in development projects:** Address the impact of warehousing saturation in regions like the High Desert by organizing Black and other communities to



negotiate community benefits agreements for new developments, ensuring that growth leads to tangible benefits for local workers and residents.

- **Encourage innovation and experimentation:** Foster a culture of innovation by supporting Black businesses and organizations in experimenting, taking risks, and learning from failures to drive progress.
- **Increase CBO involvement:** Strengthen CBO involvement through initiatives like IEGO and California Jobs First, integrating them into regional economic strategies to support Black business growth. Leverage organizations like YAP and other community-based partners to bridge different groups and address economic disparities. Enhance the “network of networks” by connecting organizations like Umojas and 100 Black Men to create a unified support system for Black workers.

STRATEGY 2: CREATE WEALTH-BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH BLACK BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

RECOMMENDATION: Increase Procurement Opportunities. Connecting small businesses to public sector support programs and services, including assistance with getting on government procurement lists and partnering with prime contractors, can boost their success.



POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- **Advocate for supplier diversity programs to increase procurement opportunities:** Expand corporate and institutional impact spending to strengthen Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) programs, particularly at anchor institutions, to enhance procurement opportunities for diverse-owned small businesses. Advocate for impact spending policies that prioritize these businesses to increase program access and build a local pipeline. Encourage changes through Tier 2 supplier relationships and subcontracting to further expand diversity, while prime suppliers mentor emerging businesses, supporting their growth and navigation of procurement processes.
- **Create technical assistance to support small businesses in applying for procurement opportunities:** Provide technical assistance for contract bids to empower small businesses to compete for and secure contracts, contributing to their growth and success. Offer support that helps more small businesses get on PlanetBids and other public procurement platforms, increasing awareness and access to these opportunities.



RECOMMENDATION: Increase the Number of Black-Owned Businesses. Expanding Black entrepreneurship can build wealth within the

Black community, serving both as a strategy to combat hiring discrimination and as a means to create long-term asset growth.



POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- **Embed entrepreneurship into other training and educational opportunities:** Integrate entrepreneurship into traditional education pathways, including Career Technical Education (CTE) programs, to foster innovation and business development in priority sectors.
- **Establish pathways to High Road business creation or expansion:** Develop a Black wealth-building strategy focused on creating High Road employers/businesses and expanding access to High Road training and career pathways for the Black community. Leverage existing state-level efforts and regional initiatives, such as those in Los Angeles, to provide insights on implementing these programs and opportunities. See Appendix E for resources and best practices.
- **Increase technical assistance and access to capital:** Provide technical support and funding to Black-owned businesses to help them engage in procurement, grants, and other market opportunities. Assess the needs of smaller businesses in bidding for government contracts and offer consulting or technical assistance to address those needs.
- **Utilize natural resources in the Inland Empire (IE):** Promote the development of energy businesses in the IE by utilizing resources like hydrogen, solar, and lithium, aligning with the clean energy transition and preventing opportunities from concentrating elsewhere.
- **Increase involvement from Black Chambers of Commerce:** Address barriers Black entrepreneurs face in acquiring businesses and accessing capital by engaging industry sectors within Black Chambers of Commerce.
- **Support worker cooperative development and employee ownership transitions:** Promote worker cooperatives and employee-owned businesses as proven models for strengthening community wealth building, enhancing job stability, and expanding business ownership opportunities for the Black community.
- **Expand networking opportunities that prioritize and make visible Black entrepreneurs:** Create and emphasize networking spaces that ensure representation and visibility for Black-owned and minority-owned businesses to foster growth and success.



STRATEGY 3: DEVELOP CAREER PATHWAYS THAT ADDRESS ACCESS, AWARENESS, AND BASIC NEEDS FOR WORKERS

RECOMMENDATION: Improve Earn-and-Learn Pathways. Develop education and training pathways that lead to jobs and paid training opportunities, such as earn-and-learn strategies (e.g., apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, on-the-job training), paid internships, and work-based learning. These approaches can disrupt local pipelines to low-quality jobs, providing the Black community with access to better-quality jobs in emerging and high-growth industries, like clean energy and cybersecurity, which offer higher earnings potential.



POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

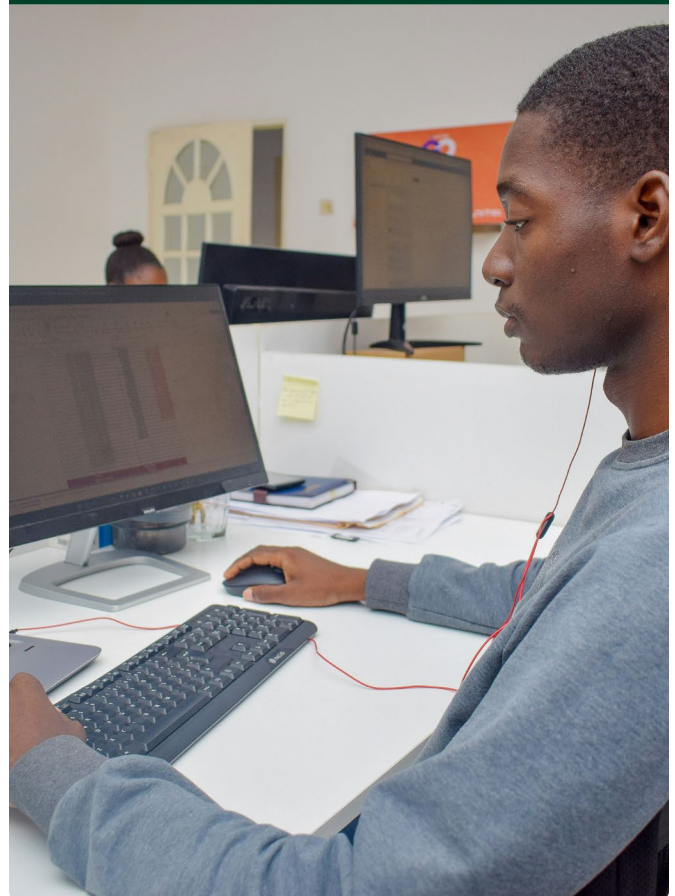
- **Integrate with existing programs:** Leverage existing efforts, such as YAP's school-based programs, to incorporate career-oriented content, enhancing access to relevant skills training within established educational settings.
- **Establish Rapid Upskilling Opportunities:** Establish pathways for rapid upskilling in critical areas like energy and cybersecurity through partnerships with initiatives such as IREN and RCCD Tech Center, ensuring that training directly connects to job placements. Partnerships with industry leaders expanding their fleet of electric vehicles (EV) is needed to connect Black workers to the jobs and opportunities coming from that technology expansion. Volvo Trucking in Fontana and Snyder Transportation were both cited as potential partners.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop Support Services for Workforce Trainees. The ability to secure basic needs like housing and food security, childcare, transportation (especially for the High Desert area), and financial stability are necessary to ensure equitable access to education, training, and employment opportunities.



POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- **Secure basic needs:** Expand support services in housing, childcare, and transportation to help trainees successfully complete training programs and secure employment.
- **Expand programs for justice-impacted individuals:** Strengthen programs that support Opportunity Youth and justice-impacted individuals, enabling greater labor market participation in the region.



RECOMMENDATION: Increase Career Pathways Awareness and Access. Creating entry points for Black learners and workers to advance their career or enter the workforce involves expanding

access to training, mentorship, and clear pathways that align with high-demand industries, while also addressing systemic barriers to ensure equitable opportunities for success.



POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- **Include Black voices in recruitment and retention efforts:** Elevate Black voices to create inclusive recruitment and retention strategies. Incorporate the perspectives and experiences of Black workers to develop more equitable hiring practices, foster supportive workplaces, and ensure that Black talent not only enters but thrives within organizations.
- **Identify career pathways:** Develop pathways for job placement and transferability to expand opportunities for workers. Identify comprehensive job or skills clusters within specific sectors or across sectors, and create placement opportunities in both core and adjacent pathway jobs. See Appendix D for sample career pathway maps.
- **Develop culturally competent career awareness opportunities for K-12 students:** Expand career awareness and education in key sectors, starting from middle school. Build on existing efforts that target career exposure, training, and internships specifically for the Black community in the Inland Empire.
- **Build mentorship opportunities:** Institutionalize culturally competent mentorship approaches and student support (e.g., the “Homie hookup,” “Auntie principle,” and “lift as you climb” strategies) to reinforce social and cultural bonds, fostering successful career development.
- **Cultivate continuous learning:** Foster a culture of lifelong learning and skill development among Black workers, equipping them to excel, advance, and remain competitive in evolving industries. Encourage Black-owned businesses to invest in workforce training, mentorship, and professional development.
- **Address information gaps:** Expand access to clear, actionable information about career pathways and job opportunities for Black workers. Provide targeted resources, guidance, and support, especially in high-growth sectors like clean energy, to empower informed career decisions and opportunities for advancement.
- **Engage key community stakeholders:** Collaborate with parents, community-based organizations, and local businesses to build robust support networks and resources that empower Black students and entrepreneurs, ensuring equitable access to opportunities and tools for success.
- **Increase engagement in science and energy for youth:** Develop hands-on programs that engage Black youth in science and energy projects, including challenges centered on regional energy issues, to build interest and skills in high-demand fields.
- **Create a centralized career pathway information hub:** Develop a platform that provides clear, accessible information on career pathways, training opportunities, and resources tailored to low-income Black workers.
- **Ensure representation in key decision-making spaces:** Increase the representation of Black individuals in industry councils, energy tables, and political roles to ensure inclusive decision making that reflects the needs of Black workers.
- **Connect industrial strategies to community needs:** Align industrial strategies with community needs. Use career pathway maps that illustrate jobs and skill-building opportunities within specific industries as a starting point. See Appendix D for sample career pathway maps.
- **Focus on emerging technologies:** Target growth areas like transportation electrification and related technologies to promote job growth and foster partnerships that benefit Black entrepreneurs.

Embedded within these three strategies is a set of equity-driven priorities that are integral to each approach and are detailed below.

EQUITY PRIORITY 1: BLACK PARITY IS A FOUNDATION FOR ACHIEVING RACIAL EQUITY

The Pathway to Parity initiative requires a long-term vision for Black economic empowerment that addresses education, career, and community needs. Establishing Black parity in the Inland Empire should serve as a foundational goal, as it represents a crucial step toward broader racial equity. Achieving Black parity—equal representation and outcomes in key areas—lays the groundwork for deeper equity efforts. By incorporating racial equity and social justice into workforce development, such as assessing jobs for their impact on equity and community outcomes, we can create more meaningful opportunities for the Black community. Similarly, making Black parity a central focus of the region's clean energy initiatives, through federal infrastructure investments and state funding alignment, ensures fair access to resources,

career pathways, and procurement for Black workers and businesses. This approach not only advances parity but also brings us closer to achieving comprehensive racial equity.

EQUITY PRIORITY 2: PROMOTE BLACK REPRESENTATION AND MENTORSHIP IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

Recognize that there is a Black leadership imperative needed to drive inclusive economic development and High Road Training Partnerships that reaches the Black community. This will not occur without champions, leadership, intentional action, and partnerships. This presents an opportunity to act on the economic principles that bring the Black community together and draws from Afrocentric education and community development approaches that can guide the economic equity work. By having Black leaders in decision-making roles, we ensure that strategies are informed by lived experiences, culturally competent solutions, and a commitment to addressing systemic barriers, ultimately fostering sustainable growth and equitable outcomes for the Black community. Black leaders must also serve as mentors, fostering the next generation of Black talent and creating pathways for leadership development.

NEXT STEPS

To simplify the path forward, we suggest beginning with these key initial steps to effectively launch the work. Pathways to Parity will need to develop operational capacities in order to prioritize and implement the outlined strategies. Developing operational capacity includes:

1. Creating and implementing a marketing strategy
2. Building a governance structure for the steering committee
3. Strengthening existing and developing new partnerships
4. Securing funding



To support the development of these capacities, we recommend developing a short-term funding ask to continue building the initiative foundation. The funding can enable the following activities:

1. Leveraging partnership with IEBWC to develop an HVAC workforce training program
2. Developing partnerships with the BBOP Center and other entrepreneurship resources to build small business supports
3. Designing and implementing a community awareness campaign about opportunities for involvement
4. Leveraging the relationship with YAP to build education and career awareness for cybersecurity career pathways



“[Some local leaders]... are like the underground railroad. They are the Rosa Parks. They do all the hard work [but get] no credibility, no recognition.”

Education Leader

Through these initial activities, Pathways to Parity can continue to develop a menu of fundable strategies that they can use to apply for larger and more sustainable sources of funding.

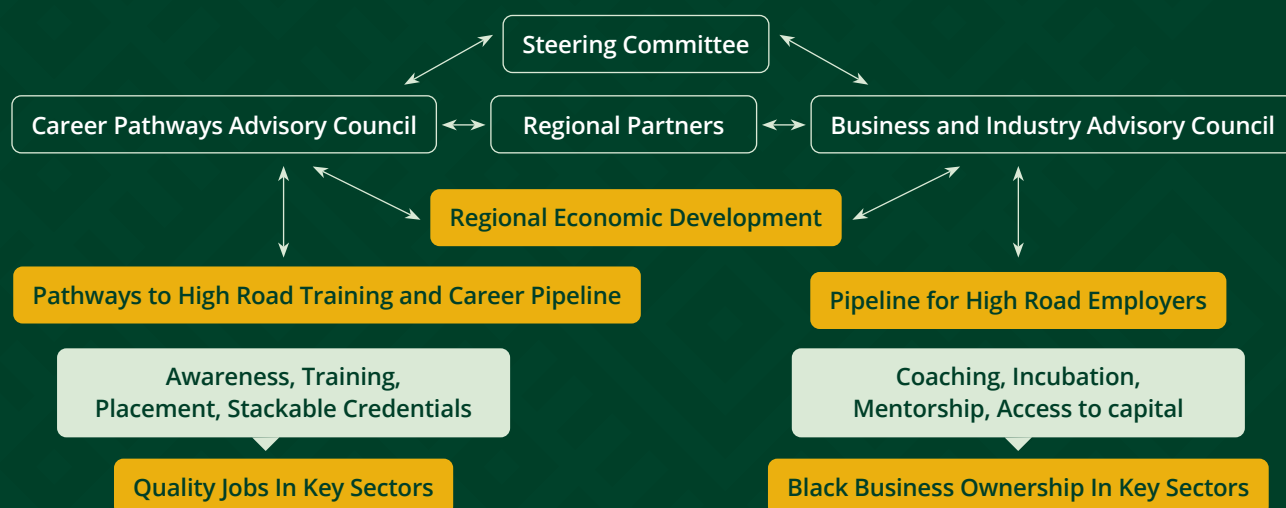


ORGANIZING AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Figure 6 presents a simplified organizing and governance framework that was developed through the convenings and regional strategy sessions with local partners. It outlines how partners can organize to advance the proposed

recommendations and strategies. This framework is intended to be a living tool that can be updated to reflect the priorities, partners, and progress on the recommendations provided.

FIGURE 6. PATHWAYS TO PARITY ORGANIZING AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



CONCLUSION

Stable employment and income are means for achieving financial stability. Wealth building, however, unlocks pathways to make systemic change.

“Wealth is not only a question of financial savings; it provides access to the political process and, therefore, exerts political influence. Households with wealth have a measure of economic security and can donate time and money, thereby influencing the political process and the policies that are important to their communities.”⁴⁵ The relationship between jobs and wealth building is not a linear one. Employment alone does not guarantee wealth. To achieve Black parity even as a baseline target, strategies must address existing barriers to quality jobs and business development and create workforce opportunities that lead to employment that will increase the likelihood of financial stability, capital accumulation, and purchasing assets.

Black workers, learners, and business owners must not only be united. They must also know their shared heritage and interests; see themselves in each other, against all odds; and make a commitment to advance the group *over individual* prosperity. Challenging the dominant system of racism and exclusion requires informed actions, IE community empowerment, and a strong workers movement that voices to powerholders the need to stay the course towards socio-economic justice as a new requirement for accountability in workforce dynamics. The voices of our Black Indaba sessions were clear: all must continue long-standing struggles for Black humanity, freedom, and liberation, especially

the current younger generations entering the workforce. They must pick up the baton being passed to them to dismantle all forms of oppression, especially the dehumanization and marginalization of Black lives, wherever it exists, including in the workplace and economy.

This study for the Inland Empire’s Pathways to Parity effort identifies ways to increase the socio-economic (material) and physical wellbeing of Black IE residents. It shows that the three sectors that indicate growing opportunities amid workforce challenges—clean energy, transportation, and cybersecurity—must still address long-standing evidence and lived experiences of Black men and women (and other non-White groups) of systemic bias, exclusion, and racism in recruiting, hiring, advancement, and retention policies.

The ambition of Pathways to Parity is anchored to the equity imperative borne from the history and plight of Black people in the U.S. It is a seed to plant in the field of workforce and economic development whose roots are inextricably linked by the collective experience and reality of systemic racism and discrimination. The opportunity to nurture the growth of these efforts holds the promise not of producing a plant or a crop, but of creating a new foundation for growing a regional economy that builds systems of economic opportunity driven by the persistence and vision of the Black community.

45 *Eliminating the Black-White Wealth Gap Is a Generational Challenge*. Center for American Progress. MAR 19, 2021. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/eliminating-black-white-wealth-gap-generational-challenge/>

IF PATHWAYS TO PARITY COULD SPEAK

“I [Pathways to Parity] am the bridge to a future where equity is no longer a distant goal but a reality.

I stand for opportunity, for breaking down barriers that have long kept Black communities from reaching their full economic potential.

I exist to empower, to build pathways that connect our people to quality jobs, wealth-building opportunities, and the industries shaping tomorrow.

I am rooted in the strength of our ancestors, carried forward by the principles of unity, self-determination, and cooperative economics.

I’m here to ensure that we not only survive but thrive—through mentorship, innovation, and social capital.

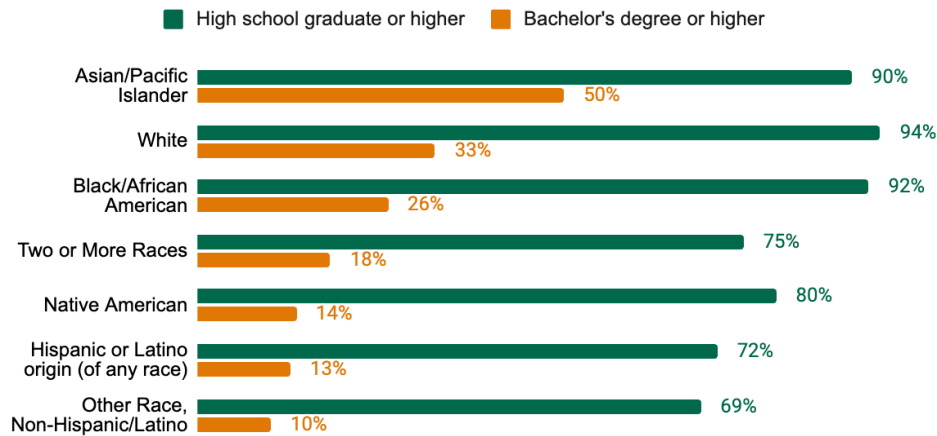
I am a movement, a collective force that turns disparity into parity, leaving no one behind.

Together, we rise—together, we build. ”

Appendix

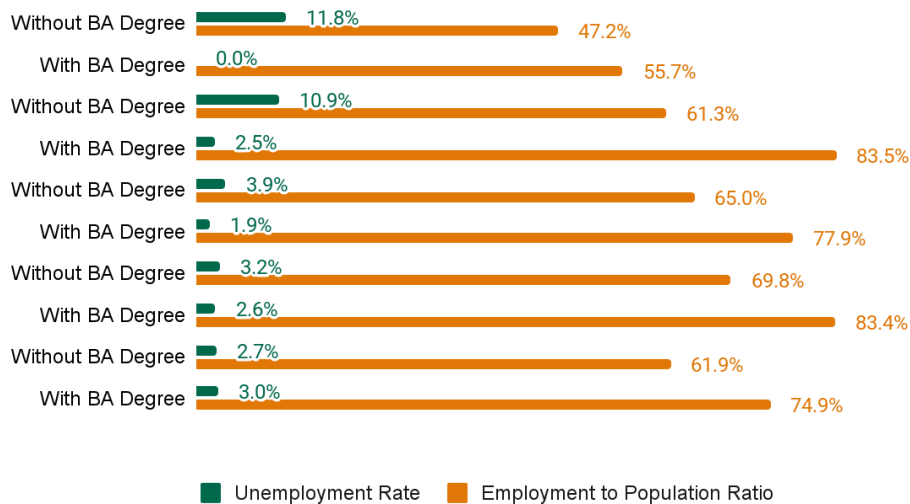
Appendix A. Economic Landscape

Figure A1. Education by Race in the Inland Empire



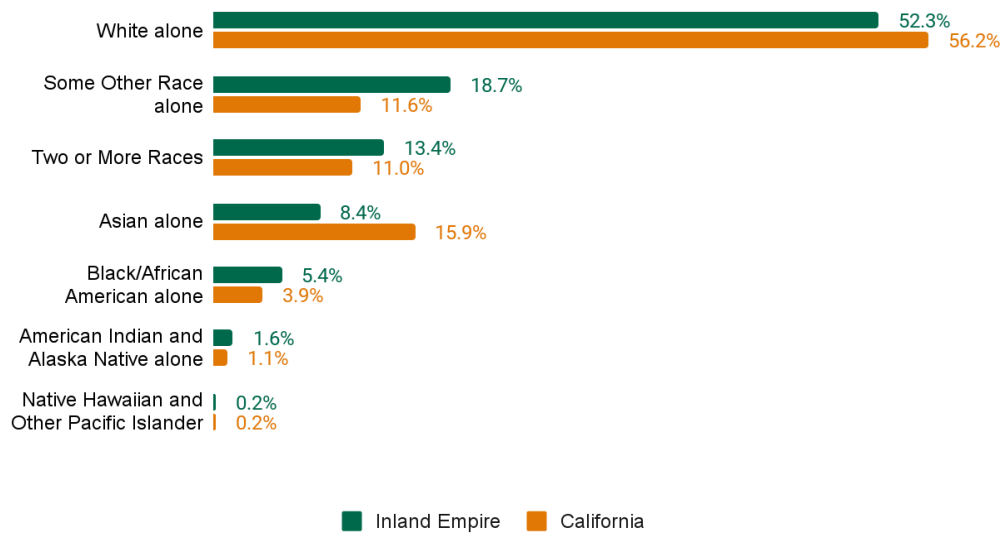
Source: ACS 2022 S1501 Educational Attainment

Figure A2. Unemployment Rate & Employment-to-Population Ratio by Education & Race in IE

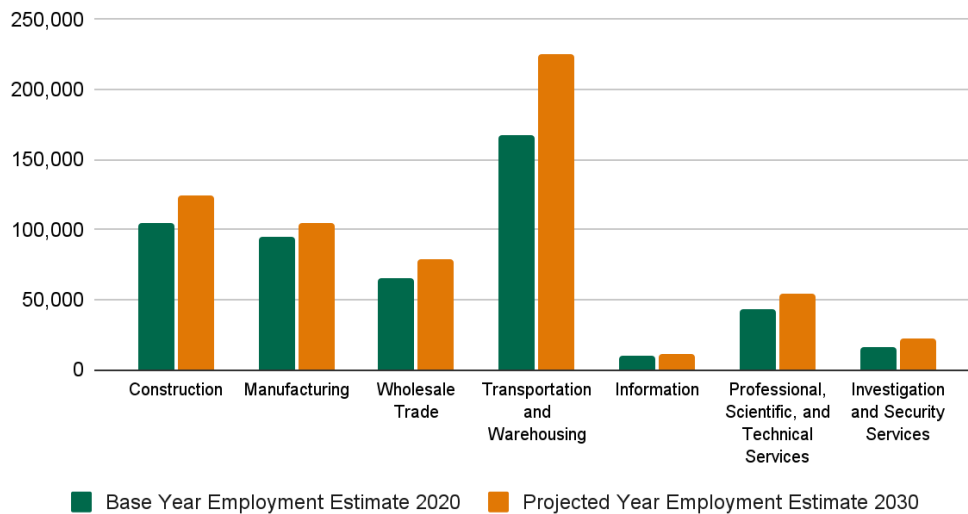


Source: State of Work in the Inland Empire 2023 Report,

<https://socialinnovation.ucr.edu/state-work-inland-empire>

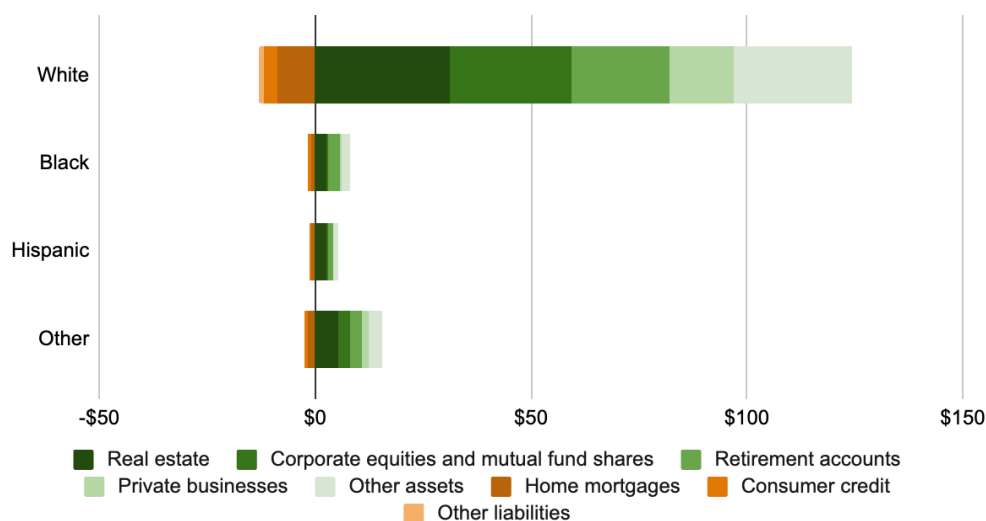
Figure A3. House Ownership by Race, 2020

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Tenure by Race and Householder,
<https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDHC2020.H10?d=DEC%20Demographic%20and%20Housing%20Characteristics>

Figure A4. Base Year Employment Estimate 2020, by Industry, and Projected Year Employment Estimate 2030, Inland Empire

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/>

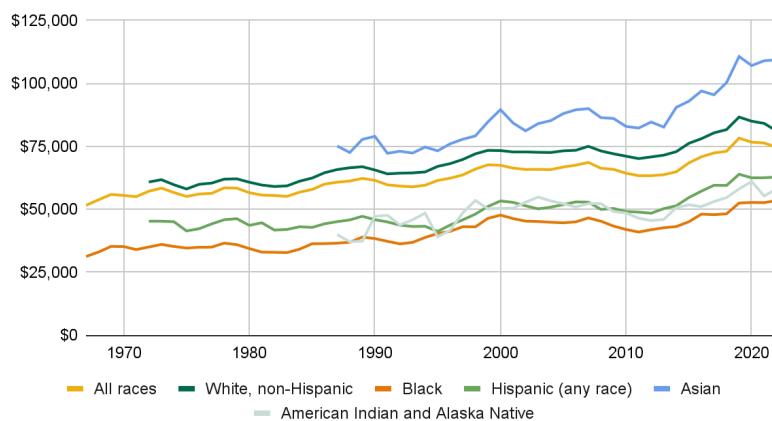
Figure A5. National Assets (in Trillions) Across Racial Categories, Q3 2022



Source: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

<https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/z1/dataviz/dfa/compare/chart/#quarter:132;series:Assets;demographic:race:population:all;units:levels:range:1989.4.2021.3> and USA Facts, <https://usafacts.org/articles/wealth-inequality-across-races-what-does-the-data-show/>

Figure A6: U.S. Median Household Income by Race and Ethnicity, 1967-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau,

<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2023/demo/p60-279.html>

Note: As definitions of ethnicity varied across censuses, some groups have been combined for display purposes. These are: White: White alone, not Hispanic (2002-2022), White, not Hispanic (1972-2001); Black: Black alone, or in combination (2002-2022), Black (1967-2001); Asian: Asian alone, or in combination (2002-2022), Asian and Pacific Islander (1987-2001), American Indian and Alaska Native alone, or in combination (2002-2022), American Indian and Alaska Native (1987-2001)

Table A1. Household Income Outcomes at Age 35 for Black Children from Low-Income Families

	Household Income for Neighborhood with Lowest Avg.	Household Income for Neighborhood with Highest Avg.	Average for City
Adelanto	\$19,023	\$25,996	\$21,846
Fontana	\$16,133	\$31,781	\$22,907
Moreno Valley	\$17,217	\$51,069	\$25,231
Perris	\$10,435	\$26,924	\$21,849
Victorville	\$16,403	\$30,640	\$22,849

Source: Opportunity Atlas. Retrieved August 14, 2024, from <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>

Within the IE, specific communities, neighborhoods, cities, and geographies experience drastically less economic opportunity than others. Studies linking zip code data to educational and economic outcomes¹ highlight the importance of addressing geographic concentrations of inequity to improve economic opportunity. Tools like the Opportunity Atlas identify household income outcomes for children by the neighborhood they grew up in. Household income outcomes for Black children who grew up in San Bernardino and Riverside counties vary greatly based on their neighborhood. Table A1 illustrates the range of household income at age 35 for Black children from low-income families, highlighting the highest and lowest income levels across different neighborhood tracts.

The data for families at all income levels show similar ranges, indicating persistent disparities and low average incomes in those places which underscore the urgent need for access to economic growth in the region. Career pathways that lead to quality jobs can drive increases in household income and economic opportunities in those communities.

Appendix B. Gaps and Opportunities in the Economic Landscape

This section is organized to highlight both the gaps and opportunities within the economic landscape of the Inland Empire, focusing on key areas such as education, employment, homeownership, and business ownership.

By addressing these disparities and leveraging existing resources, the region can create pathways for greater economic inclusion and mobility for the Black community.

¹ Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). (n.d.). *Opportunity Atlas shows the effect of childhood zip codes on adult success*. <https://www.lisc.org/our-resources/resource/opportunity-atlas-shows-effect-childhood-zip-codes-adult-success/>

Economic Access for the Black Community

Gaps: Access to the economy through education, training, jobs, homeownership, and other asset-building vehicles are only experienced by a small percentage of the Black community in the IE, largely due to the historical and systemic inequities previously outlined.

- According to the State of Work in the Inland Empire 2023 report, unemployment is the highest for Black people without degrees at 11% and Native Americans at 12%, while all other subgroups have unemployment rates less than 5%.²
- Black apprentices make up only 5% of total apprentices in the region, and bachelor's degree attainment for Black IE residents are as low as 26%.³
- Homeownership rates for Black households are the lowest across all race/ethnic groups at 38%⁴ in the IE.

This data represents the percentage of households within each racial/ethnic group that own their homes and highlights disparities in homeownership rates across different racial and ethnic groups in the Inland Empire.

Further disparities exist across indicators like median household income, poverty rates, employment sectors, and educational attainment, which underscore the need for continued efforts to address systemic inequities and promote economic opportunities for all residents of the region.

- Across employment sectors, Black workers are employed in healthcare (18%), retail (15%), public administration (12%), and transportation and warehousing (10%), and are overrepresented in healthcare support, transportation & material moving, production, and service jobs.⁵ Whereas White workers are employed in diverse sectors with a wider range of occupations, including management, professional, and business.
- 2023 median household income for Black workers in the IE compared to White workers shows a gap of \$24,000. The data highlights disparities in income, poverty rates, homeownership, employment sectors, and educational attainment between Black workers and White workers in the Inland Empire, emphasizing the persistent challenges faced by Black workers in achieving economic equity.

² University of California, Riverside, Center for Social Innovation. (2023, November). *State of work 2023*. https://live-ucr-socialinnovation.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/2023-11/State_of_Work_2023_11.15_V2.pdf

³ Interactive Apprenticeship Data. [Apprenticeship.gov](https://apprenticeship.gov)

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (June 2024); California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division. <https://www.bls.gov/lau/>

Table B1. Black-White Gap in Economic Indicators		
Economic Indicator	Black Workers	White Workers
Median Household Income	\$58,000	\$82,000
Homeownership Rate	38%	62%
Labor Force Participation Rate	62%	67%

*The economic landscape is dynamic and subject to change. This data provides a snapshot of the situation in 2023.

Data Sources:

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates

Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (June 2024)

California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division

Opportunities: The data in Table B1 highlights that labor force participation is not the main challenge. Systems that connect the Black community to quality jobs and pathways to economic mobility and equip them with the tools and resources to succeed are missing. Addressing the gap between high school graduation to employment and higher education provides a strategic opportunity for connecting the Black community to quality education, training, and quality jobs in the regional economy.

Black Business Ownership

Gaps: The percentage of Black-owned businesses in the region is very small. According to the Brookings Black Progress Index, less than 1% of Black adults⁶ in the region own a business. Nationally, no metro area in the U.S. has a share of Black-owned employer firms that matches or exceeds the Black population in the area. If the number of Black businesses matched the population size and the employees per firm matched the average business, it would create 111,756 jobs.⁷ The IE region holds opportunities for business development and entrepreneurship that can drive the clean energy transition, especially across high growth sectors in the region like manufacturing, transportation and logistics, and construction.

⁶ Brookings Institution. (2022). *Black progress index*. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/black-progress-index/>

⁷ Perry, A. M., Seo, R., Barr, A., Romer, C., & Broady, K. (2022, February 14). *Black-owned businesses in U.S. cities: The challenges, solutions, and opportunities for prosperity*. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/black-owned-businesses-in-u-s-cities-the-challenges-solutions-and-opportunities-for-prosperity/>

“As a business owner, we don’t talk about innovation enough. How do we add in existing business to what we have, to keep up with what is going on?... Folks feel that they can’t keep up or are being left behind.”

–Industry leader

Opportunities: Promising inclusive regional economic development efforts like the development of a sustainable logistics industry cluster in the region requires that the workers in these sectors have the skills, training, and technologies to adopt clean energy and green practices. It requires that owners of businesses have access to new technologies, the capital to deploy them, and the support to adapt their business practices to successfully shepherd a green transition. Accessing existing assets that support entrepreneurs and businesses in the region along these lines present a starting place for connecting to the innovation and industry cluster-based opportunities in the region.

There is a broader need to support Black-owned business development and entrepreneurship and create better conditions that can cultivate a pipeline of Black-owned businesses that address local and regional market needs. Interview and focus group data revealed a series of insights that provide a snapshot of the existing opportunities to develop and grow Black-owned businesses in the region.

Appendix C. Labor Market Information

Labor Market Information and Economic Development Opportunities: Clean Energy, Transportation, Cybersecurity, and Infrastructure

While Black workers are represented in various occupations across the Inland Empire, there is a concentration in specific sectors like healthcare support, transportation, and production. These occupations often offer lower median wages compared to those requiring higher levels of education or specialized skills. This underscores the importance of addressing systemic barriers to educational and career advancement for Black workers in the region.

Table C1: Representation and Median Wages of Black Workers Across Selected Occupations		
Occupation	Estimated % of Black Workers*	Median Hourly Wage (May 2023)**
Healthcare Support Occupations (e.g., Nursing Assistants, Home Health Aides)	25-30%	\$16 - \$20
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (e.g., Truck Drivers, Warehouse Workers)	15-20%	\$18 - \$25

Production Occupations (e.g., Assemblers, Machine Operators)	12-15%	\$16 - \$22
Retail Salespersons	10-15%	\$14 - \$18
Protective Service Occupations (e.g., Security Guards, Correctional Officers)	10-12%	\$18 - \$24
Office and Administrative Support Occupations (e.g., Customer Service Representatives, Receptionists)	8-10%	\$16 - \$22

* Estimated % of Black workers is based on a combination of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and other research on the Inland Empire's workforce demographics.

**Median hourly wage data is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics program for the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario metropolitan area (May 2023). The actual wage range may vary depending on factors such as experience, education, and specific employer.

Current labor market information in sectors that make up or contribute to the clean energy, transportation, cybersecurity, and infrastructure focus areas of this report show that transportation and warehousing remain a significant driver of job growth in the region along with manufacturing and construction.

Regional economic development efforts have identified the potential around clean energy and a sustainable logistics industry cluster promotion strategy. This could drive regional economic growth and the transition to clean energy across the sectors involved in goods movement. This type of economic development strategy aligns with environmental justice priorities calling for a drastic reduction in the air pollution currently caused by this industry and can bring opportunities for the creation of quality jobs in the region. It will also produce opportunities for new business creation related to the deployment and expansion of new technologies that are part of research and development efforts across these sectors. It will create more immediate opportunities like transitioning to electrical vehicle fleets to move goods rather than continuing with the fleets operating on fossil fuels, which continually add to the poor air quality concentrated along logistics and distribution transportation corridors, which have been linked to negative health outcomes impacting those communities in the IE.

The construction and transportation sectors will also benefit from the influx of federal and state funding coming from the infrastructure and greenhouse reduction policies that will fuel growth in those sectors as a result of the public investments that can be leveraged and the mandates in those policies for the creation of quality jobs, equity priorities, prevailing wage mandates, and community benefits opportunities. Opportunities to expand apprenticeships, grow local businesses, and establish pathways for Black workers in the IE exist but require intentionality, targeted action, and advocacy for this growth to benefit the Black community.

Table C2 provides a general overview of potential existing occupations Black workers might hold in these sectors and approximate wage ranges based on broader occupational categories. Many of these occupations require training but not a college degree. Pathways that provide on-ramps to additional training and higher education are necessary to increase earnings potential and produce career mobility opportunities across a person's working life.

Table C2: Occupations and Wage Ranges		
Sector	Potential Occupations	Approximate Wage Range (per hour)
Clean Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar panel installers and technicians; wind turbine technicians; energy efficiency auditors and consultants • Electrical engineers and electricians specializing in renewable energy systems • Project managers and administrators in renewable energy companies 	\$18 - \$40
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truck drivers; public transportation operators • Mechanics and technicians for vehicles and transportation equipment • Logistics and supply chain managers; transportation planners and engineers 	\$15 - \$35
Cybersecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cybersecurity analysts and specialists • Information security engineers; network security administrators • Ethical hackers and penetration testers; security consultants and auditors 	\$30 - \$60+
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction laborers and skilled tradespeople • Civil engineers and surveyors • Project managers and supervisors; equipment operators; inspectors and compliance officers 	\$18 - \$40+

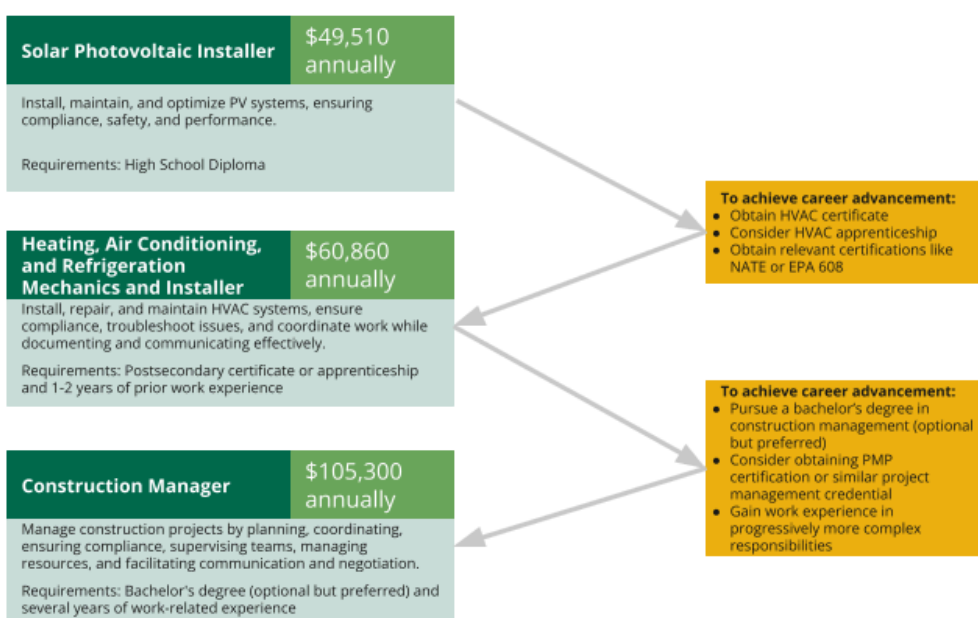
Note: Wage ranges are approximate and can vary depending on factors such as experience, skill level, certifications, and specific location within the Inland Empire.

This information is based on general trends and available data. The actual representation of Black workers and specific occupations held within these sectors varies. As these sectors grow and evolve, new occupations and opportunities will emerge, offering additional pathways for Black workers in the Inland Empire. By recognizing the potential occupations and associated wage ranges in these growing sectors, we can better understand the economic prospects for Black workers in the Inland Empire and advocate for policies and programs that foster their participation and success.

Appendix D. Sample Career Pathway Maps

Career pathway maps are valuable tools for illustrating how Black workers can enter and advance within a specific industry through on-the-job training and continuing education. Included here are sample career pathway maps for the clean energy, transportation, and cybersecurity industries. These maps highlight common skills across various roles within a career trajectory and show how acquiring specialized credentials and skills can facilitate career advancement.⁸ As the clean energy transition creates new job opportunities that demand specialized training, career pathways will continue to adapt. By developing transferable skills, workers can better position themselves to prepare for and succeed in these emerging roles.

Figure D1. Clean Energy Career Pathway Map



⁸ In-depth career pathway maps can be found here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1jqKacHmxWepr_IVyHa8gNIBwk8gu59LOAAQy77klr2Q/edit?gid=411603614#gid=411603614

Figure D2. Transportation Career Pathway Map

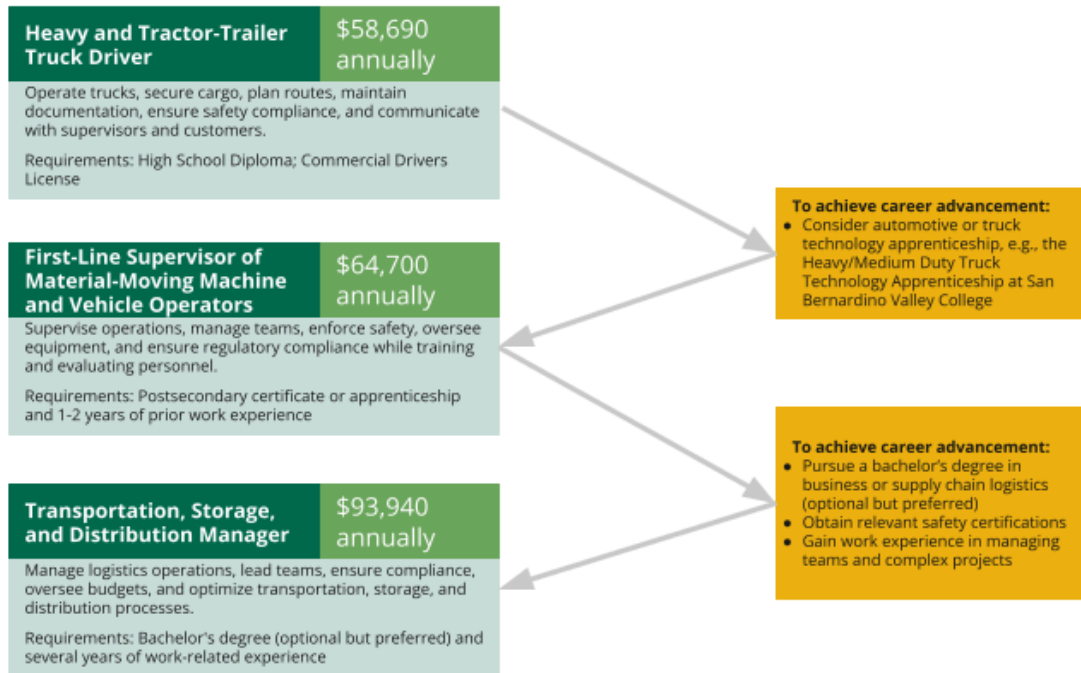
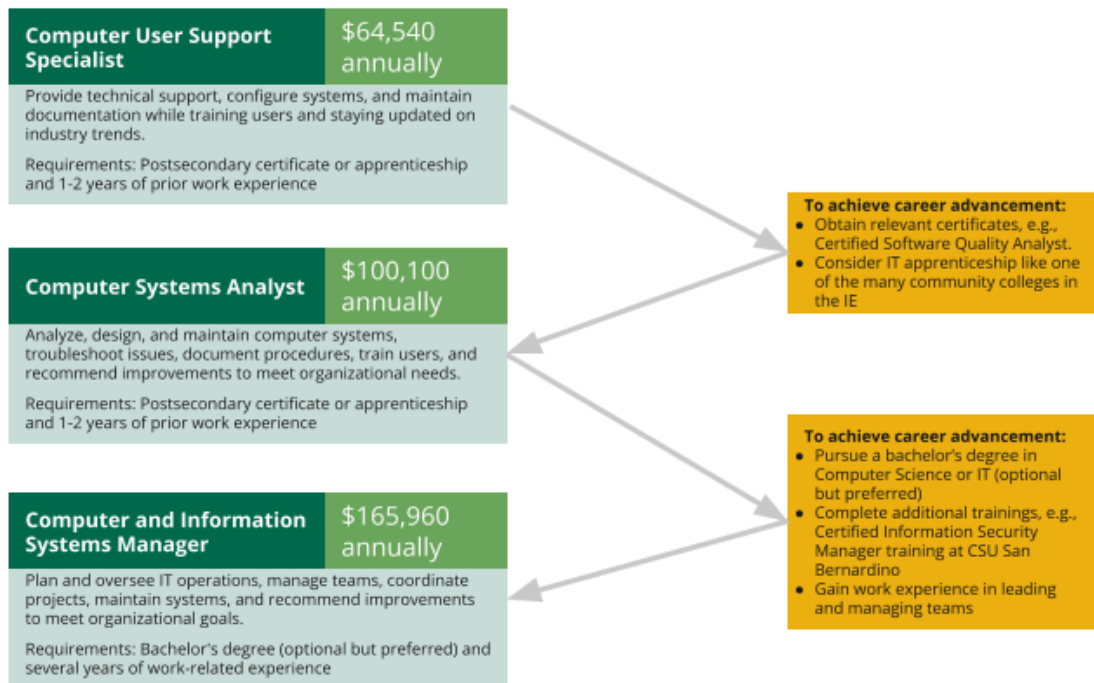


Figure D3. Cybersecurity Career Pathway Map



Entry-level positions across the three target industries share a set of common skills (see Table D1). Building these foundational skills equips workers with the versatility to pursue opportunities across and within these sectors.

Table D1: Skills Clusters Across Entry-Level Roles

Common Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking: Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems. • Reading Comprehension: Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents. • Speaking: Talking to others to convey information effectively. • Time Management: Managing one's own time and the time of others. • Monitoring: Monitoring/assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action. • Troubleshooting: Determining causes of operating errors and deciding what to do about it. • Active Listening: Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times. • Judgment and Decision Making: Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
Common Software Proficiencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic Mail Software: Proficiency in tools like Microsoft Outlook, which is commonly used across many occupations. • Spreadsheet Software: Proficiency in tools like Microsoft Excel, essential for data management, analysis, and reporting. • Word Processing Software: Familiarity with Microsoft Word, necessary for creating and editing documents. • Office Suite Software: General proficiency in Microsoft Office, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook, is often required. • Calendar and Scheduling Software: Experience with tools for scheduling and managing appointments, which is essential for maintaining organized workflows.
Additional Relevant Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination: Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions, which is important in teamwork and collaborative environments. • Quality Control Analysis: Conducting tests and inspections of products, services, or processes to evaluate quality or performance, relevant across technical roles. • Operation and Control: Controlling operations of equipment or systems, which is essential for roles involving machinery or technical systems.

Career Pathway Mapping Guide

The following outlines a step-by-step guide for creating a career pathway map.

1. Pull Labor Market Information: Gather comprehensive labor market data to inform the identification and analysis of occupations.

- **Access Labor Market Information Resources:**
 - Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS): Retrieve national and state-level employment statistics, wage data, and occupational projections.
 - State Workforce Agencies: Gather regional labor market data, including local demand for specific occupations, wage data, and employment trends.
 - Job Posting Analytics: Use tools like Burning Glass or Emsi to analyze real-time job postings for current market demands and emerging skills.
 - Economic Development Agencies: Obtain reports on regional economic priorities, industry clusters, and targeted growth sectors.
 - Educational Institutions and Workforce Boards: Review program offerings and alignment with local labor market needs.
- **Collect Data On:**
 - Employment rates, job openings, and unemployment rates by sector.
 - Wage data, including median wages, wage percentiles, and benefits offered.
 - Job growth projections and sectors with expected high growth.
 - Regional economic trends and sectoral priorities.

2. Identify Occupations: Select specific occupations for analysis, focusing on those with strong labor market demand and potential for career progression.

- **Utilize ONET Online:**
 - Filter occupations by factors such as industry job zone, growth projections, and education requirements.
 - Use ONET's advanced search features to identify occupations with overlapping knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs).
- **Cross-Reference with Local Labor Market Data:**
 - Align selected occupations with regional industry demand and growth projections.
 - Identify any emerging occupations or roles within key sectors (e.g., technology, healthcare, manufacturing) that are gaining traction.
- **Prioritize Occupations:**
 - Focus on occupations within sectors with the highest growth potential.
 - Consider occupations that form career ladders, enabling progression from entry-level to advanced roles.
 - Identify "bridge" roles that facilitate movement across sectors.

3. Analyze ONET Data and Summarize into a Table: Extract and organize key occupational data to understand job roles, requirements, and career pathways.

- **Extract Key Information from ONET:**
 - Identify job descriptions, requirements (education, certifications), KSAs (knowledge, skills, abilities), tools, and work activities for selected occupations.
 - Focus on occupations with strong growth potential and those that create clear career ladders within sectors.
- **Create a Structured Table:**
 - Columns: Job Name, Job Description, Job Requirements, KSAs, Local Programs, Wage and Occupation Growth Outlook.
 - Organize: Group occupations by sector and prioritize them from entry-level to advanced roles.
 - Detail Career Progression: Outline the additional training or skill development needed to move to higher levels within the career ladder or across sectors.

4. Identify Skills Clusters Across Entry-Level Roles: Highlight essential skills that enable mobility across different sectors, particularly from entry-level positions.

- **Analyze Entry-Level Roles:**
 - Identify common skills required across multiple entry-level roles in different sectors.
- **Create a Skills Cluster Table:**
 - Skills Cluster: Group related skills that are critical across multiple entry-level jobs.

5. Final Report/Database Development: Compile all the gathered and analyzed information into a comprehensive report or interactive database for stakeholders.

- **Develop a User-Friendly Report or Database**
- **Present Recommendations:**
 - Provide actionable recommendations for job seekers, educators, and workforce development professionals.
 - Suggest potential partnerships between educational institutions, workforce boards, and industry to address skills gaps.

Appendix E. Examples of Best Practices and Resources

The following is a list of best practices and resources that can be used as a reference as Pathways to Parity continues to develop their initiatives. This is not a comprehensive list, and other organizations supporting microenterprise, business incubation, business development, workforce development, etc. are not captured here.

Examples of Best Practices and Resources to Support Black-Owned Businesses

- Organizations like [Black and Brown Opportunities for Profit \(BBOP\)](#), the [Time for Change Foundation](#), and [SCORE for Black Entrepreneurs](#) offer valuable resources specifically tailored to support Black business owners. These resources have the potential to be leveraged effectively in the Inland Empire to empower and uplift Black entrepreneurship.
- Worker centers like the [IE Black Worker Center](#) and **High Desert Black Worker Center** play a crucial role in facilitating Black worker participation in sectors like transportation and construction.
- The **Business 2 Business Expo** organized by the [San Bernardino Council of Government](#) serves as a valuable platform for fostering connections and opportunities among businesses in the region.
- **OmniTrans's** equitable Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) procurement process and SoCal Edison's [Supplier Diversity Program](#) serve as models for other organizations aiming to support diverse suppliers and foster economic inclusion.
- The **Cleveland Model**⁹ showcases how anchor institutions can drive community investment through equitable procurement. The [Evergreen Cooperatives](#), part of this model, are worker-owned businesses that benefit from procurement opportunities with local health systems, illustrating the power of anchors to use their economic resources to invest in their community.
- [LA County Economic Mobility Initiative \(EMI\)](#) provides a collaborative and integrated approach for business owners, entrepreneurs, and social enterprises, offering access to a network of over 15 local partners that deliver resources, programs, and services to advance economic mobility, build resiliency, and promote generational wealth
- [SoCal Edison](#) serves as an example of how companies can connect clean energy jobs with educational initiatives, such as food tech education centers, demonstrating how industry partnerships can create accessible career pathways.
- **UC Riverside's Office of Technology Partnerships** facilitates the commercialization of university research and innovations. It helps protect intellectual property, supports collaborations with industry, and fosters entrepreneurship, ultimately aiming to benefit society by bringing UCR's discoveries to the marketplace. They are a resource for

⁹ Wagner, J. (2020, November 9). *How Cleveland's innovation district is advancing equity through a new kind of anchor institution*. Brookings Institution.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-clevelands-innovation-district-is-advancing-equity-through-a-new-kind-of-anchor-institution/>

entrepreneurs that want to connect to UCR's clean energy-related research and development.

- **Leonard Transportation Center, California State University, San Bernardino** is a research and policy center dedicated to advancing sustainable and equitable transportation solutions through research, education, and community engagement. They act as a voice for a sustainable transportation system in the region.
- The **U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC)** is a non-profit organization committed to transforming the way buildings and communities are designed, built, and operated, enabling an environmentally and socially responsible, healthy, and prosperous environment that improves the quality of life. They are best known for developing the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) green building rating system, and have a newer branch focused on the Inland Empire.
- The **Inland Empire Growth and Opportunity (IEGO)** is a collaborative organization dedicated to fostering sustainable and inclusive economic growth in Southern California's Inland Empire. They work to transform the region into a global hub for sustainable logistics and a leader in clean technology and supply chain activities. They are focused on encouraging sector-specific innovation and entrepreneurship, fostering a culture of innovation, and supporting the growth of new businesses, particularly in clean technology and logistics.
- **IREN (Inland Empire Renewable Energy Network)** is a collaborative network dedicated to promoting the development and adoption of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies in the Inland Empire. They operate as a joint powers authority across both San Bernardino and Riverside counties and play an important connector role with county and municipal governments.
- **Blended Impact** is an innovation lab for economic development working with local governments to add capacity to inclusive economic development initiatives. This firm leverages a combination of philanthropic and private capital to drive social and environmental change. They specialize in capital attractions strategies, identifying project pipelines and resourcing them with private sector expertise.

Examples of Best Practices and Resources to Support Black Workers

- [SoCal Edison](#) engages Black communities and provides career awareness opportunities, promoting pathways to energy and technology careers.
- [California Jobs First](#) is an initiative working on developing a regional strategy to boost local job opportunities, with a focus on inclusive economic growth.

- [STEMapalooza at San Bernardino Valley College](#) is a hands-on program that introduces high school students to STEM careers through interactive projects and demonstrations, fostering early interest in technology and engineering fields.
- [HOLA at Microsoft](#) is an outreach program designed to connect Latino students with employment opportunities, helping bridge the gap between education and workforce entry.
- [National Black Grad](#) is an organization that celebrates Black high school graduates and connects them with resources, financial support, and scholarships for higher education.

Examples of Best Practices and Resources to Support Practitioners

- [Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program](#) offers funding opportunities to support businesses in energy efficiency and clean energy sectors, creating pathways for job growth and career advancement in emerging fields.
- [SoCal Edison's Black Equity Initiative](#) focuses on partnerships with community organizations, schools, and internal employee development to create career pathways in clean energy for Black communities. This acts as a starting place for continued partnership with a central industry partner in the region's clean energy transition.
- [Transformative Climate Community Grants](#) are aimed at building more resilient communities, supporting projects that align with workforce development and environmental sustainability.
- **LA County Green Workforce Development Task Force** unites energy partners to ensure workers are trained for future job demands, particularly in the green and clean energy sectors.
- **Organizations Leading the Way:** Engage with entities already supporting workforce and business development, including [Starting Over](#), [Just San Bernardino](#), [Micro-Enterprise Collaborative](#), [COPE](#), [Truth Healing and Evolution](#), [Blu Education Foundation](#), [Latino Roundtable \(CHERP partner in Pomona\)](#), [Regional TCC](#), [IE Labor Council](#), and [Launch Network](#).

Appendix F. List of Partners Partner

We would like to acknowledge the following partners who have been steadfast in their support and participation in this effort, including their contributions to interviews, focus groups, and convenings.

- California State University San Bernardino
- CHERP, Inc.
- Green Energy Solutions
- Inland Economic Growth and Opportunity
- Inland Empire Black Worker Center
- Inland Empire Labor Institute
- Inland Regional Energy Network
- Institute for the Future
- Introducing Youth to American Infrastructure
- National Black Grads
- OmniTrans
- Riverside Community College District
- San Bernardino Council of Governments
- San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
- San Bernardino Valley College
- South California Edison
- Western Riverside Council of Governments
- Youth Action Project

