



The California Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA) supports economic growth and innovation statewide. CalOSBA's core mission is to provide resources to All California small businesses, disabled veteran business enterprises (DVBES), minority and women-owned businesses, and those individuals who own and operate businesses located in low-wealth and rural communities.

CalOSBA supports outreach and engagement efforts in three ways, advocacy, resources, and building resilience in CalOSBA's programs with our Technical Assistance Network that supports growth and business sustainability statewide.

This month's newsletter highlights the CalOSBA efforts to serve California businesses statewide.

## **CalOSBA Small Business Advocate, Tara Lynn Gray Gives Commencement Address**

### **29 New Entrepreneurs Go to Market in East Oakland**



CalOSBA Director Tara Lynn Gray had the privilege of giving the "commencement" presentation to 29 entrepreneurs now launching startups after completing a grueling ten weeks of training with [ESO Ventures](#). ESO is a business incubator in East Oakland that opened its doors in late 2020. ESO has already completed three cohorts representing a total of 68 new businesses. Launched by experienced business educators, ESO's mission is to provide black and brown entrepreneurs with confidence, competence, and capital to close the wealth gap and create employment opportunities.

The December cohort also got a pep talk from former ESO Cohort-1 graduate Jasmine Lenay, who is making six figures in revenue from her new self-care brand [Umber by J. Lenay](#).

In 2022, ESO plans to use incoming state funding from the California Capital in the Community Act (SB-129) to expand its 10-week immersion course and provide startup capital with ongoing support services in East Oakland and other underserved communities. ESO also hosts a directory of its graduates' e-commerce sites. Shop Small, Shop Local: SHOP ESO | ESO Ventures (eso-ventures.com)

## VC Include Starts Something New



On Veteran's Day, Director Gray spent time at the [VC Include Conference](#) held by [Include Ventures](#). Founder Bahiyah Robinson and partners Keith Spears and Taj Ahmad Eldridge have established a platform to accelerate investment in historically underrepresented emerging managers – women, Black, Latinx, Indigenous and LGBTQ – to drive economic growth through the power of diversity. They have built VC Include as an exclusive ecosystem and marketplace designed for GPs and LPs to drive alpha to investors while also moving the needle on shaping a more equitable and empowered world. They endeavor to build the infrastructure for an inclusive economy and lead in connecting diverse founders with environmental, social, corporate governance and impact investing. Worthy of noting is that they integrate 7 of the 17 United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Gender Equality, Industry, Innovation, and Reduced Inequalities in their work. Learn more [here](#).

## Regional Advisors Corner

### Northern California – Plumas County SBDC Counselor Dreams of "Rural Renaissance"



Clint Koble is famous for calling the lending agency providing State of California COVID-19 relief grants, 25 times on behalf of a single business; the owner now thinks Clint is a miracle worker. "He's *that* squeaky wheel," laughs Kristin York, vice president of [Sierra Business Council](#) funds. She also manages T AEP recipient [Sierra SBDC](#), covering Plumas, Lassen, and Modoc counties. "He's brought an exponential increase of service to the area." Based in Plumas, Clint regularly travels to Lassen and Modoc counties, and there's hardly a business in the region that Clint hasn't visited personally.

The 71-year-old is an SBDC counselor, a substitute teacher, manager/owner at a Lake Almanor resort, and now the workhorse of the Dixie Fire Long-Term Recovery Group. A former hospitality industry executive, he also served as an

Obama appointee in Nevada to the USDA/FSA and ran for Congress twice before moving to Plumas County in 2013.

When the Dixie Fire came within four miles of his home, he almost had to evacuate. Instead, he invited 22 firefighters to stay at the resort for seven and a half weeks. Today he is still putting in hundreds of hours of his own time to help his fellow residents find homes, rebuild their businesses and plan for an economic future in a county where neighboring community Greenville was nearly wiped off the map. "I've found more purpose in this than anything I've done in my life," says Clint, whose experience during the fire was written up in the [Sierra Business Council's blog](#).

He describes his feelings about his clients, the mom-and-pop microbusinesses, and entrepreneurial startups as "hero worship." He is always ready to share his ideas for sparking a "rural renaissance" in counties ravaged by fire in 2021.

"Economic development is economic survival here. Broadband is going to be critical. We need EV charging stations, healthcare, childcare," says Clint. "A huge key is to engage women and young people in leadership," he adds. His advice for successful interventions in rural or disaster-impacted communities is patience.

"In a small town, you have to show up and pull your weight. You have to meet everyone three times. The first time you show up, they're gracious. The second time, they're surprised. The third time, they believe you really want to help. You have to stay engaged but not be political. But most of all, you have to be patient. Economic development is a team sport. You got to take the little wins and build on them," says Clint. "It's one deal at a time, one day at a time, one person at a time."

## Central Coast Visit – El Pajaro Commercial Kitchen

### Roundtable Discussion and Small Business Tour



November 8, 2021, CalOSBA Director Gray attended the Central Coast Partner Convening Roundtable co-hosted by the [Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association \(ALBA\)](#). Approximately twelve partnering organizations and

agencies were invited to participate. The roundtable discussion focused on identifying opportunities and ways to strengthen small farm and agricultural programs in the region. In attendance was [El Pajaro Community Development Corporation \(CDC\)](#), providing technical assistance, loan application packaging, business plans, marketing, management, and business technology applications in addition to business coaching, consulting, and training through their business incubator.

CalOSBA Director Gray visited the El Pajaro's Commercial Kitchen Incubator with Executive Director Carmen Herrera-Mansir, Kitchen Incubator Program Manager, Cesario Ruiz, and El Pajaro Board Member Jorge Reguerin. The Commercial Kitchen Incubator is a shared-use commercial kitchen launched in July 2013 to support local specialty food-related businesses on the Central Coast and it is in high demand.

During Director Gray's tour of El Pajaro's commercial kitchen, she observed three local small business owners utilizing the shared commercial kitchen. Moreover, Director Gray was pleased to learn that two of the small business owners she met were also recipients of the Small Business Covid Relief Fund Grant. Executive Director, Carmen Herrera-Mansir, had this to say to director Gray, "Thanks again for visiting our kitchen...we had a great time! We love it when we can share our success stories and work "firsthand."

### **Southern California – 3rd Annual Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) / Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) SoCal Conference 2021**

The University of California Riverside (UCR) held its 3rd Annual Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) Southern California Conference 2021, which brought agency experts to the small business entrepreneurs. Federal SBIR/STTR programs provide \$3.6 Billion in capital funding every year to help small business entrepreneurs bring transformative innovations to market. Small businesses had the opportunity to listen, learn, and engage with over 16 agencies, listen to five specialized workshops, and participate in agency appointments to discuss their potential proposals. University of California Riverside's Office of Technology Partnerships provides comprehensive SBIR/STTR proposal support through its SBIR/STTR Resource Center and EPIC SBDC. Visit: The [Office of Technology Partnerships | SBIR/STTR Resource Center \(ucr.edu\)](#) for more information about small business innovation resources available.

### **Small Business Start –Grow–Inland Empire Conference**

[Orange County Inland Empire \(OCIE\) Regional Small Business Development Center \(SBDC\)](#). Network hosted at CSU Fullerton in collaboration with the [Inland Empire SBDC](#) hosted by the [Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship \(IECE\)](#) at CSU San Bernardino.

Attendees of this conference came to learn how to increase their revenues and grow their businesses at the Start-Grow- IE Small Business Conference. During this event, the focus was on recovering and growing post-COVID through financing, procurement, and marketing. Additionally, attendees had the pleasure of listening to keynote speaker, Hilda Kennedy, founder, and president of AmPac Business Capital [Start-Grow-IE Speakers - OCIE SBDC \(ociesmallbusiness.org\)](#), who is a successful business owner and community leader, who shared her expertise on how to take your business to the next level by leveraging good leadership and management strategies.

Southern California Regional Advisor, Chris Earl provided remarks and shared updates on CalOSBA's upcoming programs for small businesses. Furthermore, the conference highlighted the efforts of the OC/IE regional network at California State University (CSU) Fullerton, and the creation of a new marketplace for small businesses to sell their products online; upon completion of a 5-week training program, participants receive access to their own E-commerce site to launch their business.

## **CalOSBA External Partners and News Highlights:**

### **Department of Toxic Substance Control Clean-up in Vulnerable Communities Initiative – Small Business Program**

"In 2021 Governor Gavin Newsom signed the Cleanup in Vulnerable Communities Initiative (CVCI), allocating \$500 million to the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to expedite the cleanup and beneficial reuse of idled properties that may be contaminated, with priority given to properties in historically vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. DTSC is advocating the use of small business and disabled veteran business enterprises to enhance equitable access to opportunities under the Cleanup in Vulnerable Communities Initiative, also referred to as "CVCI". Engaging with small businesses, especially women-owned, minority, and disadvantaged businesses creates opportunities for inclusion and can strengthen California's economy."

[Learn more.](#)

### **CalOSBA Technical Assistance Network External Outreach Calendar of Workshops and Events**

California funds a network of small business technical assistance centers that provide no-cost one-on-one consulting and low-cost training services to small businesses and entrepreneurs at all stages. Please visit CalOSBA's external outreach calendar: [Click here to see CalOSBA's external outreach calendar](#)

### **CalOSBA Grant Program Update**

The iHubs2 Grant will stimulate partnerships, economic development, and job creation for underserved geographic areas, industry sectors, and business owners.

Request For Proposals: Application period October 11, 2021 – December 16, 2021. Ten (10) iHubs2 entities will be designated by CalOSBA throughout California through a competitive RFP and will have a one-time \$2.5 Million investment into the program: \$250,000 per iHubs2 designee.

Designated Areas: More than one [iHub2](#) may be designated in an area to the extent that there is a clear distinction between the focus area of each iHub2.

The California Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA) supports economic growth and innovation and ensures that ALL California small businesses and innovative startups have the information and direct support they need to better navigate resources, programs and regulations. CalOSBA serves as the voice of small business, representing their views and interests across the state and advocating for equitable access to capital, markets, and networks so that all California small businesses successfully start, manage, grow and become more resilient.

**For more small business resources and information, visit [calosba.ca.gov](https://calosba.ca.gov)**

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