

2026 ANNUAL REVIEW

Updates on Our Work, Giving,
and Organization

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PROGRESS TOWARD OUR NORTH STAR

TESTS TO THE STATE'S RESILIENCE, VALUES, AND COMMITMENT TO WORKERS

Challenges and resilience defined 2025, particularly workers paid the lowest wages. The year began with devastating wildfires in Los Angeles County that destroyed lives, homes, and livelihoods for tens of thousands. A new federal administration began expanded immigration-enforcement tactics, as well as economic policies that weakened the safety net and increased costs and uncertainties for families, businesses, and local economies.

The nonprofit and philanthropic sectors also experienced threats from the federal administration that have forced organizations to protect themselves and those they serve, taking away some of the focus and resources from supporting the low-wage workers who continue to struggle to get by.

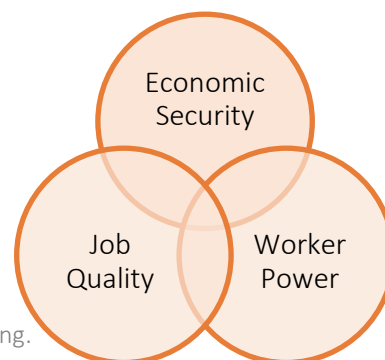
Meanwhile, the pace of technological change promises to dramatically reshape our jobs and lives. We will need to adapt — at the community, regional, and state levels — to lead California into the future with bold, innovative solutions to address our state's most pressing issues.

All this has reaffirmed Irvine's commitment to reaching its North Star: *a California where all low-income workers have the power to advance economically*. Despite gains toward that goal, last year ushered in a political and economic climate that remains very difficult for low-income Californians and worker advocates.

Fortunately, there are leaders, organizations, and networks hard at work to define California's next chapter and keep the well-being of the state's most vulnerable workers at the center of their efforts. This includes Irvine grantees working in and for communities, building worker power, advocating for better policies, and advancing inclusiveness, innovation, and worker voice on the job and in our economies.

This Annual Review shares more on that, and this first section includes annual data we use to reflect on the needs and experiences of low-income Californians via three, inter-related aspects of our North Star: **economic security**, **job quality**, and **worker power**.

Workers can afford basic needs and are resilient against unanticipated financial hardships.



Workers have access to employment that offers a living wage, stable job, opportunities to grow and advance, and benefits that support health and well-being.

Workers can influence decisions that impact their lives and are represented in related decision-making bodies.

IRVINE'S NORTH STAR

A California where all low-income workers have the power to advance economically.

We update these indicators annually with the most recent figures from nonpartisan polling and other public data. To better understand disparities, we analyze data by race/ethnicity, gender, age, income, region, and employment status.

The narrative portions of the next three pages note changes in demographic breakdowns from last year, if 5% or more. Alongside this data we include quotes from California workers who were interviewed as part of a Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) listening project in 2025.



ECONOMIC SECURITY

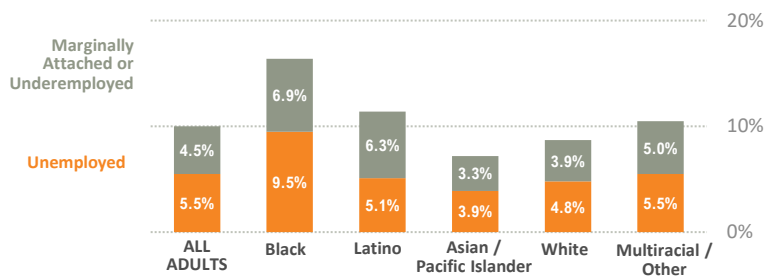
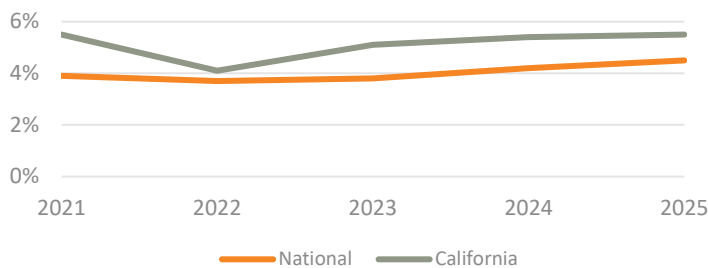
Workers can afford basic needs and are resilient in the face of financial hardships.



Californians earning low incomes are doing what they can to make ends meet in a challenging economy. The rate of Californians who are underemployed increased 2% in 2025. Black Californians experienced the worst economic hardship in 2025, with negative trends across most economic-security indicators. A key driver is affordability, due to rising costs.

EMPLOYMENT

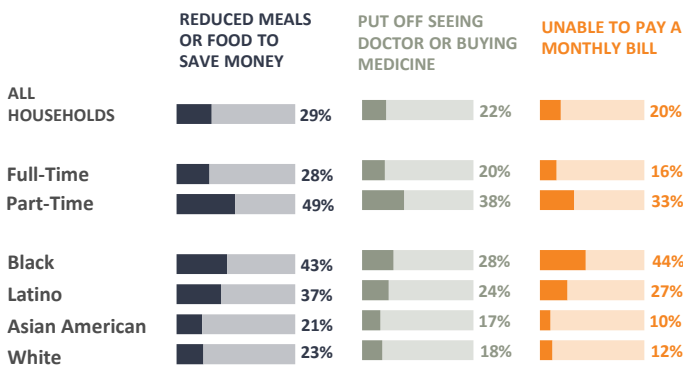
The California unemployment rate remains higher than the national rate. 10% of Californians need work, which includes those who are underemployed or marginally attached to the labor market. Black jobseekers are faring worst compared to last year, with a 6.2% increase in those who need work.¹



Note: "Underemployed" refers to part-time workers seeking full-time work. "Marginally attached" describes those not working or job-hunting who work and have searched within the past 12 months.

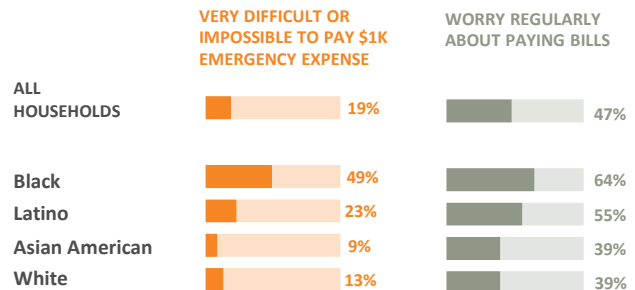
MAKING ENDS MEET

On average, California households are facing similar challenges in making ends meet compared to last year. However, Black and Asian households fared worse on some measures, with 8% more Black households reducing meals or food purchases to save money, and 6% more Asian American households putting off seeing a doctor or buying medicine. White households fared 5% better than last year in being able to pay monthly bills.



RESILIENCE TO HARDSHIP

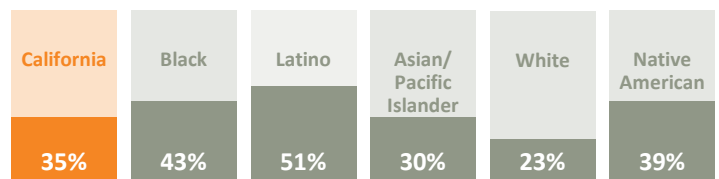
Californians differ widely in their ability to withstand financial hardship. Compared to last year, an additional 8% of Black Californians regularly worry about being able to pay bills.²



"So many of us are living paycheck to paycheck. I've had a tooth that's been bugging me, but I'm scared to go in since I'm not sure how much my insurance will cover. I can try to be careful with recreational and grocery spending, but I have no idea what will be covered and how much I'll have to pay the doctor."
- Inland Empire Worker

AFFORDABILITY

One in three California households cannot afford California's real cost of living. On average, that requires triple the minimum wage, or \$105,736, for a household of four.³ California's high housing costs continue to drive affordability concerns, as rent increases continued to outpace wage increases (a 74% increase compared to a 25% increase in wages since 2020).⁴



Note: The real-cost-of-living measure looks at housing, food, health care, childcare, transportation, and other basic needs.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics (November 2025), Public Policy Institute of California calculations from EDD as of September 2025

² Public Policy Institute of California (November 2025)

³ Real Cost of Living (Calculated using 2023 data)

⁴ California Legislative Analyst's Office, [California Housing Affordability Tracker](#), November 2025



JOB QUALITY

Workers have access to employment opportunities that offer a living wage, job stability, opportunities for growth and advancement, and benefits that support health and well-being.



Californians experienced losses and gains on job-quality measures in 2025 compared to 2024, perhaps because of uncertainties in the labor market and economy. Part-time workers fared worse on access to benefits than last year. Those with higher incomes and education levels tended to report greater access to benefits and opportunities for advancement. Black workers reported the least job stability, while Latino workers reported the least advancement opportunities.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME



1 in 4 Californians earn a living wage that would allow them to support a household of two adults and two children. About half of California's workers earn at least the living wage for one adult.¹



"I work 56 hours per week but am not considered a full-time employee because of how the rules are set up [...] and that impacts how I get my benefits."

— Inland Empire Worker

JOB BENEFITS



Most Californians have access to benefits through employers. Access to retirement benefits increased 6% for Latino workers compared to last year, while 10% fewer Asian American workers had access to healthcare coverage. Part-time workers fare worse than full-time workers, losing 2024 gains in access to healthcare and paid sick leave (with decreases of 7% and 8%, respectively). Californians earning below \$40,000 per year also receive job benefits at lower rates than other workers (64% receive paid sick leave, 43% healthcare coverage, and 46% retirement savings).²

JOB PROVIDES:	PAID SICK LEAVE	HEALTHCARE COVERAGE	RETIREMENT BENEFITS
ALL ADULTS	82%	78%	75%
Full-Time	90%	90%	85%
Part-Time	50%	36%	38%
Black	89%	87%	83%
Latino	82%	77%	72%
Asian American	83%	80%	81%
White	81%	78%	74%

Note: Census American Communities Survey data reveals a higher rate of insurance coverage at 94% for all Californians, with 49.5% of insured Californians on an employer-sponsored plan. About 6.3% of Californians remain uninsured.⁴

¹ MIT Living Wage Calculator (January 2026)

² Public Policy Institute of California (November 2025)

³ Public Policy Institute of California (November 2025)

⁴ University of Minnesota, SHADAC analysis of the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files (2025)

JOB STABILITY



Most Californians report stable pay and hours at work. As compared to last year, positive changes include an additional 10% of Asian American workers having stable work hours, 5% more Latino workers having stable pay, and 8% of workers earning below \$40,000 per year having stable hours. 5% fewer Black workers reported stable pay.

JOB PROVIDES:	STABLE PAY AT WORK	STABLE HOURS AT WORK
ALL ADULTS	88%	83%
Full Time	92%	90%
Part Time	76%	58%
Black	76%	73%
Latino	89%	82%
Asian American	89%	89%
White	90%	81%

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT



Access to career advancement opportunities vary considerably, privileging workers with more education and higher pay. Workers with higher levels of education report greater access to education and training on the job (69% of college graduates versus 40% of those with a high school education or less). 43% of Californians earning below \$80,000/year have access to education or training on the job as compared to 57% of all adults. Black workers report an 11% decrease in opportunities for advancement from 2024.³

JOB PROVIDES:	OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND ADVANCEMENT	EDUCATIONAL OR TRAINING ASSISTANCE
ALL ADULTS	57%	58%
Full-Time	62%	64%
Part-Time	40%	36%
Black	57%	65%
Latino	55%	54%
Asian American	64%	66%
White	57%	57%



WORKER POWER

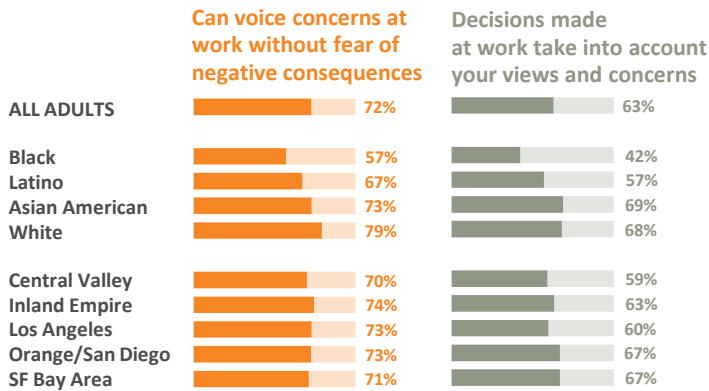
Workers have influence over decisions that impact their lives and are represented in related decision-making bodies.



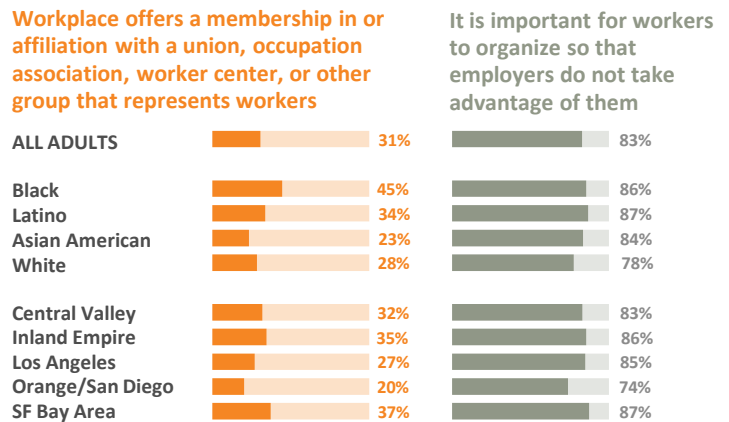
Californians support for worker organizing remains strong; nearly one-third of Californians have the opportunity for worker representation, with some regional changes affecting the composition of worker organizations across the state. Black Californians are experiencing significant declines in their sense of worker voice and their trust of government, perhaps due to losses of economic security, job quality, and worker voice disproportionately affecting Black Californians in 2025.

WORKER VOICE

7 in 10 California workers feel they can voice concerns at work, and nearly two-thirds report that decisions made at work take their views into account. Black workers reported significant declines on both measures compared to last year: Reports of being able to voice concerns at work declined 7%, and 28% fewer Black workers felt their views were taken into account at work.¹

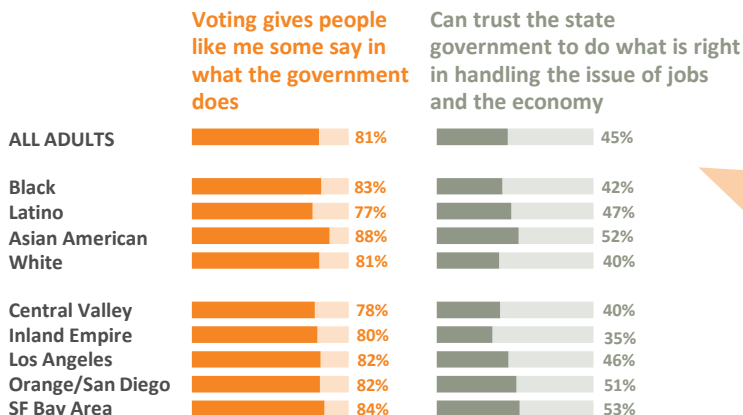


More than 8 in 10 Californians believe workers should organize so that employers do not take advantage of them. This rate is higher among the lowest-income Californians: 87% for those earning under \$20,000/year, and 90% among those earning \$20,000-\$40,000 per year. Support across regions has stayed steady since last year except for San Diego/Orange County, where support dropped by 5%. In the Bay Area, 7% more workers have a formal way to be represented as workers. San Diego/Orange County experienced an 11% drop in opportunities for worker organizing since last year.³

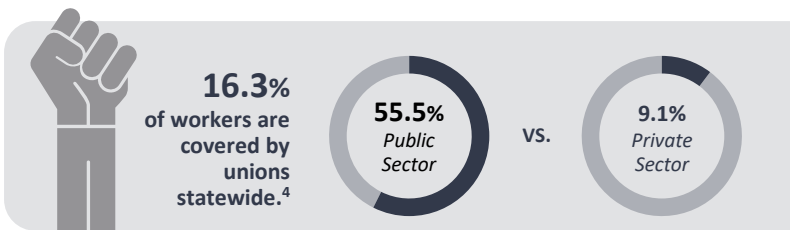


VOTING AND REPRESENTATION

Californians continue to agree that voting is important in having some say in the government. While belief in the importance of voting has remained fairly constant since 2022, there have been declines among Latinos and increases among Black Californians. Trust in the state government declined in the Inland Empire and Central Valley by 8% and 6%, respectively, but increased in the Bay Area by 5% and in Orange/San Diego by 8%.²



Note: The graph includes survey respondents who chose "completely agree" and "somewhat agree."



"People in power are not normal people. They are all so rich. Something can change when they have been in someone else's shoes. But the rich just care about their own situation and don't really get what it's like for me."
- San Diego Worker

¹ Public Policy Institute of California (November 2025)

² Public Policy Institute of California (November 2025)

³ Public Policy Institute of California (November 2025)

⁴ UC Berkeley Labor Center "State of the Unions" (2024)

Notes: The left graph is respondents who chose "completely agree" and "somewhat agree." The right graph includes those who chose "just about always" or "most of the time."

2025 Highlights

OUR BODIES OF WORK

Initiatives

Better Careers

Goal: to connect low-income Californians to good jobs with family-sustaining wages and advancement opportunities

Fair Work

Goal: to advance fairness, dignity, and respect for California workers

Just Prosperity

Goal: to ensure our economic and political systems work for all Californians

Priority Communities

Goal: to partner with California communities to ensure working people have the power to influence public systems and employers for good jobs, inclusive economic development, and self-determination

Cross-Portfolio Grantmaking

Goal: to explore opportunities that complement our initiatives and test new ideas to increase impact across our grantmaking portfolio

Projects

Leadership Awards

Goal: to recognize and support leaders advancing innovative and effective solutions to significant state issues

We aim to fulfill our mission through the following key strategies:

A singular goal that unites our work: a California where all low-income workers have the power to advance economically

Initiatives that have specific outcomes, timelines, and resources

Developing and adjusting initiatives by learning from those closest to the work

Providing, whenever possible, large, flexible grants to organizations at the core of our initiatives

Seeking impact on individual, field, and statewide levels

Partnering with and across other sectors to better advance our and our grantees' goals

We approach this work with our institutional values top of mind: Accountability, Curiosity, Empathy, Equity, Nimbleness, Partnership, and Transparency.

This section includes updates and insights related to our:

- Initiatives
- Cross-Portfolio Grantmaking
- Additional Grantmaking
- Listening and Learning

Notable in 2025

- **Better Careers held a grantee convening** in San Diego that brought together more than 100 grantees from across the state. Attendees from each initiative workstream were able to learn from one another and share challenges and solutions for helping workers access quality jobs and careers.
- **Better Careers grantees** and key registered apprenticeship organizations in Los Angeles **traveled to Zurich with a delegation of Southern California leaders — policymakers, educators, workforce innovators, and funders** — to study Switzerland’s vocational education and training system. The model offers valuable insights for strengthening California’s apprenticeship system. The trip has sped up the initiative’s efforts to improve coordination and infrastructure for registered apprenticeships in Los Angeles.
- **The Anti-Recidivism Coalition sponsored, and Governor Newsom signed into law, bills** that will improve working conditions and pay incarcerated firefighters \$7.25 per hour, a significant and historic increase from their previous pay of \$5.80-\$10.24 per day.
- **The Public Sector Practice Change workstream launched a peer learning group** of 16 local public Workforce Development Board grantees to share insights about projects, best practices, and strategies responding to federal policies and funding. The group is an opportunity for grantees to strengthen their collective capacity to serve workers and jobseekers.

BETTER CAREERS

In 2022, Irvine’s board approved an updated strategy for Better Careers, committing \$160 million over seven years to ensure that:

- More Californians are placed in and have the support they need to stay in quality jobs
- Nonprofits can provide sustained access to quality jobs and remove barriers to economic opportunity that disproportionately affect women and people of color
- Public workforce development boards are more equitable and responsive to all the communities they serve

In 2025, we invested \$13.5 million in 22 grantees to advance goals via three workstreams:

- 1 **Strengthen apprenticeship intermediaries** to increase opportunities for all low-income workers to access inclusive, sustainable, and debt-free paths to jobs with good benefits and wages, opportunities to advance, and the ability to influence workplace decision-making
- 2 **Support community-led and -accountable direct service organizations** that Californians who have been failed by multiple systems trust to provide holistic services and connect them to quality jobs
- 3 **Strengthen the capacity of local public workforce development boards** to better meet low-wage workers’ needs and place them into quality jobs

Key Learnings

- **The strategy is on track.** Our evaluation affirmed that prioritizing long-term, wraparound supports, stronger apprenticeship intermediaries, and more responsive public institutions helps underserved jobseekers access high-quality training and placements. We also focused on areas to sustain impact: engaging employers to advance job quality, addressing jobseekers’ basic needs, and funding nonprofits’ direct service, advocacy, and organizing work.
- **We will have more impact by shifting Public Sector Practice Change grantmaking in house and narrowing our focus.** We can maximize impact by making grants related to workforce boards ourselves versus through an intermediary. We will invest more in fewer boards that are most aligned with our strategy and values to remove barriers to pursuing quality jobs, build partnerships with community organizations, and share decision-making power with workers and jobseekers.
- **Federal actions are having a devastating impact on workers of color and underserved communities.** We provided flexible funds to community nonprofits to ensure continuity of direct services, build capacity, and elevate the voices of impacted workers to influence policy and resources. Cross-sector collaboration is needed to advance an inclusive workforce system as federal and state resources decline.

Initiatives

Notable in 2025

- In response to the Los Angeles wildfires, the **National Day Laborer Organizing Network** coordinated a large volunteer response, training more than 170 day laborers in federal health and safety standards, and advocating for safer working conditions in cleanup and rebuilding. **The California Domestic Workers Coalition** quickly set up a relief fund for workers and successfully advocated with Cal-OSHA to extend wildfire health and safety protections to domestic workers.
- In October 2025, following years of advocacy by the **California Coalition for Worker Power** (a Fair Work grantee), Governor Newsom signed SB 578 to permanently establish, in the labor code, the **California Workplace Outreach Project**. This first-in-the-nation program launched during the pandemic and funds 89 community and labor organizations, including more than 35 Irvine grantees, to engage and educate workers on their rights.
- **Fair Work optimized grantmaking to support grantees' federal response strategies.** The initiative utilized more than \$7 million from its budget and \$2 million from cross-portfolio grantmaking funds to increase support for the well-being and economic security of immigrant workers, and sustainability and resiliency for nonprofits.

FAIR WORK

In 2023, Irvine's board approved \$186.5 million through 2030 for Fair Work. The initiative believes workers will do better economically when they have a meaningful voice on economic issues that affect them, are fully afforded their labor rights, and have advancement opportunities that improve their livelihoods. Informed by grantees, the initiative envisions progress in three areas:

- **Among workers:** More low-wage workers are informed and civically engaged about their rights and advocate for improvements within key industries to improve wages, benefits, and workplace protections.
- **In the worker rights field:** Grantees will improve their individual and collective skills and resources to better reach and serve more workers.
- **Within policy and systems:** The worker rights field will advance policy and industry reforms, increase investments, and strengthen partnerships to improve conditions for low-wage workers' lives.

In 2025, we invested \$38 million in 40 grants (some in partnership with another Irvine initiative) focused on:

- 1 Expanding organizing to engage more California workers around their rights and opportunities for family-sustaining work
- 2 Advancing integrated approaches to strengthen labor enforcement and ensure workers receive their full wages due
- 3 Supporting promising innovations, policy solutions, and public-private partnerships that improve job conditions in low-wage industries and increase access to secure employment

Key Learnings

- **Grantees observed more barriers for enforcing workplace protections.** Immigrant workers already fearing employer retaliation are more deterred from filing claims due to federal immigration enforcement risks. Grantees continue to work on wage-theft cases and have stretched to support workers threatened by federal policies and escalated immigration enforcement. Grantees rapidly responded to directly help workers, train them on their rights, engage employers to protect immigrant workers, and challenge unlawful enforcement.
- **Grantees are exploring new employer strategies.** The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, Organizing Power in Numbers, and the California Coalition for Worker Power have pivoted to engage and build alliances with employers and industries to protect immigrant workers.
- **Outreach and organizing enabled workers to recover unpaid wages.** Despite fears of immigration enforcement and retaliation, grantees successfully organized with agriculture, food service, and construction workers to recover wages from employers. Grantees are also using the courts to win back wages.

Notable in 2025

Just Prosperity commissioned an independent evaluation of its initial grantmaking strategy and found that its investments helped **inform, protect, and expand more than 400 policies and budget proposals.**

Those efforts increased protections for vulnerable renters, increased paid sick leave, and expanded cash supports and tax credits for low-income families.

These results were made possible by:

- Organizing and outreach efforts by grantees that **engaged approximately 2.6 million low-income Californians**
- Grantees identifying and **training close to 40,000 community residents**, who are now local leaders ready to mobilize neighbors on a range of policy opportunities (e.g., protecting childcare subsidies, financial supports for working families, housing affordability, etc.)

JUST PROSPERITY

In 2022, Irvine’s board approved Just Prosperity to ensure that low-income Californians have the power to influence lasting change in our economic and political systems. The four-year, \$107 million initiative’s goals are to:

- Create and protect policy solutions that improve economic opportunity for low-income households
- Increase organizing and coordination across organizations and networks that build the voice and power of historically marginalized communities
- Build public and political will for policies, practices, and ideas that advance the power and prosperity of low-income Californians

In 2025, we invested \$27.4 million in 33 grants (some of which were in partnership with other Irvine initiatives) for:

- 1 **Policy research and advocacy:** supporting networks of organizations and coalitions that prioritize community needs, especially from those historically excluded, and fostering collaboration among diverse partners
- 2 **Statewide and regional power-building:** investing in the resources, skills, and knowledge of community organizers to build power with low-income workers so they have more access and opportunities to drive changes
- 3 **Strengthening field capacities like storytelling and research:** investing in efforts that elevate community voice to influence public and political will

Key Learnings

- **Californians are increasingly concerned with affordability, and wages are not enough to address persistent economic insecurity.** Inequality, changing labor markets, and erosion of the safety net have made it difficult for Californians to secure work and afford basic needs. Just Prosperity grantees complement Irvine’s overall grantmaking with work to expand access to childcare, housing, food, and other necessities. Our flexible grants have helped organizations address pressing needs while continuing to advance long-term changes.
- **Organizing and advocacy remain foundational as grantees seek more resources to expand efforts.** Statewide power-building and policy-advocacy efforts have not always represented the diverse priorities of low-income Californians. More than half of our grantmaking, to date, has focused on increasing organizing skills, resources, innovation, and coordination within statewide coalitions and networks to serve communities with distinct needs — and secure meaningful policy wins.
- **Building a broader, more inclusive coalition is a priority that takes time and resources.** Grantees feel greater urgency and are experimenting with new approaches to engage a range of ideological perspectives and influence decision-makers. Developing these new relationships and capabilities takes time, internal capacity, and ongoing support.



Notable in 2025

- Irvine support helped our priority communities remain competitive at the state level, with each region receiving funding from California Jobs First to implement inclusive economic programs. For example, the **UC Santa Cruz CITRIS Initiative for Drone Education and Research (CIDER)** was [awarded nearly \\$3 million](#) and is launching a program to expand regional workforce development related to drones.
- The Central Valley Community Foundation celebrated the five-year anniversary of **Fresno DRIVE**, a community-led initiative to advance economic inclusion for all in Fresno that Irvine has supported since 2019. Accomplishments:
 - Since 2013, Fresno has climbed 33 places in the Economic Inclusion Index and 62 places in the Racial Inclusion Index, and employment rates increased from 68% to 74%, nearing the California average.
 - The Urban Institute attributes Fresno's success to strategies that align with Fresno DRIVE's community-led approach, including developing a shared vision, bold public leadership, cross-sector partnerships, and community engagement.
- **The Port of Stockton**, building on a [\\$110 million EPA Clean Ports Program grant](#), partnered with the Green Economy Lab and Wiggins to co-develop and implement a workforce training program that will lead to more living-wage jobs.

PRIORITY COMMUNITIES

In December 2024, Irvine's board approved a new strategy for Priority Communities, committing an additional \$220 million over seven years to support efforts in six cities (Fresno, Merced, Riverside, Salinas, San Bernardino, and Stockton) to create an economy that works for all residents. The initiative's goals are to:

- **Strengthen worker and community power**
- **Invest in community-led and -owned economic development models**, including workforce pathways and the small business ecosystem
- **Respond to emerging community needs** and opportunities

In 2025, we invested \$33 million in 41 grantees to support our work to:

- 1 **Increase the capacity, diversity, and coordination of organizations** and coalitions to build worker influence and power, and increase the commitment of public and private institutions to advance economic development goals that work for all residents
- 2 **Grow public and private investment** in community-led and -owned economic development models that boost the prosperity of workers, consumers, and business owners
- 3 **Increase the ability of nonprofits** to address economic barriers that disproportionately impact residents of color and the effects of too little public and private investment

Key Learnings

- **Federal policies are straining the system.** With reduced federal funding coming to California, we are managing expectations on how much Irvine can fill gaps in nonprofit funding. We will continue partnering with others to respond to crises and fund work to support residents disproportionately harmed by program cuts.
- **We must ensure that regional prosperity is not just for those in power.** These regions are at the epicenter of opportunities for new technologies/industries, but without community leaders shaping decisions and holding decision-makers accountable on economic policies, workers and residents of color will be left behind and exploited.
- **We need to build relationships with leaders in Native communities so they can advance their economic development goals.** We need to reach out to Indigenous leaders in each region and help other community partners build their capacity to engage with their neighbors who are from local tribes about opportunities, such as transitioning to green energy.

Cross-Portfolio Grantmaking

Grantmaking Highlights



To develop a governance framework that embeds equity, supports economic resilience, and leverages public funds (building on lessons from similar state and regional initiatives)

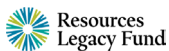
INVESTING *in* PLACE

To advance implementation of a comprehensive Capital Infrastructure Plan for Los Angeles that embeds transparency, accountability, and equity in public investments, especially to prioritize community well-being and economic opportunity for low-income residents



HUMBOLDT AREA
FOUNDATION

To be a regional anchor for equitable access to economic opportunity, disaster response, and coordination for legal support and rapid response, based on federal actions



To (along with Priority Communities) develop a policy agenda and build organizing capacity for climate and economic policies that benefit low-wage workers

POSSIBILITY LABS

To train and support government and community leaders to enact civic-engagement programs with voices of underrepresented, low-income Californians in public decision-making

Each year we use some staff time and grant dollars to explore opportunities that complement our initiatives and sit outside or span multiple focus areas. These investments can offer additional ways to reach our North Star goal and to support learning and strategy development across our work.

LEVERAGING PUBLIC FUNDS

Irvine works alongside funders, government, organized labor, employers, and community organizations to ensure that public investments translate into good jobs, community benefits, and more equitable economic outcomes for Californians paid low wages.

In prior years, unprecedented federal and state investments — particularly through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act — created significant opportunity to influence how public dollars were deployed. Leveraging Public Funds emerged as a cross-portfolio strategy to help communities access, shape, and maximize these investments.

Since 2022, Irvine has allocated approximately **\$80 million** to capacity building, technical assistance, and pre-development support to fill critical gaps in under-resourced regions and systems.

In 2025, however, substantial federal funding cuts, delays, and uncertainty significantly altered this landscape. Irvine adapted its approach, moving away from assumptions about large federal resources toward **strengthening state and local systems, governance, and civic infrastructure capable of delivering equitable outcomes under constrained conditions**. We supported efforts to:

- Develop durable governance and policy frameworks that embed equity and economic resilience into state and regional funding decisions
- Advance equity, transparency, and accountability in local capital and infrastructure planning
- Strengthen regional anchor institutions' capacity to coordinate economic opportunity, disaster response, and legal and rapid-response infrastructure
- Integrate climate and economic policy through field-building and organizing efforts
- Build the capacity of government and community leaders to design civic engagement models that elevate the voices of low-income Californians in public decision-making

Cross-Portfolio Grantmaking

Grantmaking Highlights

Increase awareness and understanding of how AI impacts low-wage workers



Latino Prosperity – to support the EyesOnOpenAI coalition and a communications and advocacy campaign to uphold California’s charitable trust laws in AI governance



TechTonic Justice – to empower direct service providers, worker centers, and advocates in identifying, challenging, and litigating AI-driven injustices through training, technical support, and community storytelling

Strengthen coalitions to advance public and private policy frameworks and sector strategies



LAANE – to advance equitable AI governance in Los Angeles by developing guardrails to protect workers; engaging unions and community organizations in city decision-making; and informing local regulations on accountability and responsible technology use

Advance human-centered AI solutions that address challenges faced by low-wage workers and families



One Fair Wage – to examine how AI and automation are transforming the restaurant industry and advance strategies codesigned by workers and employers that improve job quality rather than displace workers

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Emerging technologies play a major role in the labor market, especially for low-wage workers who are most susceptible to job shifts and the least in control over workplace decisions. We believe that those most impacted by Generative Artificial Intelligence and AI-enabled automation should have the knowledge, tools, and agency to influence these technologies at the company, sector, and policy/systems levels.

In 2024 we began making grants to learn from and support organizations working on AI in relation to our mission and priorities. Landscaping in 2025 led us to an updated strategy:

Continued priorities:

- Elevate worker voice and power in AI design, oversight, and governance
- Strengthen legal, policy, and sector frameworks that ensure AI adoption benefits low-income workers and communities
- Support applied learning and communications efforts that counter the narrative about AI inevitability and make AI’s real impacts visible to policymakers and the public

Continue exploring:

- Build the capacity of the workforce system to respond to AI-driven changes in work and skills in ways that value worker experience; expand equitable, paid training; and promote shared responsibility among employers, training providers, etc.
- Support organizations in using AI effectively, recognizing that one training is not enough when broader operational or capacity issues are at play

EQUITABLE BUSINESS GROWTH

With the uncertainty of public funding from the federal and state government, Irvine adjusted its Equitable Business Growth strategy from supporting the sustainability and growth of small and mid-sized businesses, particularly in the climate economy, to making targeted investments to strengthen intermediary capacity.

This includes helping businesses navigate public programs, access job training subsidies, comply with workforce requirements tied to public procurement, and supporting business associations positioned to advance inclusive workforce and economic development. Examples:



LeadersUp – to support businesses in accessing job training subsidies, navigate government programs, and comply with workforce requirements tied to public procurement



UNITE LA (with Just Prosperity) – to support business associations as part of a pivot to create capacity, adaptability, and durable infrastructure so that public dollars and systems, amid uncertainty, remain accountable to workers and communities

POWER BUILDING, NARRATIVE CHANGE, AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Additional cross-portfolio grants in 2025 focused on supporting and learning from work related to power building, narrative change, and capacity building. Irvine supported:

- A second grant to the **Movement Innovation Collaborative** to strengthen the infrastructure for community power-building across the state, with a specific focus in Inland California
- New funding for narrative-change collaboratives and leadership-development programs
- Investments in organizations to expand access to capital and financial resources for Native and tribal communities
- **Charitable Ventures of Orange County** for continued efforts to expand philanthropic coordination and investment in Native-serving organizations and Tribes, and to launch an online platform to highlight regional economic justice data and community-driven solutions
- **UC Irvine's** continuation of work started in 2025 to study the origins of wealth inequality in Orange County and advance scholarship on the history of land, race, and Indigeneity in the region and how that shapes economic and racial inequality today

Additional Grantmaking

Grantmaking Highlights

Well-Being and Economic Security of Immigrants

- Irvine funded rapid-response networks in under-resourced regions to provide legal and humanitarian aid.
- Investments helped organizations coordinate statewide rapid-response efforts, improving legal and civic support.
- Irvine supported groups that combine legal expertise and community organizing to help immigrants respond to changing federal policies.

Sustainability of Nonprofits

- Irvine invested in projects to help nonprofits improve security, governance, and operational systems, and launched a fund for emergency support.
- \$1 million was invested in a collaborative to protect public interest programs through coordinated legal action, narrative-change, and other communications.

FEDERAL RESPONSE

Changes by the new federal administration in 2025 had implications for low-income workers and the organizations that support them. This includes far-reaching federal budget cuts, new restrictions on safety net benefits, and expanded immigration enforcement that have destabilized businesses, families, and local economies.

Organizations that serve and advocate for workers came under pressure for work related to immigrants, equitable approaches, and civil rights, and philanthropy and nonprofits have faced legal and financial risks while, at the same time, trying to bridge gaps left by reduced or delayed public funding for safety-net programs, workforce investments, and community services.

In 2025, Irvine expanded a federal-response strategy begun at the end of 2024 that prioritizes the well-being and economic security of immigrant families, and the sustainability of nonprofits.

Irvine deployed approximately \$20 million — \$13 million of which from a special payout — plus an additional \$16.35 million invested via our four grantmaking initiatives.

Expected challenges to come

Irvine strategy implications

Federal enforcement intensifies and is likely to endure

Support partners in adapting and responding to shifting federal policies

Organizations bridging direct service and organizing are stretched thin

Strengthen integrated community responses (workforce, benefits, and civic engagement) to meet the full needs of families

Nonprofits' finances are tested by federal cuts

Expand financial advising and sustainability planning for nonprofits

New nonprofit supports are emerging but need coordination

Deepen coordination among funders and intermediaries for more impact and less burden on grantees

Impact litigation is a critical tool but expensive and evolving

Continue to support partners' legal strategies and monitor trends

Additional Grantmaking

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

We believe the voices, ideas, and priorities of the Californians most deeply impacted by the housing crisis must inform efforts to address it. In 2018, Irvine commissioned a landscape study and made some exploratory grants in housing research, advocacy, and innovation. In 2021, Irvine committed, as a focused grantmaking project, an **additional \$40 million over four years** to:

- 1 **Build the capacity of housing policy advocates** across the state to elevate the voices, interests, and ideas of low-income residents
- 2 **Engage impacted populations** in the design and implementation of policy solutions
- 3 **Advance a 3Ps agenda:** Protect tenants, Preserve affordable housing, and Produce new affordable units

Over the past seven years, we have invested **more than \$52 million** to support statewide and regional housing advocacy efforts, strengthen the capacity and coordination of community advocates, and advance equity-centered policy research. Our funding has also supported community priorities, such as equitable development and land use, community ownership models, and rural, tribal, and farmworker housing.

Now is a moment of transition for the housing field, with Irvine and other funders narrowing their investments. We supported, with the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, a resource, [Advancing Housing Affordability in California: A Funder Playbook](#), that highlights impactful grantmaking strategies and offers guidance for current and new funders.

This includes opportunities to align housing investments within existing missions, values, and portfolios (not overtly about housing, since the housing crisis affects nearly every issue (education, health, economic mobility, etc.)). And because housing's high costs intersect with Irvine's North Star goal, we are exploring how to integrate housing affordability and community ownership into our existing initiatives.

LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Each year, The James Irvine Foundation Leadership Awards recognize leaders whose innovative solutions to critical state challenges improve people's lives, create opportunity, and contribute to a better California.

The Foundation grants each organization \$350,000 and shares their approaches with policymakers, peers, and other audiences via an event in Sacramento, traditional and social media activity, and individualized creative/artistic projects. Read about these impressive leaders [here](#).

Listening and Learning

Listening to the people we seek to support and partner with is core to our work. Our approach is driven, in part, by our [Impact Assessment and Learning Framework](#), which guides how we assess progress and impact, and how we use what we learn in our strategy, grantmaking, and operations.

We support many forms of listening across Irvine to inform our thinking, approaches, and practices — and to address equity. We also share what we learn with others, where relevant and useful. Below are 2025 examples of listening to and learning from initiative grantees and California workers.

LISTENING TO GRANTEES

- **Better Careers** convened grantees from its three workstreams to build relationships and learn from successes and challenges. The initiative also engaged with grantee advisors to discuss preliminary evaluation insights.
- **Fair Work** convened grantees to support relationship-building, strategic dialogue, and reflection. The Fair Work team is using learnings from this convening to inform investment strategies that respond to grantee needs and challenges. Additionally, the initiative engaged grantee advisors on initiative evaluation data collection.
- **Just Prosperity** brought grantees together to strengthen connections, explore opportunities for collaboration, and share insights on community conditions to guide the initiative’s strategy refresh.
- **Priority Communities** hosted a grantee webinar to discuss the results of the initiative’s look-back over five years. The team also launched a grantee advisory committee to inform the initiative’s approach to measuring the impact and progress of the updated strategy.

LISTENING TO CALIFORNIA WORKERS

Irvine supported the Public Policy Institute of California to produce [Work and Economic Insecurity in California](#). The report explores reasons for economic insecurity among low- and middle-earner Californians, policy solutions, and analyzes statewide data. It also shares perspectives from a diverse array of low- and middle-wage workers who attended 12 regional listening circles supported by Irvine. Insights include:

- **Affordability is a challenge, particularly in recent years.** Workers struggle with the rising costs of everyday necessities, with food and rent up 25% on average, and utilities and gas up 40% since 2020.
- **The cost of living feels like a tightrope walk.** Workers feel overwhelmed by taking on debt to cover costs. Safety-net programs can provide relief, but many workers face challenges qualifying for or accessing them.
- **Family, health, and other personal needs impact work choices.** Listening circle participants report making decisions based on what allows them to care for themselves or others. Some decided against moving to lower-cost areas in California because of family and community support.
- **Financial struggles reflect long-term labor market changes.** California has been adding high- and low-wage jobs but not middle-wage ones, and earnings have stagnated for those at or below the median.
- **Changing careers or employers for more money has risk.** Many low-income workers feel like they’re balancing between limited stability and financial failure, and fear upsetting that balance by taking steps forward.

CALIFORNIANS AT A GLANCE

PPIC conducted its annual [Economic Well-Being Survey](#), with Irvine support, about Californians’ economic situations and perspectives on economic mobility. The survey of 2,306 adults included an oversample of Californians living on low incomes (households under \$40,000).

68%

expect bad financial times in California during the next year.



One in four say the lack of well-paying jobs has made them seriously consider moving, with 21% saying they would move out of state.



Half of lower-income Californians say that they or someone in their home has reduced meals or cut back on food to save money.

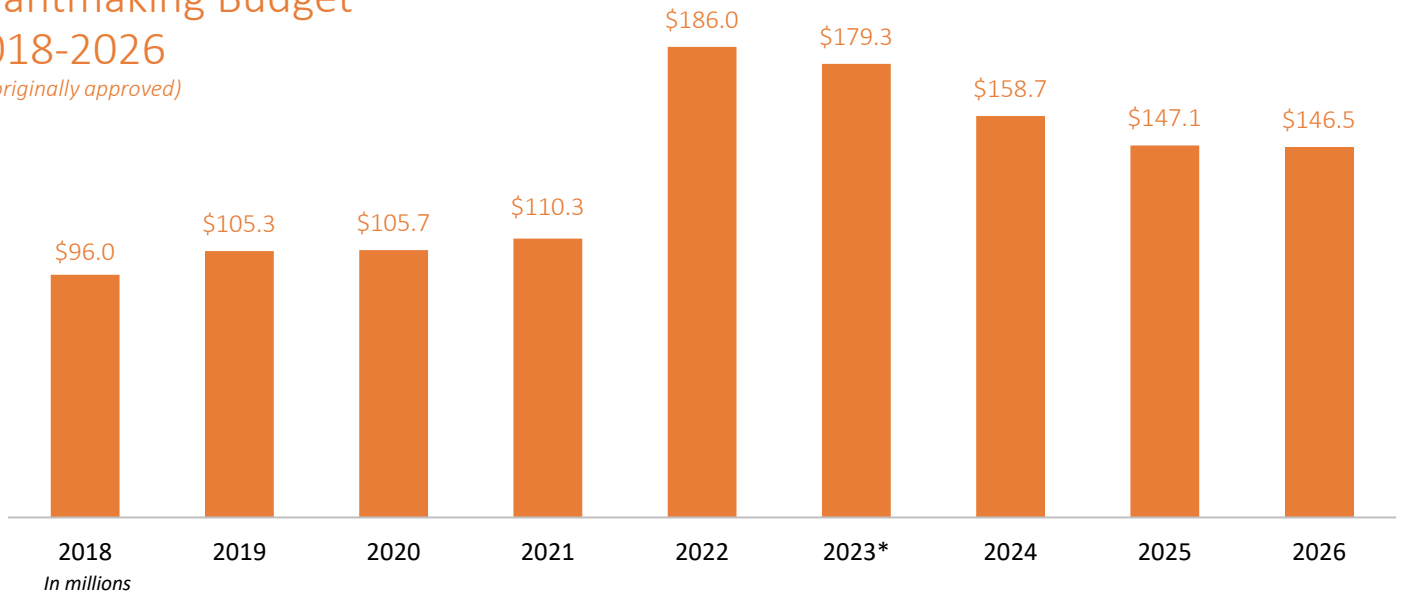
78%

favor increasing government funding for job training so that workers have the skills for today’s jobs.

2025 GRANTMAKING PORTFOLIO BY THE NUMBERS

Grantmaking Budget 2018-2026

(as originally approved)



2026 Grantmaking Budget

	2025 Actual
Initiatives	
Better Careers	\$ 15,080,000
Fair Work	\$ 37,101,356
Just Prosperity	\$ 27,859,582
Priority Communities	\$ 33,100,000
Projects	
Leadership Awards	\$ 6,643,500
Cross-Portfolio Grantmaking (formerly R&D)	\$ 12,756,107
Additional Grantmaking	
Impact Assessment and Learning	\$ 1,000,000
Institutional Relationship Grantmaking	\$ 1,665,000
Opportunistic Grantmaking	\$ 20,690,000
Flex Fund	\$ 503,900
Membership/Sponsorship	\$ 645,500
Board/Staff Discretionary and Matching	\$ 3,162,000
Total	\$160,207,000

2025 Grantmaking Portfolio Overview

2025 GRANTMAKING CATEGORIES

Initiatives

- Better Careers
- Fair Work
- Just Prosperity
- Priority Communities

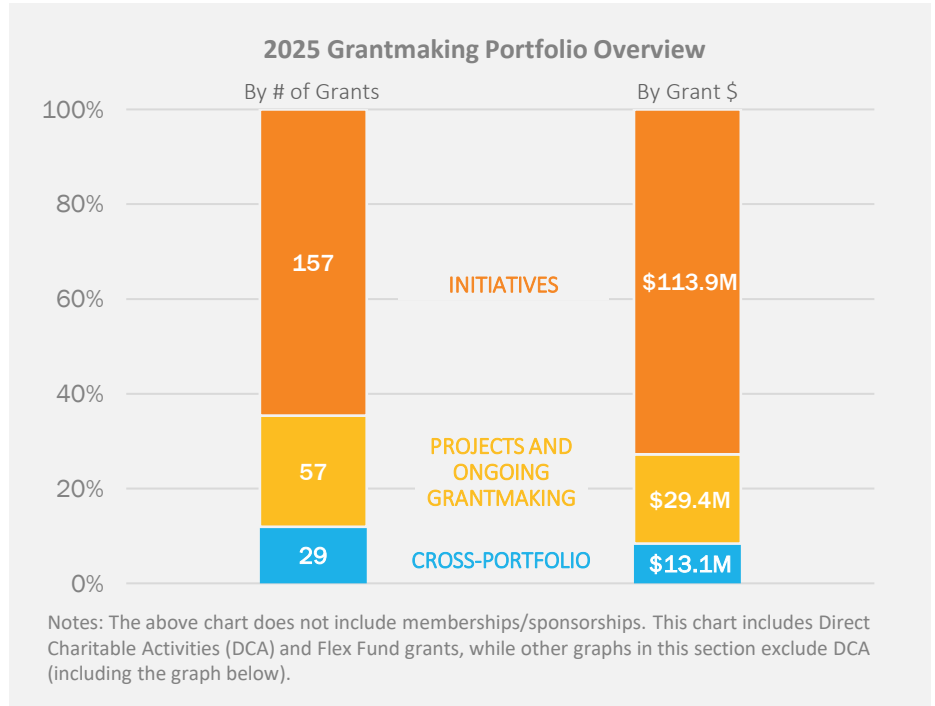
Projects and Ongoing Grantmaking

- Additional Grantmaking*
- Impact Assessment and Learning
- Leadership Awards

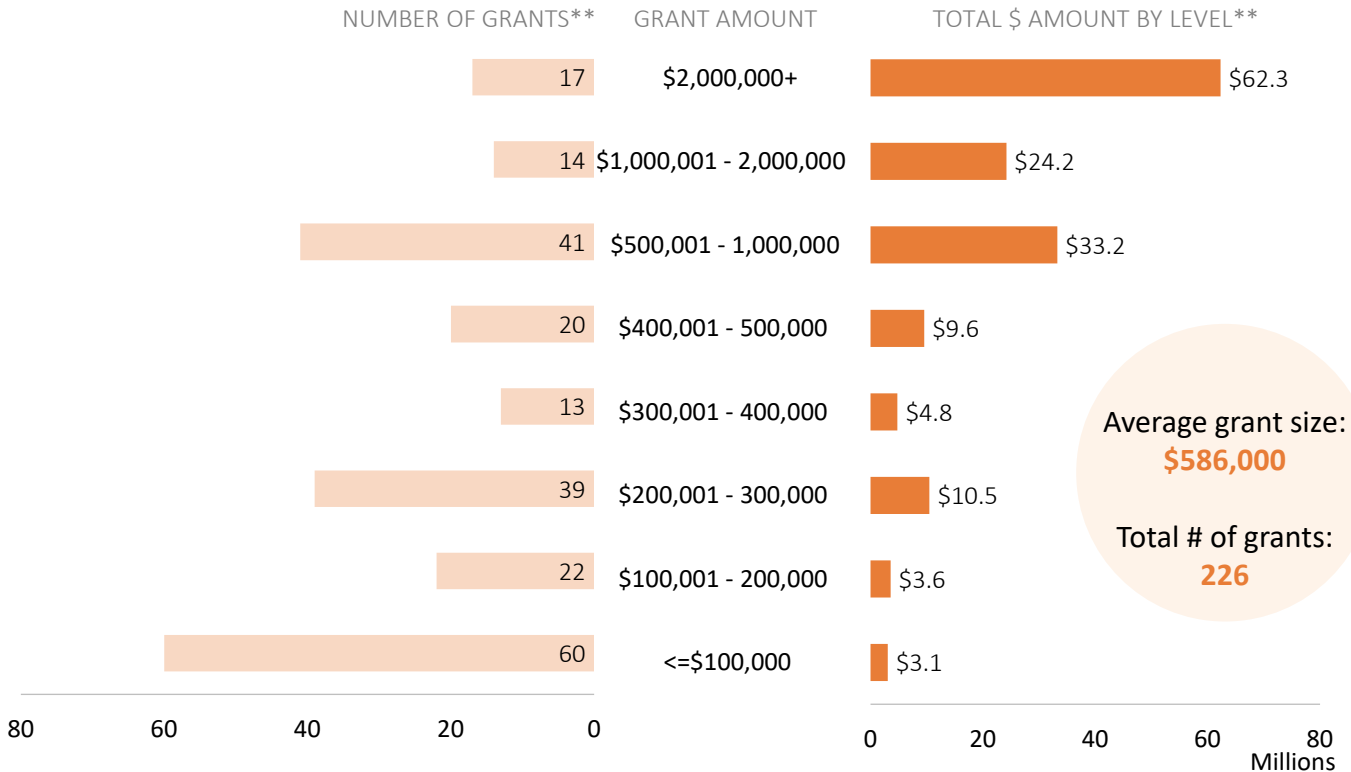
*Includes Flex Fund and Institutional Relationship and Opportunistic grantmaking, and 2025 federal-response grantmaking

Cross-Portfolio Grantmaking

In 2025 this included AI and Automation, Leveraging Public Funds, and research and development-related grantmaking.



Total Grantmaking in 2025 by Grant Amount



**Number of Grants and Total \$ Amount includes Flex Fund grants but not Direct Charitable Activities (DCA) or memberships/sponsorships.

2025 Grantmaking by Region of California



CALIFORNIA REGIONS	2025 Regional Grantmaking	% of Total 2025 Regional Grantmaking	Active Portfolio* (as of 1/2026)	% of Total Active Portfolio Regional Grantmaking	% of California Population** (2023)	% of Californians At Or Near Poverty (2023)***
Bay Area	\$ 5,481,860	7%	\$ 24,519,552	10%	19%	16%
Central Coast	\$ 8,035,592	11%	\$ 25,051,825	10%	4%	4%
Los Angeles Metro	\$ 20,816,700	27%	\$ 53,380,064	21%	27%	31%
North Coast and North State	\$ 3,440,500	4%	\$ 8,775,950	4%	1%	1%
North Valley	\$ 564,200	1%	\$ 1,628,200	1%	2%	2%
Orange County	\$ 1,170,850	2%	\$ 6,026,289	2%	8%	8%
Riverside and San Bernardino	\$ 10,298,142	13%	\$ 53,300,325	21%	12%	13%
Sacramento Metro	\$ 1,763,942	2%	\$ 5,651,700	2%	6%	5%
San Diego and Imperial	\$ 2,606,721	3%	\$ 15,056,300	6%	9%	8%
San Joaquin Valley	\$ 22,657,963	30%	\$ 58,113,575	23%	11%	12%
Sierra	\$ 37,000	0%	\$ 66,000	0%	1%	1%
TOTAL REGIONAL GRANTMAKING	\$76,873,470	100%	\$251,569,780	100%		
	2025 Grantmaking	% of Total 2025 Grantmaking	Active Portfolio* (as of 1/2026)	% of Total Active Portfolio Grantmaking		
TOTAL REGIONAL GRANTMAKING	\$76,873,470	49%	\$251,569,780	56%		
TOTAL STATEWIDE GRANTMAKING	\$79,525,972	51%	\$198,716,092	44%		
TOTAL REGIONAL AND STATEWIDE	\$156,399,442	100%	\$450,285,872	100%		

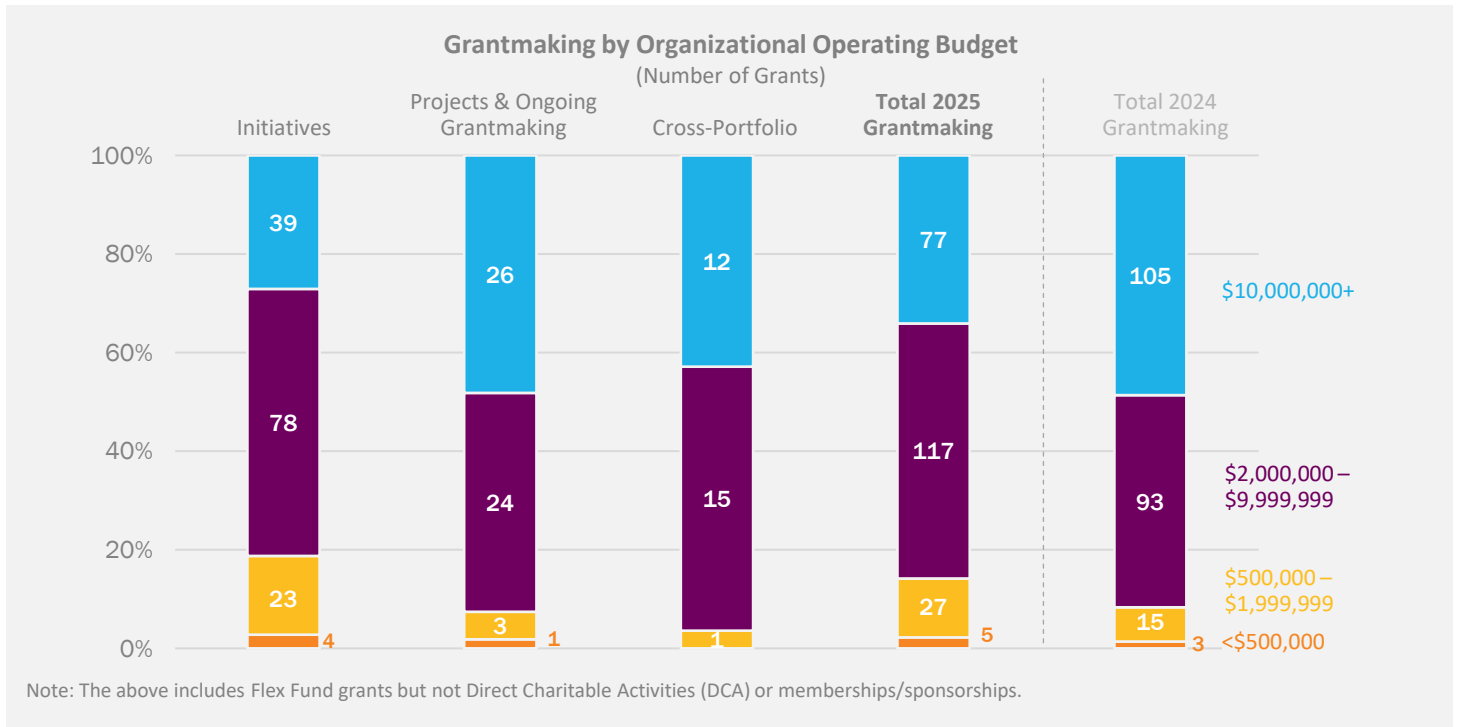
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

*Active Portfolio is comprised of grants made in 2025 and multiyear grants made in previous years.

**California regions have grouped counties based on the geographic detail in the Census Bureau American Community Survey, on which the California Poverty Measure (CPM) research is based.

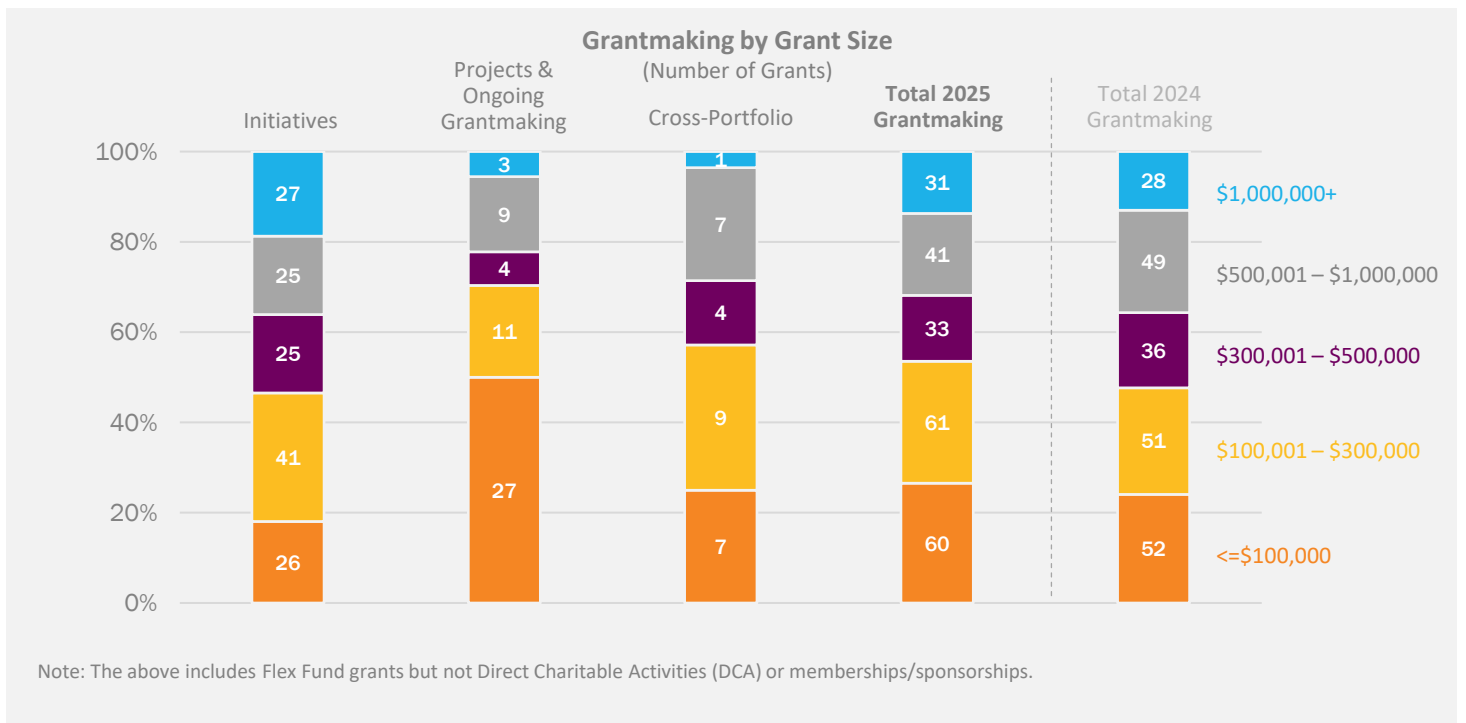
***% of Californians At or Near Poverty — e.g., 31% of Californians at or near poverty live in Los Angeles. Source: PPIC calculations from the 2023 CPM research, as of October 2025. Based on the American Community Survey in 2023 with additional administrative data appended. CPM poverty thresholds are basic needs estimates for a family of four that rents its place of residence, averaged over all Californians in the state or region. The CPM differs from the federal poverty line in that it takes cost of living into account. "At or near poverty" is defined as 150% of the CPM, which corresponds to approximately 250% of Federal Poverty Guidelines.

Operating Budget Size of 2025 Grantees



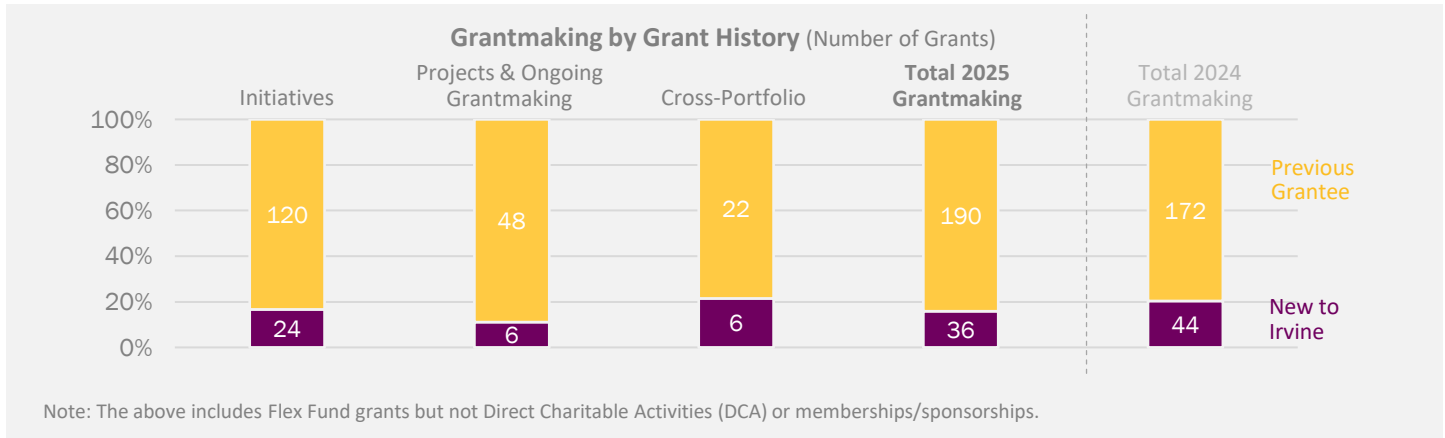
Grant Size in 2025

The average grant size decreased in 2025 to \$586K, compared to \$703K in 2024 and \$789K in 2023. This is due, in part, to an increased number of grants made for less than \$100K, particularly in response to federal actions impacting grantees and low-wage workers.



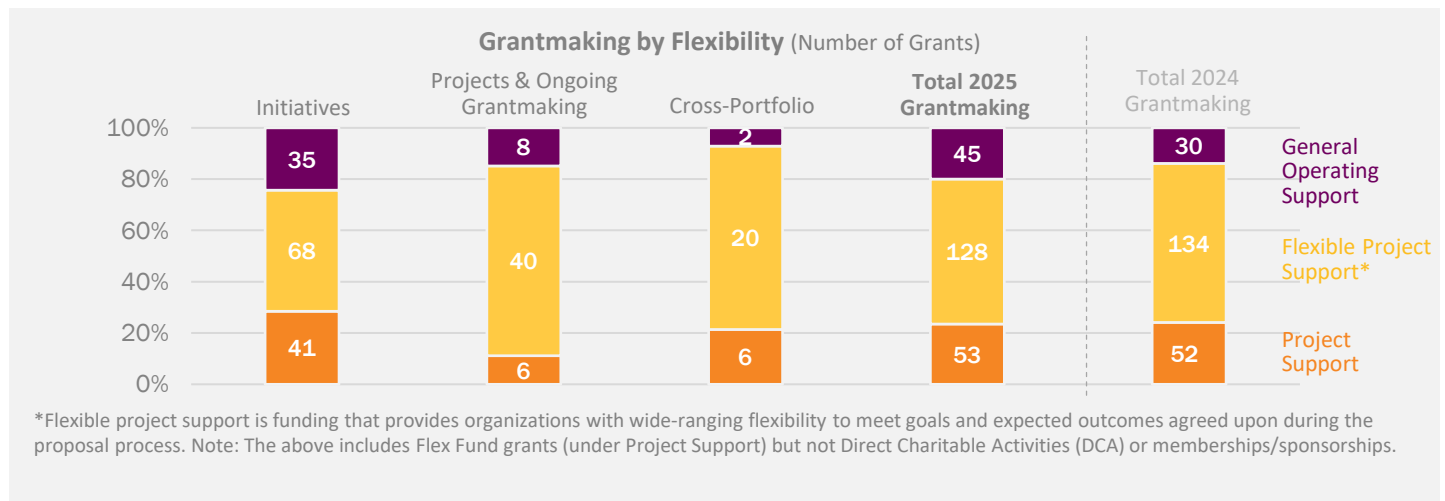
Previous vs. New Organizations to Irvine in 2025

Our initiative model supports a set of core grantees over the course of an initiative, resulting in a significant percentage of our grants going to organizations that received prior Irvine support. We also engage with new partners through our initiatives and cross-portfolio work.



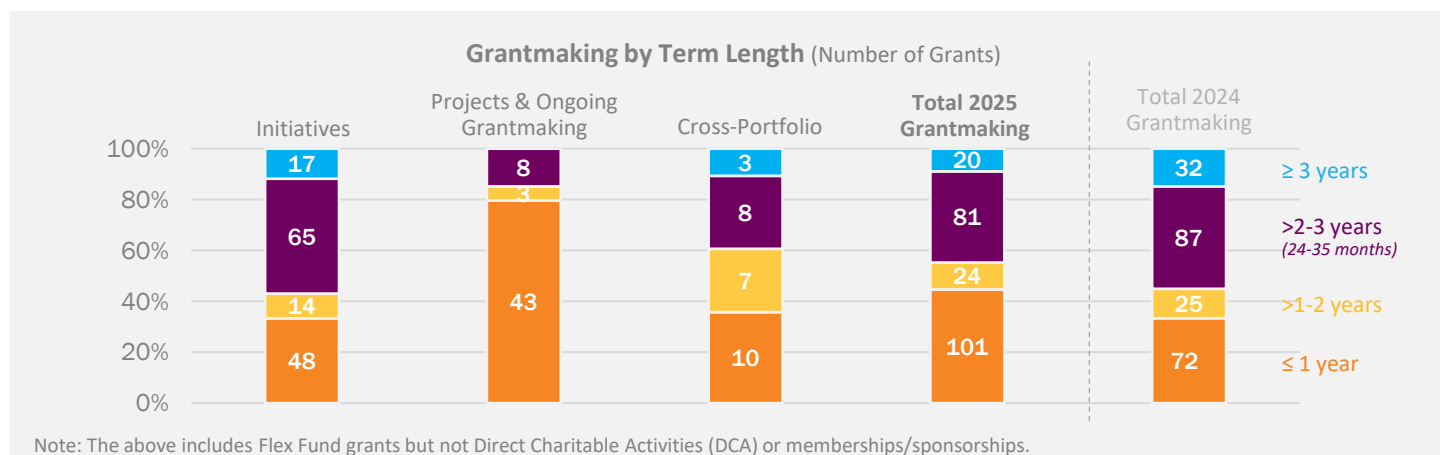
Types of Grant Support in 2025

We cannot provide general operating support to national or broad-scope organizations, fiscal sponsors, or regranting entities. However, our percentage of general operating and flexible project support has increased year over year, from 58% in 2023 to 76% in 2024 and 77% in 2025.



Grant Term Length in 2025

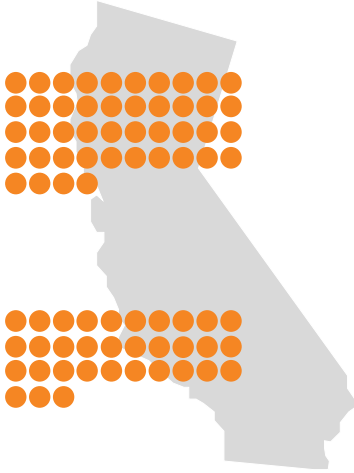
We prioritize multiyear grants to provide sustained support to core grantees through our initiatives. 2025 saw an uptick in shorter grants to address emergent needs driven by federal policy changes.



THE PEOPLE AND CULTURE OF IRVINE

People and Culture

As of December 31, 2025, 33 staff were in our Los Angeles office and 44 in San Francisco.



SUPPORTING AN INCLUSIVE AND CONNECTED ORGANIZATION

In 2025, we continued to deepen our commitment to fostering a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and connected culture at Irvine. Guided by our organizational values, we developed internal learning opportunities, invested in staff development, and strengthened structures that support belonging, collaboration, and shared leadership across the Foundation.

Below are highlights of our 2025 work:

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND TRAINING

Disability Inclusion and Accessibility Training

In 2025, we launched an optional training series for staff on disability inclusion, awareness, and accessibility, designed with disability-rights educators. These sessions created shared understanding of disability justice, inclusive communication, and strategies to proactively reduce barriers in our processes, grantmaking, and events.

The training complemented our ongoing efforts to refine policies and practices that ensure staff with visible and invisible disabilities experience access, belonging, and support at Irvine.

Inclusive Organizational Culture Training

All staff were invited to participate in an optional, facilitated session on inclusive behaviors, equitable team norms, and cross-cultural communication. The session was based on staff feedback and insights from our DEIB Committee (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging). It was designed to help teams create shared expectations for collaboration, respect, and accountability.

The training improved participants' abilities to interrupt bias, elevate underrepresented perspectives, and make space for authentic voice across roles, identities, and lived experiences.

Organizational Learning Agenda and All-Staff Retreat

Throughout 2025, our Organizational Learning Agenda brought staff together for sessions on strengthening alignment with Irvine's values, North Star, and our aspirations around equity. This supported cohesion across teams and understanding of how our practices advance our mission.

This learning work culminated in the 2025 All-Staff Retreat, which included "StrengthsFinder" assessments. Individual and team-based reflection and facilitated exercises helped staff explore how to leverage each other's strengths to enhance communication, collaboration, and alignment — reinforcing a culture of connection, empathy, and continuous improvement.

ADVISOR DEVELOPMENT

Advisory Community of Practice

Building on previous years, the Advisory Community of Practice hosted new sessions on navigating conflict, coaching through growth, and equitable decision-making. Advisors engaged in peer learning on fostering belonging, team development, and leading complex or sensitive conversations with greater confidence.

Conflict Style Assessment and Supporting Tools

All Advisors completed a Conflict Style Assessment to better understand their default responses to conflict and how these show up with teams. These insights support more effective communication, collaboration, and constructive resolution of conflicts. Additional sessions explored regulating emotions, giving and receiving feedback across power dynamics, and navigating conflict in teams that have lived experiences and perspectives.

INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION AND STAFF VOICE

DEIB Committee Leadership and Engagement

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Staff Advisory Committee, which is optional to join, played a key role in strengthening Irvine's culture and ensuring staff perspectives informed organizational decisions. In 2025, the committee:

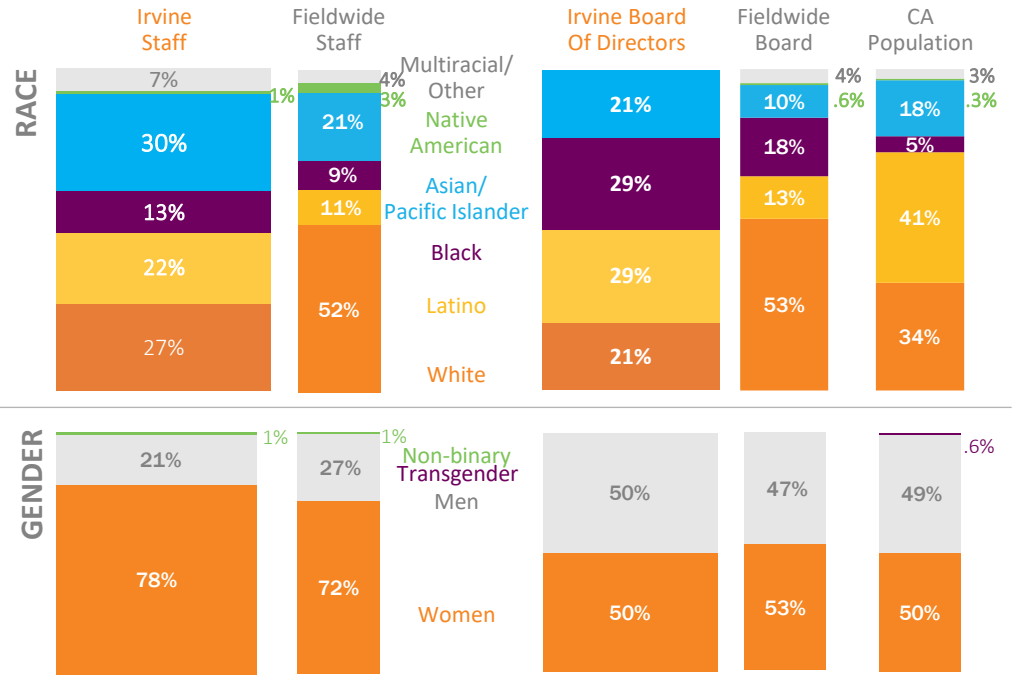
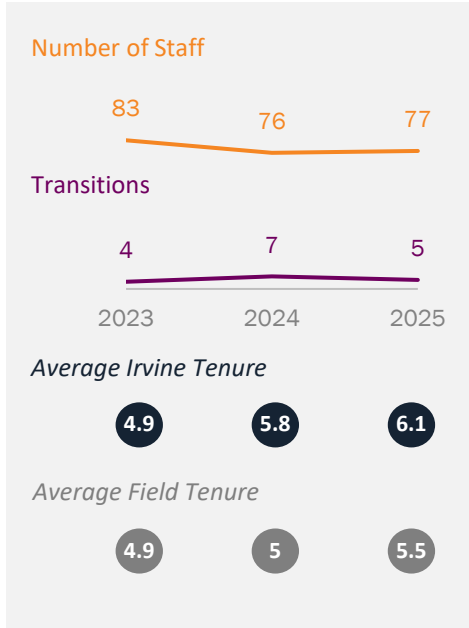
- **Expanded its role**, partnering across the organization to strengthen fair and inclusive practices within policies, staff engagement efforts, and internal communications
- **Strengthened collaboration with the Executive Team**, co-designing townhall agendas, elevating staff questions, and reinforcing expectations of transparency and two-way communication
- **Enhanced the annual staff pulse-check survey**, advising on design and equity indicators, and partnering on interpreting the results to inform 2026 culture-building priorities and next steps
- **Facilitated cross-department conversations** to surface themes from staff feedback, including belonging, communication norms, and translating insights into actionable improvements
- **Modeled distributed leadership and inclusive engagement**, offering a voluntary space where staff could bring lived experience, creativity, and candid reflection to shape culture and collective learning

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

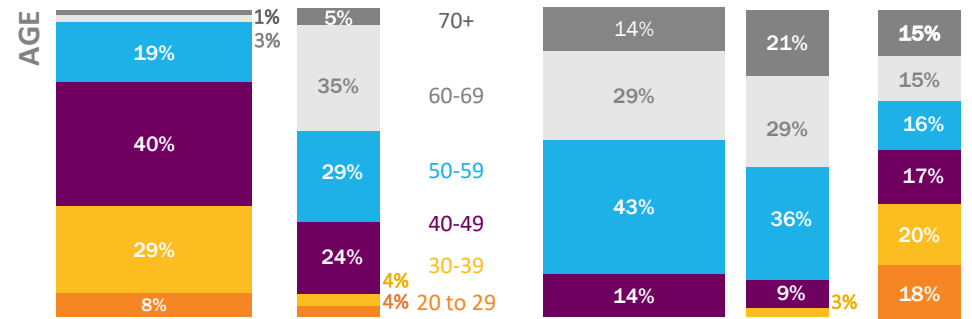
2025 work set a foundation for deepening our culture of belonging and organizational learning. In 2026 we will build on this by embedding inclusive leadership practices across teams, expanding pathways for staff development, and ensuring that our systems reflect our values and equity aspirations.

Staff and Board Demographics

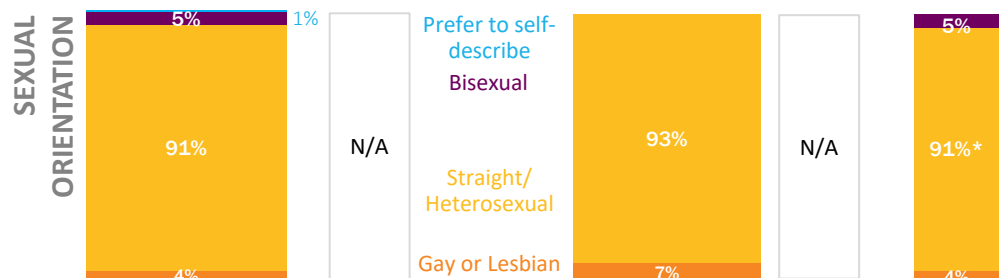
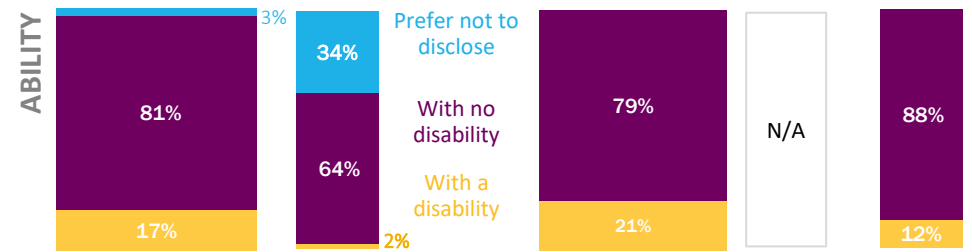
We use a self-identification method with our staff and board to collect demographic data. Sharing this information is optional and is used solely for internal education and awareness. The Foundation is an equal opportunity employer. All staff and board recruitment decisions are made without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other protected characteristic.



Note: Self-reported gender identity varies across data sources. Surveys of Irvine staff include male, female, and non-binary; CA data includes male, female, and transgender; other datasets limited their reporting to male or female only.



Note: California age distribution is normalized to ages 20 and older to align other datasets, including adults only.



*California data did not include disaggregation of those who reported straight/heterosexual or chose not to report, so this data is reported together.

Sources: Staff data is from the self-identification survey from 2019 and onboarding after that. Board data is from the self-identification survey from 2024 and thereafter upon onboarding. Race, age, and sexual orientation data is from PPIC, based on 2024 U.S. Census estimates. Gender for California is from the 2024 Census Household Pulse Survey. Ability data is provided by the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities from the 2023 American Community Survey. Fieldwide data comes from the 2025-2026 Foundation Board Practices Survey by C3 Consultants.

Note: Irvine staff and board data reported on this page are as of 2025. Board data and staff data excludes those who chose not to disclose their data; President and CEO is included in the board data.