

Executive Summary of Asociación de Emprendedor@s

Overview – San Bernardino County partnered with the Asociación de Emprendedor@s to educate, motivate, empower, and develop leadership skills and business acumen of Spanish-speaking, Latino immigrant entrepreneurs.

Challenge – Major obstacles minorities face in creating new businesses are lack of knowledge of business procedures, lack of confidence, lack of support, and financial resources. While information about how to start a business is available online, it is not centralized and requires enormous amounts of time to research and identify rules, regulations, and requirements. By offering these programs in Spanish, the Asociación de Emprendedor@s program provides an individual and transformational approach to helping each person develop a unique path towards launching a microbusiness and positioning themselves for long-term stability and success. Another obstacle and focus of the County's Economic Development Department (EDD) was to ensure access to the program. San Bernardino County is the largest County in the nation. This vastness can impact access to resources which is why the EDD used locations that could reach the greatest number of applicants, holding the 2023 programs in San Bernardino City and the High Desert's Town of Apple Valley and the cities of Rancho Cucamonga and Ontario in 2024.

Solution – San Bernardino County Economic Development Department and Asociación de Emprendedor@s successfully educated, motivated, empowered, and developed the leadership skills and business acumen of Spanish-speaking, Latinx immigrant entrepreneurs (Emprendedor@s) across the region. All services are provided at no cost and are available to low-income minorities throughout San Bernardino County. The Emprendedor@s Basic Program focuses on five areas: training in business fundamentals; building a success mindset; providing access to financial resources; developing supportive mentorship relationships; and setting accountability milestones. After completing the 8 week-training and through San Bernardino County's depth of alliances and resources, microbusiness owners successfully: understand the concept of financial management and why it is vital, utilize financial management practices, rules, and tools, understand the basics of start-up financing and develop a plan to finance their enterprise, and have a solid and workable business plan.

Innovation –The Asociación de Emprendedor@s trains, supports, mentors, and provides resources to minorities and underserved entrepreneurs to create Business Development goals for their microbusinesses to help them flourish. All this information is provided in Spanish. Setting robust and achievable goals increases the likelihood of success and these goals helped the entrepreneurs meet the mission and objectives of a new start up business. EDD utilized the Spanish-language Emprendedor@s Program Curriculum for the training program. A curriculum workbook, which includes all the activities and exercises done during each of the 8 modules of the program, was provided to each participant. Upon completion of the program, the Emprendedor@s have a graduation ceremony where participants provide a 30-second elevator pitch to attendees, presenting their business in a conference style setting where stakeholders can provide the business with resources. This program has a special focus on low-income communities of color and further encourages graduates to refer their family and friends to the program. To diversify the client pool and provide culturally competent outreach, all marketing materials are provided in Spanish and English. The grass-roots approach to outreach increases the depth of access to unserved, underserved, disinvested, and disadvantaged groups and empowers them to achieve economic equality.

Results – Four cohorts have taken place with the support of San Bernardino County in 2023 and 2024. Working in collaboration, EDD and Asociación de Emprendedor@s partnered with San Bernardino City, Rancho Cucamonga, Ontario, and the Town of Apple Valley. 165 County Hispanic entrepreneurs enrolled into the program, with 88 graduating. In 2023, 45% of the graduates who completed the program in San Bernardino County started businesses and are selling their products/services.

Replicability – The program can be replicated by creating a 2-3 month program geared towards minority entrepreneurs in their primary language to overcome barriers to entry. Partnerships with local nonprofits, cities, and stakeholders can aid in the process of establishing, marketing, and locating sites for the classes to take place. The partnerships would also assist with locating guest speakers for class activities. An instructor with an entrepreneurial background to better answer the questions of participants.

Project or Program Contact – Ana Ambriz, Executive Administrative Assistant, 290 N D St. Suite 600, San Bernardino, CA 92415, 909.387.4460, ana.ambriz@eda.sbcounty.gov