



## Catalyst Awards Overview

### Idea Stage Applications

#### 1. Merced College:

##### **Merced College Semiconductor Project: Proposed Funding (\$48,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Advanced Manufacturing**

This project supports the Advanced Manufacturing sector by establishing a regional semiconductor workforce and innovation hub. This pilot initiative aims to explore and validate a place-based strategy to attract semiconductor investment by: Developing strategic industry partnerships through targeted outreach, site tours, and stakeholder engagement to align regional capabilities with industry needs. Designing industry-informed curriculum pathways in partnership with employers, focusing on technician-level skills in advanced manufacturing, microelectronics, and cleanroom protocols. Exploring public-private partnerships to assess infrastructure needs and catalyze investment in training facilities and industry co-location opportunities.

#### Modesto Junior College:

##### **Building a Strategic Framework for Industry-Aligned Training in the Northern San Joaquin Valley: Proposed Funding (\$48,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Catalytic Skills / Talent Development**

Modesto Junior College (MJC)'s project focuses on innovative workforce development aligned with priority sectors and cross-cutting strategies. Key highlights include:

- **Advanced Manufacturing:** In partnership with Gallo and the Manufacturers Council, MJC aims to upskill workers through a flexible School of Continuing Education offering noncredit training in automation, quality control, and process improvement.
- **Bioeconomy:** Collaborating with BEAM Circular and others, MJC is developing biotechnology training pathways to support sustainable industries that convert agricultural waste into valuable products.
- **Regional Innovation Ecosystem:** The project promotes an agile workforce training infrastructure through MJC's Catalyst initiative, supporting rapid experimentation and implementation of new models based on industry feedback.





- **Catalytic Skills/Talent Development:** MJC seeks to expand access to high-demand skills through stackable, flexible training programs that transition into credit-bearing credentials and careers.
- **Regional Coordination and Alignment:** Partnering with Stanislaus 2030, Workforce Development, and employers, MJC will co-design responsive training pathways informed by labor market data, site visits, and employer engagement.

## 2. University of the Pacific:

### **Bringing Solar light to North San Joaquin Valley: Proposed Funding (\$48,000)**

#### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Clean Energy**

This project aims to study the viability of a lighting manufacturer to expand its solar lighting product lines into the North San Joaquin Valley (NSJV) region. In the idea stage, the project addresses uncertainty about the market potential and community alignment for solar lighting solutions in this specific geographic area, and it will evaluate the broader business potential. A key outcome is to provide evidence that can inform business decisions about keeping or bringing clean energy-related manufacturing and services to California, rather than relocating to other states.

#### **Center for Business and Policy Research (CBPR) at the University of the Pacific:**

### **North San Joaquin Valley (NSJV) Data Compass: Proposed Funding (\$48,000)**

#### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Regional Coordination and Alignment**

The NSJV Data Compass is an early-stage initiative to build a community and business informed, equity-centered data infrastructure that supports the North San Joaquin Valley's (NSJV) shift toward a more inclusive, collaborative, and innovation-driven economy. Grounded in the California Jobs First framework and the North Valley THRIVE Strategic Plan, the project addresses a foundational gap: the absence of a unified, accessible, and sustained regional data system across Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties.





### **Stanislaus Equity Partners (STEP):**

#### **Micro Home Manufacturing Facility and Construction Training Program: Proposed Funding (\$48,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Catalytic Skills /Talent Development**

Feasibility study for the launch of a micro home manufacturing facility in Stanislaus County. The proposed Micro Home Manufacturing and Construction Training Program is multifaceted economic and workforce development initiative designed to simultaneously address workforce skill gaps, regional housing shortages, and economic disparities across Stanislaus, Merced, and San Joaquin Counties. This model pairs vocational training directly with on-site production of affordable homes, effectively addressing two critical regional needs—housing availability and skilled labor.

### **3. University of the Pacific:**

#### **Walnut Shell-Based Particleboard for Sustainable Construction: Proposed Funding (\$47,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Circular Bioeconomy**

This project strengthens the regional innovation ecosystem by leveraging Pacific’s material science labs to develop sustainable products from agricultural byproducts like walnut shells. It fosters cross-sector collaboration with agriculture and manufacturing partners such as the San Joaquin Growers Alliance and Valley Manufacturing Coop, ensuring alignment with regional priorities. The project advances sustainable manufacturing and agriculture by converting walnut shells into durable, eco-friendly construction materials, reducing agricultural waste and supporting the circular economy.

### **4. Family Resource and Referral Center:**

#### **Early Learning & Care Workforce Development: Proposed Funding (\$48,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Generational Well-being**

This project uses data to directly address key workforce development challenges through strategic childcare expansion and workforce alignment efforts: Data shows a strong link between lack of affordable childcare and reduced workforce participation, especially among women and low-income families. The project tackles this by increasing childcare availability, enabling greater workforce access and mobility for marginalized groups.





## **5. University of the Pacific:**

### **Pilot Study on the Economic Feasibility and Public Perception of Carbon Sequestration in San Joaquin County: Proposed Funding (\$48,000)**

#### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Clean Energy**

This project will directly engage residents and stakeholders from disadvantaged areas. It will examine how carbon sequestration initiatives (like urban tree planting or jobs in carbon removal projects) could bring economic opportunities to local people, particularly in low-income and minority communities. Additionally, it will identify any policy barriers that might prevent small businesses or local farmers in these areas from participating in carbon programs. The goal is to support regional equity and make sure under-resourced communities are part of the transition to a cleaner economy. This place-based approach will ground the research in local relevance and maximize positive impact where it is needed most.

#### **LeadershipHub Training Institute:**

### **Unlocking Leadership Potential: Advancing Workforce Equity through Inclusive Career Pathways in San Joaquin County: Proposed Funding (\$35,000)**

#### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Catalytic Skills/Talent Development**

The Unlocking Leadership Potential project strengthens workforce development by equipping underrepresented individuals with leadership skills, mentorship, and career support in high-demand sectors like healthcare, education, and technology. It supports community development through local partnerships and culturally relevant programs that build local leadership capacity. By embedding equity and inclusion principles and focusing on marginalized populations, the initiative addresses systemic workforce barriers. It also enhances digital infrastructure by using a virtual learning platform, expanding access to leadership training for rural and transportation-limited participants. Overall, the project advances regional goals by building an inclusive, resilient talent pipeline that fosters both economic and social progress.





## Development Stage Applications:

### 6. Nurture:

#### **North San Joaquin Valley Child Care Entrepreneurship & Business Expansion Initiative: Proposed Funding (\$450,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Generational Well being**

This project will conduct a feasibility study and plan **for cooperatively owned staffing service**. It explores solutions for ensuring a stable workforce, increasing the availability of child care services, improving assistant job quality, and improving business sustainability. This project scale Nurture's tested child care business start-up program to San Joaquin and Merced counties. It remove bottlenecks curtailing business expansion.

### San Joaquin A+:

#### **Growing Futures Program: Preparing Youth for Careers in Manufacturing: Proposed Funding (\$450,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Catalytic Skills/Talent Development**

This project will provide career exposure opportunities, professional skills training, and paid internships for students (ages 17-19) residing in disadvantaged communities within Stanislaus County. The primary purpose of the project is to introduce up to 100 youth to manufacturing careers and to prepare and place up to 15 youth for paid internships with 10 employers. The intended outcome of the project is to establish the foundational education-to-employment infrastructure needed to help cultivate the next generation of skilled workers in the manufacturing sector.

### 7. Brisco Enterprises, Inc.:

#### **Deepwell Compost: Proposed Funding (\$450,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Circular Bioeconomy**

Deepwell Compost is a first-of-its-kind regional composting hub designed to address urgent waste management and environmental and economic challenges in Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin counties—areas defined by intensive agriculture, high volumes of organic waste, and numerous disadvantaged communities. The project directly supports North Valley Thrive's priorities of inclusive





economic growth, environmental resilience, and regional collaboration through infrastructure that transforms waste into agricultural and community value. The facility will process up to 200,000 tons of organic material annually, including food waste, green waste, agricultural byproducts, biosolids, paper, cardboard, sheetrock, and deceased animals. These waste streams currently overburden landfills and rendering facilities. Instead, they will be diverted and converted into high-quality compost, supporting regenerative agriculture, improving soil health, and advancing a circular bioeconomy.

#### **Community Technology Initiative:**

##### **Green Economy Lab: Proposed Funding (\$415,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Clean Energy**

The Green Economy Lab advances North Valley THRIVE's net-zero and decarbonization goals by training a local workforce in clean energy technologies, including EV infrastructure, energy efficiency, and smart grid systems. The program prepares residents—especially from disadvantaged communities—for living-wage jobs through certification and apprenticeship pathways in electrical trades, logistics, and emerging fields like green hydrogen and advanced construction. By focusing on community-based deployment and maintenance of clean energy systems, the Lab ensures that environmental and economic benefits remain local. It serves as a scalable, equitable model for climate-aligned workforce development in underserved regions.

#### **8. Open Innovation Centers:**

##### **FuturePlay - scaling New Collar Opportunities for San Joaquin County residents: Proposed Funding (\$450,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Catalytic Skills/Talent Development**

Through its FuturePlay Academy, the initiative delivers hands-on training in 3D design, additive manufacturing, and game development, addressing regional workforce needs in clean energy, prototyping, and digital media. Programs offer accessible micro-certifications embedded in trusted community spaces to remove barriers for disinvested populations. The project fosters entrepreneurship and freelancing by equipping learners with real-world tech skills and mentorship. Additionally, it strengthens the regional innovation ecosystem through a scalable learning management system that expands tech education and workforce readiness.

#### **9. University of California, Merced:**

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## **SkillRISE: Regional Interconnection through Skills-Based Education: Proposed Funding (\$450,000)**

### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Catalytic Skills/Talent Development**

This project aims to upskill the workforce, particularly entry-level solar technicians, to enable upward mobility and strengthen the region's competitiveness in global markets. Through hands-on training, industry partnerships, and flexible pathways—including dual enrollment, community college programs, and upskilling for current and displaced workers this program will prepare diverse learners for in-demand jobs and equips them with industry-recognized micro credentials.

### **11. Merced County Office of Education:**

#### **Bright Beginnings: Proposed Funding (\$450,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Generational Well being**

The initiative advances key investment actions by coordinating regional stakeholders, implementing state and local childcare strategies, supporting Family Child Care Homes (FCCHs) through grants, technical assistance, and business development resources, and promoting financial literacy among providers.

### **12. Opportunity Stanislaus:**

#### **VOLT on the Go: Proposed Funding (\$450,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Catalytic Skills/Talent Development**

Expansion of *VOLT on the Go*, a mobile manufacturing training program operated by VOLT Institute and Opportunity Stanislaus, to serve underserved and rural communities in the Northern San Joaquin Valley (Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus Counties). The program addresses barriers to employment such as lack of transportation, training, and English proficiency by offering accessible, bilingual manufacturing skills training. Over two years, it aims to train at least 400 individuals for high-demand roles like maintenance mechanics and technicians. Key partners include local education institutions, community organizations, and workforce agencies. The initiative responds to both local poverty and a growing regional demand for skilled manufacturing labor.

### **13. Modesto Chamber of Commerce:**

#### **North Valley Small Business Connection Marketplace: Proposed Funding (\$450,000)**





### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Small Business/Entrepreneurship**

The North Valley Small Business Connection Marketplace is a tri-county digital infrastructure project designed to strengthen the small business ecosystem across Stanislaus, San Joaquin, and Merced counties. Evolving from the Shop Greater Modesto pilot, this transformative platform connects and supports entrepreneurs—especially micro, home-based, and marginalized business owners—by providing tools for digital visibility, lead generation, technical support, and resource access.

### **Investment Stage:**

#### **14. Merced College:**

#### **Center For Ag Robotics and Entrepreneurship & Smart Farm: Proposed Funding (\$1,493,000)**

### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Regional Innovation Ecosystem**

This investment will help transform and complete the final stages of the instructional farm into a high tech smart farm for workforce training and R&D associated with climate-smart agriculture, advanced manufacturing, and bioeconomy. In collaboration with UC Merced, Merced Union High School District (MUHSD), and other private and non-profit partners, the project will scale critical pre-development work—establishing the smart farm, curricula, and industry capacity to power inclusive economic growth in Merced County and the broader North San Joaquin Valley.

#### **15. BEAM Circular:**

#### **California Bioeconomy Innovation Campus: Proposed Funding (\$1,800,000)**

### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Circular Bioeconomy**

The California Bioeconomy Innovation Campus (Campus) will be a state-of-the-art biomanufacturing scale-up facility that establishes the NSJV as a leader in the circular bioeconomy sector, creates good jobs by attracting and growing new bioeconomy businesses, and accelerates environmental solutions. The Campus bridges a critical “valley of death” for biotechnologies resulting from a lack of shared facilities necessary to transition technologies from research to commercial-scale production. Emerging biotechnologies need scale-up support in order to utilize local feedstocks (such as agricultural residues







and food processing waste) to make valuable bio-based products while diverting the use of fossil fuels. The Campus will also feature a community visitor center, wet labs, office space for entrepreneurs, and training resources. Unique approach: The Campus will serve as a global Center of Excellence for sustainable biomanufacturing, designed to offer in-demand bioindustry services and capacity not currently available anywhere else in the country. The facility will serve as California’s first shared resource for bioproduction at pilot and intermediate scales, with a focus on commercializing technologies that utilize California’s diverse agricultural byproducts.



#### **16. Restore The Delta:**

##### **Mormon Slough Restoration: Proposed Funding (\$1,274,000)**

##### **Sector / Enabling Strategy: Climate Smart Infrastructure**

Restore the Delta is collaborating with tribal governments, NGOs, and local flood agencies to develop the Mormon Slough Restoration project. The 9-mile slough, a former river channel running across South and East Stockton, will be transformed into a publicly accessible greenway and park. Currently, the slough and surrounding neighborhoods are flood-prone, with hundreds of unhoused individuals residing in the area, vulnerable to flooding and other risks. Green urban spaces significantly boost economic development by attracting businesses and residents, increasing property values, fostering tourism, contributing to public health, reducing healthcare costs, and enhancing overall quality of life. Project benefits include community economic development opportunities, enhanced flood protection, improved water quality, recreational space, and habitat restoration. We prioritize equitable benefits for all community members, with a collaborative approach that centers tribal perspectives to honor the indigenous community’s values and interests, respects the unhoused population and avoids displacement, and acknowledges the diverse history of Stockton’s communities.

