

# Announcing \$14.2 Million in Grants and \$2.5 Million in Impact Investments

*Our latest round of grants prioritizes community health and supports California's communities that have been disproportionately harmed by the COVID-19 pandemic and economic instability.*

August 16, 2021—The California Wellness Foundation today announced \$14.2 million in grants to advance health equity in California by championing community violence prevention, promoting economic security in our Black and brown communities, and storytelling for systemic change. Our grantmaking is supplemented by \$2.5 million in impact investments, which support traditionally underinvested entrepreneurs including women and people of color as well as businesses that operate in historically redlined communities.

"Many communities of color and low-income communities have been historically denied access to credit and capital. This system of financial discrimination has stymied economic mobility for generations of families," said Judy Bek, Cal Wellness president and CEO. "In addition to our [Advancing Wellness grantmaking](#), our impact investments allow us to champion equity, economic security and dignity of all Californians, especially now, when so many are struggling to recover from the economic fallout caused by the COVID-19 pandemic."

## Investing in Community-Led Solutions to Gun Violence

In 2020, California homicides increased by 31 percent, while handgun sales surged by 65 percent. Our partners are not calling for more policing. They want to see more community-led solutions to gun violence. We need better funded violence intervention programs that address the cycles of intergenerational poverty, violence, and trauma that fuel gun violence. We need trauma-informed counseling, support services, and job training for our at-risk youth.

To support our communities—and particularly Black and brown communities, which are disproportionately impacted by gun violence—we awarded 11 grants totaling over \$4.5 million to community-based, people of color-led organizations throughout California, from Monterey to Oakland to Los Angeles. For example, the [Anti-Recidivism Coalition](#) will advance systemic change across the youth justice system through policy advocacy, organizing, and leadership development. At the policy level, [Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence](#) and the [Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence](#) will continue to organize and mobilize advocates and educate lawmakers on community-led solutions to curtailing community violence.

The [Violence Prevention Research Center](#) at UC Davis will produce and disseminate actionable research on gun prevention efforts in California, while the [Guardian](#) will continue its series of reporting projects, "Guns and Lies," which investigates how gun access, trauma, social and economic policies, and poverty work together to contribute to community violence. The reporting will also spotlight innovative solutions to gun violence from communities across California.

## Ending Generational Cycles of Poverty and Economic Insecurity

As part of our [Economic Security and Dignity portfolio](#), this quarter we continued to invest in economic well-being and mobility in our state, particularly focusing on immigrants and people involved with the criminal justice system. We awarded five grants totaling \$1.6 million to a group of diverse grantees and diverse strategies ranging from policy advocacy to leadership development to comprehensive workforce development.

Our five grantees are [Root & Rebound](#), [Flintbridge Center](#), [EBASE](#), [Time for Change Foundation](#) and [A New Way of Life Reentry Project](#). [Root & Rebound](#), for example, will use its grant to match just-impacted Central Valley residents—in particular women of color—with job opportunities and supports, while also mobilizing them to advocate for policy change. [EBASE](#) will champion the economic security of low-income workers and communities of color in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. They'll do so through public policy advocacy and leadership development by and for the people who live and work in those communities.

## Storytelling To Change Hearts, Minds and Public Policy

This quarter, we awarded grants to organizations that are telling under-told stories, rewriting narratives, developing counter narratives and lifting up and amplifying voices of people who have traditionally been silenced or ignored. Long-lasting systemic change is not possible without a change in attitudes and beliefs, and the work of these media outlets will elevate these voices.

Four grants totaling \$750,000 are supporting storytelling efforts by [EdSource](#), [Capital & Main](#) and [FresnoLand](#). For example, our grant to [EdSource](#) will enable their journalists to report success stories about youth who are experiencing homelessness or are involved with the juvenile justice system, in particular stories of them succeeding and thriving in postsecondary education. [FresnoLand](#) will apply its grant to fund independent research and high-quality policy journalism that supports civic engagement, good government, and local policies that advance health equity and create a better post-COVID Fresno region. A grant to [Project HOPE](#) will help fund a special theme issue of the [Health Affairs](#) journal to lift up new research on structural racism in health care.

## Investing at the Intersection of Race, Gender and Health

This quarter, we awarded \$2.5 million in Program-Related Investments (PRIs). PRIs allow us to use our endowment to make low-cost capital available to charitable or social enterprises that align with our mission. They are part of our strategy to invest beyond our grant dollars to support the health, safety, and resilience of underserved communities. Our investments target communities of color, particularly those that have been disproportionately impacted by historic disinvestment, unhealthy environments and community violence.

PRIs support the foundation's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion by addressing systemic barriers related to race and gender in the financial sector and to increase the flow of capital to traditionally undercapitalized investment managers and entrepreneurs.

This quarter, we invested \$1 million in [Chingona Ventures](#), a woman-led and diverse early-stage venture capital fund that is investing in underrepresented entrepreneurs. We also made a \$1.5 million investment in the [California Rebuilding Fund](#), a public-private loan fund that provides affordable, flexible loans to small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on businesses operated by people of color.

Businesses run by women and people of color suffered disproportionately during the pandemic. Nearly seven in 10 women of color small business owners experienced a decline in revenue, by 46 percent on average, while Black and Latina female founders received just 0.43% of total venture capital investment in 2020. Meanwhile, businesses in majority-white neighborhoods of major California cities received twice the rate of loans through the [paycheck protection program](#) compared with those in majority-Latino neighborhoods.

"As a health funder, our vision has always been a California where every person is able to enjoy health and wellness regardless of their race, class, gender or disability. And our approach has been to remove the barriers that stand in the way," said Alex M. Johnson, Cal Wellness interim vice president of programs. "With this round of grants, we continued to follow the leadership, the vision and the solutions proposed by our visionary community partners. In many different and equally powerful ways, they are challenging the root causes of health inequities in our state and we're honored to support them."

[See the complete list of new grants.](#)

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