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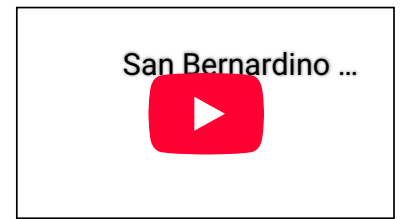
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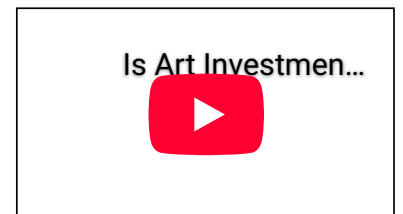
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State of Inland Empire Entrepreneurship Calls for Capital: Declaring Entrepreneurship as Workforce Development

3 min read

🕒 16 hours ago Manny Sandoval (<https://iecn.com/author/mannybsandoval/>)



Photos by Manny Sandoval: Shannon Martin beams with joy as she accepts The EmpowerHer Award for The GuudSeed Company during the awards portion of the event.

The future of the Inland Empire’s economy depends on empowering local entrepreneurs with the resources they need to succeed, according to leaders at the inaugural State of the

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Inland Empire Entrepreneurship Address & Awards.

Held August 23 at Entrepreneur High School and hosted by the [Time for Change Foundation \(https://iecn.com/time-for-change-foundation-opens-fourth-emergency-shelter-in-san-bernardino-with-support-from-taraji-p-henson/\)](https://iecn.com/time-for-change-foundation-opens-fourth-emergency-shelter-in-san-bernardino-with-support-from-taraji-p-henson/)'s Black and Brown Opportunity for Profit (BBOP) Academy, the event spotlighted the vital role of small businesses in shaping the region's resilience and growth.

"We're super excited to be here today because we want to let the Inland Empire know about what is going on with entrepreneurship and why it's so important," said Vanessa Perez, executive director of the [BBOP Academy \(https://iecn.com/time-for-change-foundations-entrepreneurial-bbop-center-brings-silicon-valley-level-tech-and-innovation-to-ie-women/\)](https://iecn.com/time-for-change-foundations-entrepreneurial-bbop-center-brings-silicon-valley-level-tech-and-innovation-to-ie-women/). "It's important to us because we know that small businesses and entrepreneurs build our local economy. Everything we need to develop this city is right here... we have the gifts, we have the talents. But what they need is information and capital—so we're here to talk about that and share resources."

Perez stressed that entrepreneurship is workforce development, urging the community to invest in the entrepreneurs who keep local economies alive. "Let's get together and make sure we pour into the local businesses that are here so that they can feel appreciated and be developed and stay in this community because everything we need is right here," she said.

Leslie Galvan, communications coordinator for the BBOP Center, said the organization aims to anchor itself as a leader in entrepreneurial development by connecting small businesses and students alike with practical tools and mentorship.

"The [BBOP center \(https://bbopbusinessacademy.com/\)](https://bbopbusinessacademy.com/) wants to establish itself as a thought leader here in the entrepreneurial space," Galvan said. "Bringing in powerful panelists that are actively doing the work and bringing that



entrepreneurial mindset to students is exactly what Entrepreneur High School is bringing to the youth. We are a city that can thrive, and all we need is support from key stakeholders.”

Galvan highlighted access to capital, information, and networks as the pillars of BBOP’s mission. “If you’re getting a no, you’re not talking to the right person,” she said. “It’s truly important that we’re setting these entrepreneurs to succeed by providing these resources... Our business academy helps build, grow and scale a business in English and Spanish and is self-paced. This is an opportunity for any entrepreneur ready to take their business idea to the next level and build a profitable and investible business and ensure that we are bringing that business to the IE and not taking it anywhere else.”



Workshops offered by the BBOP Academy every Tuesday and Thursday cover essentials like forming an LLC, navigating small business taxes, and integrating artificial intelligence into operations. These sessions, Galvan noted, are designed to give local founders the tools to grow their ventures while keeping their businesses rooted in the Inland Empire.



Michael Padilla (left), executive director of learning and program development at Entrepreneur High School, mingles with a BBOP Award recipient during the State of the Inland Empire Entrepreneurship Address & Awards in Highland on August 23.

Michael Padilla, executive director of learning and program development at [Entrepreneur High School](https://iecn.com/real-journey-academies-95-graduation-)
(<https://iecn.com/real-journey-academies-95-graduation->

rate/), said the partnership with BBOP grew naturally from their shared mission of uplifting local entrepreneurs.

“We always want to recognize and create opportunities for community members,” Padilla said. “That’s how our partnership with the BBOP Academy aligned.”

He explained that the idea stemmed from the school’s annual student pitch competitions. “Our students create businesses and at the end of the year we do pitch competitions to see who moves on to the accelerated program,” Padilla said. “BBOP wanted to do an adult pitch competition and get the community involved, so I said let’s do it. That community pitch competition is what sparked the idea for this event.”

Padilla added that after hosting the pitch competition, the two organizations agreed in summer 2025 to expand their collaboration and create a larger community event, which ultimately became the State of the Inland Empire Entrepreneurship Address & Awards.

Perez and Padilla presented awards to local business recipients, closing the event by affirming that entrepreneurship is more than innovation—it is the foundation of workforce development and economic vitality in the Inland Empire.



Audience members applaud enthusiastically in support of local entrepreneurs.

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