



## Equity Working Group Meeting

**November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**1:00 – 2:45 p.m.**

The meeting was held via Zoom teleconference. A video recording of the meeting is available upon request. The meeting presentations are available [here](#).

### ATTENDEE LIST

**Presenters:**

*Kevin Lee, UC Berkeley*

*Michelle Nakphong, UC San Francisco*

*Myrna Gutierrez, Los Angeles County Office of Immigrant Affairs*

*Viridiana Rosales Trujillo, Imperial Valley Small Business Development Center*

**SCAG Staff:**

*Anita Au*

*Anna Van*

*Annaleigh Ekman*

*Edward Venegas*

*Jeannie Ma*

**Webinar:**

*Angel Garcia, Ventura County*

*Gail Shiomoto-Lohr, City of Mission Viejo*

*Kevin Shin, Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition*

*Lori Huddleston, LA Metro*

*Pengxiang Zhang, LLG Engineers*

*Priscilla Lopez, Imperial Valley Small Business Development Center*

*Jessica Nguyen, Ventura County*

*Joseph Cabral, Clean Power Alliance*

*William E Bales, Stars of Hollywood Network, Inc.*



## MEETING SUMMARY

### WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Jeannie Ma, Assistant Regional Planner, SCAG | [ma@scag.ca.gov](mailto:ma@scag.ca.gov)

1. Jeannie welcomed all participants and shared that the [EWG History document](#) is regularly updated. She introduced work related to supporting immigrant communities, including [GARE's Fostering Racial Equity in Immigration](#) series, [Toolbox Tuesday Voice for All: Developing and Implementing Effective Language Access](#), and [USC Equity Research Institute of Immigrant in Los Angeles \(SOILA\) County Report 2024](#).

### RESEARCH ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT EXCLUSION AND HEALTH AMONG ASIAN AND LATINO IMMIGRANTS IN CALIFORNIA

2. Kevin Lee, Senior Researcher, UC Berkeley and County of Santa Clara | [kflee@berkeley.edu](mailto:kflee@berkeley.edu)

Michelle Nakphong, Assistant Professor, UC San Francisco | [michelle.nakphong@ucsf.edu](mailto:michelle.nakphong@ucsf.edu)

- Kevin and Michelle presented three research projects that each explored the intersection of immigrant populations and public health. The first project, *The Legacy of Immigration Policies and Employment Exclusion: Assessing the Relationship between Employment Exclusion and Immigrant Health* analyzed employment exclusion and health outcomes among Asian and Latine immigrants in California. Their findings revealed that employment exclusions, such as losing work authorization or facing unsafe job conditions, significantly worsen self-rated health, increase psychological distress, and delay medical care. Research takeaways highlighted that employment serves as a lever for accessing healthcare, with level of exclusions whether from the job market or due to workplace violations are closely tied to legal status.
- The second research project, *Employment Exclusions and Health Care Access among Latine and Asian Immigrants in the Context of Racialization*, examined how the legal status of immigrants influences health care access. Findings revealed that those lacking legal documentation were more likely to delay necessary health care compared to those with legal status. Additional takeaways included employment exclusions have compounding and cumulative effect on immigrant's health and psychological health, the intersecting histories of exclusion impact immigrant use and access to health care, and greater levels of employment violations negatively impact use and access to care, which is more pronounced for those without documentation.
- Third research project, *Social Exclusion at The Intersections of Immigration, Employment, And Healthcare Policy: A Qualitative Study of Mexican and Chinese Immigrants in California*, studied how legal status shapes employment trajectories and healthcare access for Mexican and Chinese immigrants in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Surveys were conducted and results showed that participants often prioritized improving their legal status at the expense of short-term career opportunities and health care access, highlighting how legal status affects both employment and healthcare-seeking trajectories.
- Policy recommendations included acknowledging the intersection between labor policies and immigrant policies, improving labor policies to improve health, increasing workers' rights and workplace health and safety resources for immigrant workers, local government agencies playing a larger role in enforcement, and targeted efforts for undocumented workers to understand labor and health care rights.

#### Comments:

- **Comment:** This research parallels to the struggles faced by people experiencing homelessness and intersects with



those who have faced employment exclusions, particularly individuals who are undocumented and homeless.  
[abridged]

## **CAPACITY BUILDING FOR IMMIGRANT-FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONS AND IMPROVING LANGUAGE ACCESS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

Myrna Gutierrez, Los Angeles County Office of Immigrant Affairs | [mygutierrez@dca.lacounty.gov](mailto:mygutierrez@dca.lacounty.gov)

3.

Myrna presented on the Capacity Building for Immigrant-Serving Community-Based Organizations, detailing the efforts of the [LA County Office of Immigrant Affairs \(OIA\)](#) to support immigrant-focused organizations. This included distributing a \$6.5 million Capacity-Strengthening Grant to a cohort of 10 immigrant-focused CBOs and expanding Case Management Capacity to a cohort of 21 immigrant-focused CBOs.

Additionally, \$1.5 million was allocated to a Mobile Team for Case Management and Legal Support Capacity to a consortium. Grantees such as Saahas for Cause and Al Otro Lado utilized the funding to support immigrants, refugees, those with complex immigration cases, and asylum seekers, demonstrating success through measures such as onboarding a social worker to help with specific needs and cases.

The OIA is also leading the Countywide Language Access Initiative, which aims to train county staff to ask for customers to communicate their preferred language, address the lack of data on Language Access needs requests, and create the formal process for language access complaints. This includes revisiting the Language Access Plans for all 38 of Los Angeles County's departments with OIA aligning departmental strategies with a standardized template to address community concerns. Additionally, the initiative seeks to improve access to services with language support, strengthen community organizations, and provide community feedback for continuous improvement.

### Questions and Answers:

- **Question:** Given that your office provides resources for immigrants, what has been your department's reaction to the recent news about the presidential election and the [potential] administrative changes regarding language access?
  - **Answer:** It affirms the work in language access and capacity building and the further need to advocate for it, especially during times like these. The county is actively engaging in discussions with the city of Los Angeles to identify the right approach, address the risk associated with limited resources, and find ways to maximize existing resources. There has been internal discussion ensuring we remain proactive in supporting immigrant communities.
- **Question:** Could technology be leveraged to enhance language assistance, streamline translations, and improve communication between diverse communities?
  - **Answer:** AI is a trending topic and is increasingly being embedded into language access plans. We are exploring the best methods and consulting with leadership on how to implement AI effectively. There are numerous providers of AI language access services, which present an excellent opportunity to improve language accessibility. However, human verification of translations will always be necessary. AI can significantly expedite and enhance language access in ways we could not have imagined. For instance, we recently planned a pilot program, but by the time it would have launched, advancements in AI for language access would have made so many advancements by then. We are working strategically to partner with AI experts in language access services, focusing on maximizing resources instead of investing in areas that can already be improved. A cost analysis is important to determining the best approach. Internal discussions have also considered using AI for indigenous languages. Initial testing has shown promising results, even if it highlights the need to account for the nuances of specific languages.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS IN IMPERIAL COUNTY WITH THE LOCAL IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION GRANT

Viridiana Rosales Trujillo, Imperial Valley Small Business Development Center | [viridianarosales@co.imperial.ca.us](mailto:viridianarosales@co.imperial.ca.us)

4. Viridiana presented on the Imperial Valley Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which opened in 2023 and provides a range of services aimed at economically uplifting and supporting immigrant communities, including professional development resources for small businesses and entrepreneurs, individualized business mentorship, workshops and training sessions, certificate programs, networking opportunities, and community outreach and engagement. Imperial Valley SBDC received \$295,338 to focus on economic development through the Local Immigrant Integration and Inclusion Grant, the first-ever state funding initiative dedicated to local government immigrant integration efforts. Imperial Valley SBDC plans to use the funds to empower immigrant entrepreneurs for sustainable business success, foster the launch of innovative immigrant-owned businesses, and enhance financial literacy among immigrants in the community. This program will include enhanced resources in Spanish, culturally sensitive support, individualized business counseling, training workshops, and networking opportunities, facilitated in collaboration with local government, educational institutions, and local lending organizations. SBDC's aims to conduct outreach towards immigrant entrepreneurs, Spanish-speaking individuals, and disadvantaged communities.

### Questions and Answers:

- **Question:** What did the credit and lending landscape look like for immigrants in Imperial County before the Imperial Valley Small Business Development Center (SBDC) was established?
    - **Answer:** Prior to the SBDC being established, immigrants in Imperial County had to go through the traditional route for lending from both grant-based and financial institutions. This program will help immigrants receive assistance in gaining access to this funding. Imperial County is a rural and small area in the Southeastern corner of California. Imperial County is at the border of Arizona and Mexico, so we have quite a bit of immigrants looking to open small businesses in our county. This program helps immigrants with establishing and expanding businesses so that they do not need to follow the traditional pathways. Additionally, the SBDC partners with local lending institutions that have established great programs for immigrant entrepreneurs and small business owners.
- 5.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS & OFFERS, REQUESTS, AND CONNECTIONS

Jeannie Ma, Assistant Regional Planner, SCAG | [ma@scag.ca.gov](mailto:ma@scag.ca.gov)

- USDOT is hosting the [Native American Heritage Month: USDOT Title VI Public Presentation](#) on November 19, 2024. The webinar will raise awareness of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, discuss how to foster relationships with departments of transportation, and provide a space for attendees to ask questions about nondiscrimination under Title VI.
- The [Interagency Equity Advisory Committee General Membership Application](#) is seeking new members to elevate diverse and historically marginalized voices that can advise Caltrans, CalSTA, and the CTC on how to achieve meaningful outcomes in transportation equity, environmental justice, and equitable economic opportunities in transportation planning and funding programs. Applications are due on December 1, 2024.
- The webinar series, [GARE Conversations: Fostering Racial Equity in Immigration-Operationalizing Policies for Connected and Prosperous Immigrant Communities](#) will be the last of the four-part series and will feature speakers from Welcoming America and local government practitioners. They will discuss methods and practices on how jurisdictions can operationalize and implement policies to improve economic outcomes for immigrant communities. A [GARE membership](#) is required to register for this session. The webinar is on December 11, 2024.
- SCAG is now accepting nominations for the [SCAG's 2025 Sustainability Awards](#), recognizing projects that contribute to



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the goals of Connect SoCal, the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. These awards will honor projects that have advanced mobility, sustainability, and prosperity in the region. The awards are open to both governmental and non-governmental entities, including community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-profit organizations (NPOs). Applicants are encouraged to submit joint entries for projects that span multiple agencies, sectors, and geographies. Projects completed or adopted between January 1, 2021, and December 31, 2024, are eligible for nomination. Nominations are due on December 13, 2024.

If you have questions about this meeting, please feel free to reach out to Anita Au ([au@scag.ca.gov](mailto:au@scag.ca.gov)) or Annaleigh Ekman ([ekman@scag.ca.gov](mailto:ekman@scag.ca.gov)). SCAG also encourages participants to reach out if you have a topic, project, program, tool, or resource that you think should be highlighted in a future meeting.