California Fights Back:

The California Worker Outreach Program 5.0

A Report Compiled by the California Coalition for Worker Power Based on the CWOP Mid-Term Progress Report for the Period of July 2025 to April 2026

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Introduction

The Trump administration's immigration enforcement sweeps have occurred at churches, schools, hospitals, courthouses, and transit stops, but the number of *workplace* immigration arrests in California dwarfs that of all other locations. Immigrants are vulnerable en masse at predictable locations and predictable times: at work. Fortunately, California has developed a unique and highly effective outreach model that has allowed it to fight back: the California Worker Outreach Project, or CWOP.

Trusted Messengers

CWOP is a trusted messenger outreach model in which the state partners with community-based organizations (CBOs) to reach vulnerable workers that the state cannot. Established during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, CWOP was designed to reach those most impacted by the crisis. What began as an emergency response has since grown into the largest worker rights public education effort in California's history. CWOP offers building infrastructure for worksite responses to pandemics, climate crises, immigration enforcement sweeps, and more.

This fiscal year marked the fifth iteration of CWOP and distributed $28 million across 89 organizations throughout the state from July 2025 to June 2026, including $1.1 million directly for a pilot Rural Strategic Engagement Program.[1] "CWOP 5.0" launched at a pivotal moment for

[1] https://www.dir.ca.gov/outreach/cwop/

California workers, as heightened federal immigration enforcement, mass layoffs of federal workers, and defunding of federal infrastructure programs intensified challenges for workers and communities across California.

This report documents the experiences of CWOP partner organizations as they conduct worker outreach through acute adversity, as well as those of workers themselves who received CWOP support. It uses interviews with CWOP grantees as well as data from the Division of Industrial Relations' grantee portal for the reporting period between July, 2025 and April, 2026.

Measuring Resistance: CWOP By The Numbers

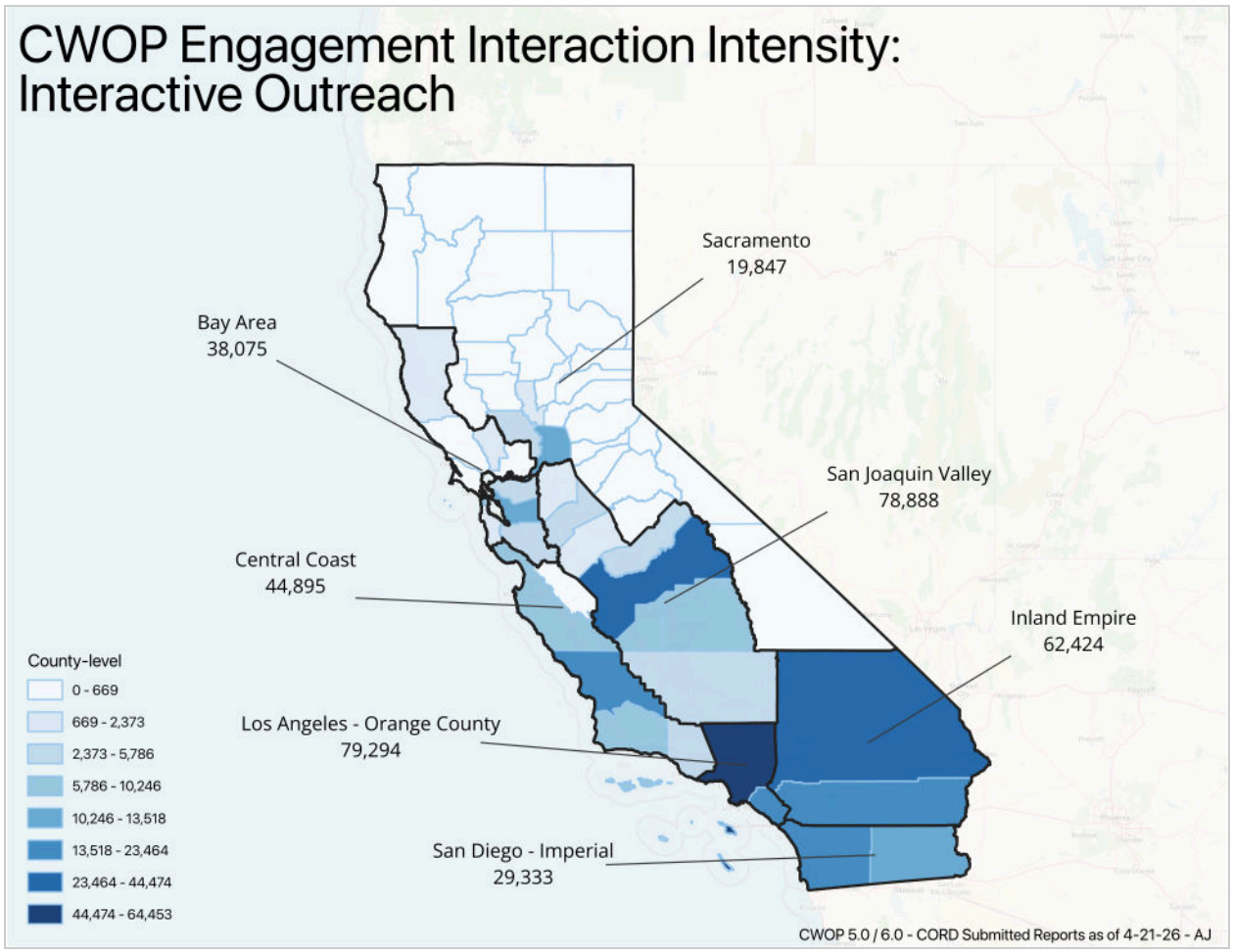
CWOP has been California's first line of defense against targeted deportation, layoffs, and labor standards violations for vulnerable workforces throughout the state. In total, CWOP has **reached more than 7.75 million workers in 50+ over the last 5 years**.[2]

Top 10 CWOP Industries	Top 10 CWOP Languages
Agriculture	Spanish
Car wash	English
Food processing, including meatpacking	Mixteco
Food service, including restaurant and grocery/retail	Vietnamese
Janitorial	Arabic
Hospitality	Tagalog / Filipino
Warehouse and logistics	Khmer
Manufacturing, including garment	Mayan / Mam
Residential care	Purepecha
	Cantonese

In the last year, CWOP partners have interactively engaged more than 352,000 workers (Figure 1: CWOP 5.0 Interactive Outreach Activities). Unlike flyering or texting, these two-way interactions include conversations on the phone, door-to-door, at meetings, events, or high-traffic locations like bus stops. These tactics prioritize meaningful dialogue over the passive sharing of information and represent the highest-touch outreach model within CWOP.

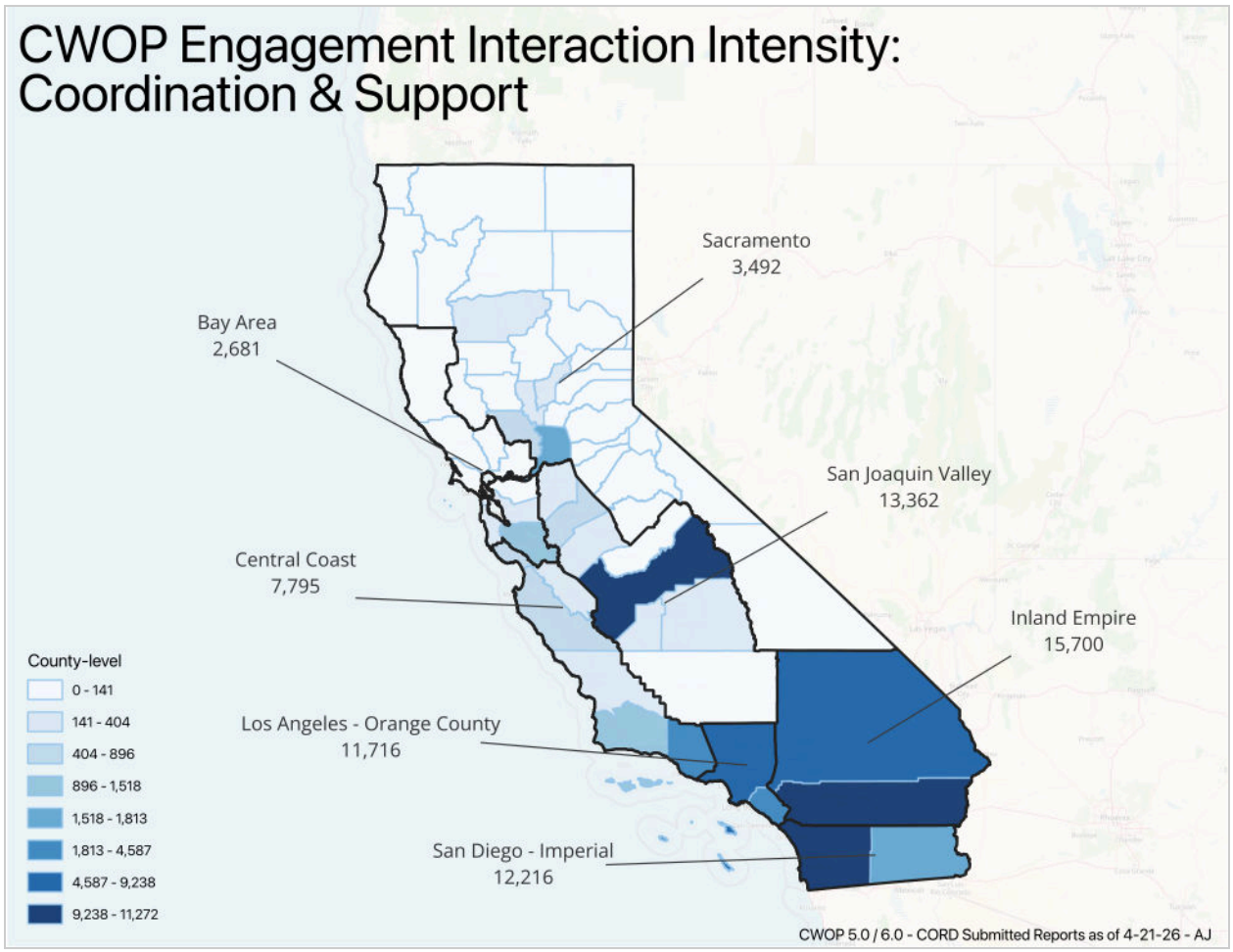
[2] https://possibility-lab-legacy.eachevery.dev/cwop/

Figure 1: CWOP 5.0 Interactive Outreach Activities



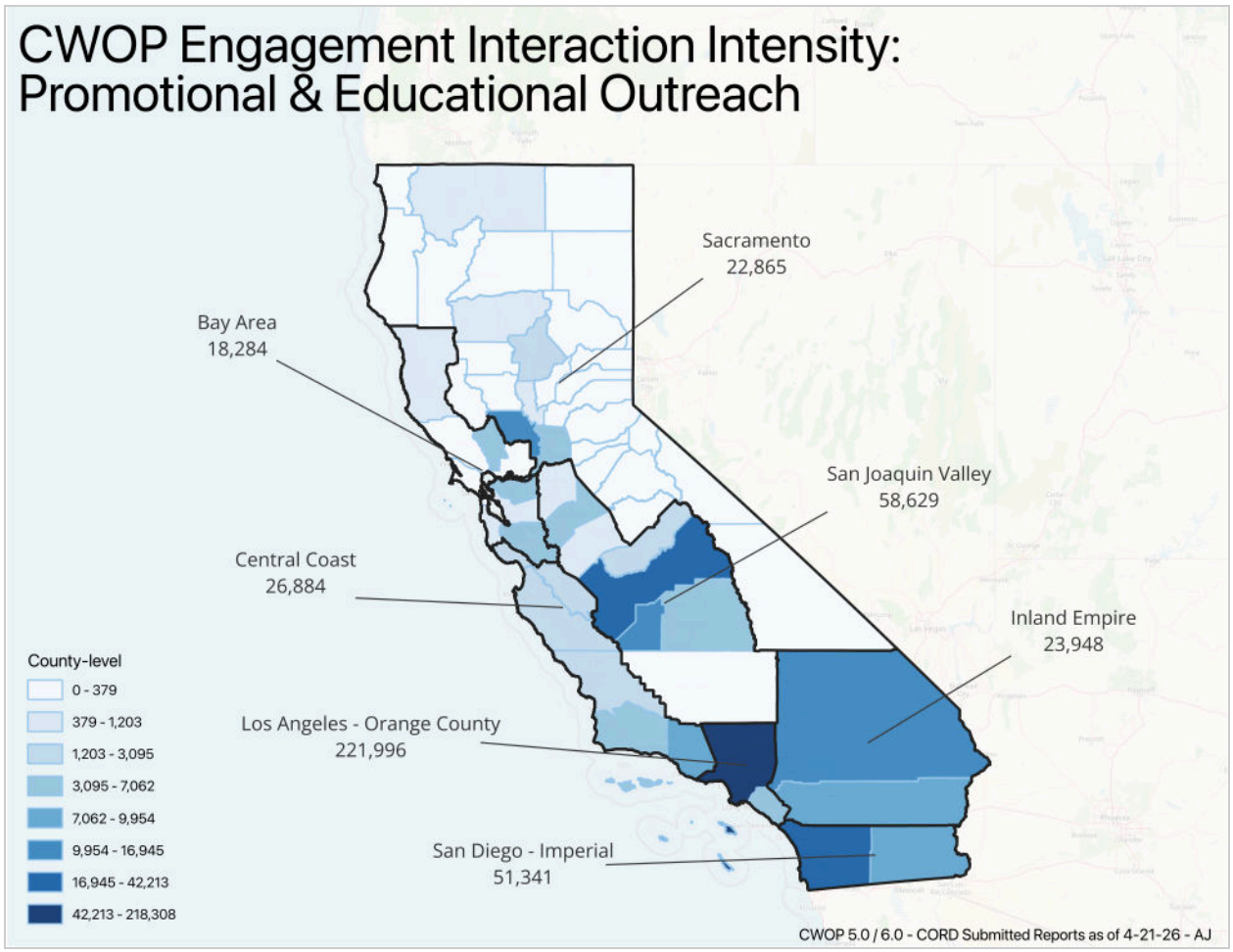
CWOP grantees have reached 423,950 people at community events that provide direct support for claims and complaint navigation, worker leader training, and other technical assistance (Figure 2: CWOP 5.0 Outreach Coordination and Support Activities). These trainings teach workers to be peer navigators, to help organizations move beyond outreach to provide direct support for labor standards violations.

Figure 2: CWOP 5.0 Outreach Coordination and Support Activities



Together, CWOP grantees have collectively produced 434,000 one-way communication channels like social media, newsletters, blogs, flyers, mailers, radio, and television interviews have distributed worker rights information (Figure 3: CWOP 5.0 Promotional and Educational Outreach Activities).

Figure 3: CWOP 5.0 Promotional and Educational Outreach Activities



All told, CWOP 5.0 has reached well over **776,000 workers in ten months**.

Who is CWOP? Stories from the Field

CWOP is rooted in a trusted messenger model that mobilizes non-profit CBOs with deep roots in vulnerable communities. These organizations offer a range of services, from ESL classes to job skill development, and vary widely. Some have a budget of less than $500,000 and a handful of staff in discrete regions, like El Timpano or Calexico Wellness Center. Others have a sprawling footprint and budgets of greater than $66 million, like the Coalition for Human Immigration of Los Angeles. For a complete list of CWOP organizations and their funding amount, please see Appendix A.

Within this structure, CWOP “Activator” and “Activator Plus” organizations serve as frontline trusted messengers directly engaging workers in their communities. Activators—many of whom

are new to worker rights outreach—bring deep experience in grassroots organizing, culturally responsive engagement, multilingual outreach, and community-based relationship building. Their work focuses on direct outreach through canvassing, phone banking, community events, and educational meetings using DIR-approved materials. Activator Plus organizations, many of them long-standing CWOP partners, build on these efforts by providing more comprehensive worker support, including Know Your Rights training, technical assistance, and direct support for workers navigating workplace issues such as wage theft, retaliation, and health and safety complaints.

CLEAN Carwash Worker Center

The CLEAN Carwash Worker Center is a veteran CWOP grantee with a robust track record; during CWOP 3.0, which lasted just nine months, they reached over 124,000 workers during 3,217 activities. In addition to worker education, CLEAN operates a worker-owned mobile car wash, assists with wage claims, and teaches auto detailing classes.

Few industries have been as impacted by federal immigration enforcement sweeps as car washes. As of April 30, 2026, CLEAN has documented raids at more than 60 car washes, with some up to five times. CLEAN has supported more than 360 workers in detention and deportation proceedings, spending close to $1 million to post bonds as well as countless hours locating missing workers in detention facilities in Arizona and Texas.

CLEAN's two full-time CWOP outreach coordinators teach workers about rights to wages, health and safety at busy intersections and car washes. "That's what we used to do all the time," says one CLEAN worker, "but this year we've had to add on helping folks create emergency plans in case of a raid."

CLEAN's consistent visibility at raids has heightened concern about federal surveillance of their cars. To protect undocumented staff and members, CLEAN pivots between virtual and in-person meetings and events and plans security and emergency response for all in-person activity.

CLEAN reports that CWOP connects workers across organizations, and that they feel better prepared for any event that might happen–another pandemic, a natural disaster, immigration sweeps, and more.

Garment Worker Center

Coordinated, large-scale federal immigration enforcement sweeps in Los Angeles began in earnest on June 5, 2025, at day labor centers, car washes, and a garment factory in downtown Los Angeles called Ambiance Apparel.

The Garment Worker Center, another veteran CWOP grantee, had been supporting a group of workers at Ambiance Apparel at the time of the raid. These workers immediately implemented rapid response protocols to mobilize community responders to the scene, yet found themselves trapped by surveillance drones and closed exits. GWC continues to support these workers at Ambiance, who report ongoing drone surveillance and labor rights violations. Fear of retaliation is high.

This raid and others like it profoundly affected GWC's programming. Like CLEAN, GWC pivoted to hybrid meetings and training, security protocols, prioritized immigrant rights information, and began to support workers in detention and deportation proceedings.

Central Coast Alliance for a Sustainable Economy

Another veteran CWOP grantee, CAUSE supports education and outreach for agricultural workers through the Central Coast. Through the CWOP network, organizers at the Central Coast Alliance for a Sustainable Economy were notified of workplace raids throughout Central Coast agriculture fields and implemented high alert rapid response protocols.

On June 9, 2025, CAUSE received word of immigration sweeps at the worksites of many of their Oxnard based members. Employers and managers blocked entrances to vulnerable ranchos and demanded judicial warrants for entry, successfully turning back federal immigration agents at six sites. CAUSE organizers and volunteers coordinated carpools for farmworkers to get home safely.

When ICE returned one month later and conducted one of the state's largest workplace raid at Glasshouse, CAUSE organizers supported workers in locating detained family members, filing wage theft claims with workers who were not paid their last week and informing workers at other farms their rights to use sick time if they didn't feel safe returning to work in the subsequent days.

"Networks like CWOP have never been more essential," reports CAUSE staff. "That longstanding trust we've built with workers helps us convey credible, timely information to protect workers."

Step Forward Foundation

Veteran CWOP grantee Step Forward Foundation, which offers services in Vietnamese, Tagalog, Mandarin, and English, and has directly filed 88 claims at Rural Strategic Engagement (RSE) legal clinics in the Sacramento area this year. Labor Commissioner staff attend these clinics, enabling Step Forward Foundation to file wage and retaliation claims on the spot. At

one clinic they helped Maria, fired for seeking overtime pay, to submit a wage and retaliation claim; at another, they filed a claim for two workers doing installation, repairs, and flooring who were collectively owed $11,350 in wages.

As an Activator+, Step Forward teaches other CWOP partners – attendance often exceeds 120 – how to write demand letters or file claims for unpaid wages, discrimination and harassment, wrongful termination and retaliation, paid and unpaid leave and benefits, human trafficking and U and T visas, and violations of the Fair Chance Act (Ban the Box).

The Center for Workers Rights

As a Regional Lead, the Center for Workers provides legal services to workers throughout Northern California. Their "Know Your Rights" presentations and wage clinics feature workers who share personal experiences navigating wage theft and retaliation. Clients and attendees learn directly from peers who have engaged with agencies and stood up for themselves. These presentations create opportunities for workers to ask questions, seek support, and connect with one another.

Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)

Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project supports Indigenous migrant communities primarily from southern Mexico, including the states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, Michoacán, and Puebla, who live or work in Santa Barbara County. During a MICOP RSE Clinic in Santa Maria, the Labor Commissioner's Office provided a workshop on wage theft and the wage claim process. After attending the workshop, one worker organized his co-workers to advocate for unpaid wages they were owed for a week of work. A total of eight workers took action and, through the knowledge gained during the Know Your Rights workshop, successfully recovered over $11,000 in unpaid wages.

Westside Family Preservation Services Network

The Westside Family Preservation Services Network works to prevent child abuse and neglect in 16 rural communities across Fresno County. T. Mendez, an agricultural worker, approached WFPS for support. She reported working Monday through Saturday from 7:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. for $32 per week. Ms. Mendez had raised concerns about this shockingly low wage with her supervisor, but the company ignored her. It delayed payment until she was owed several weeks of unpaid wages as well as unpaid overtime, meal and rest breaks, and reimbursement for work materials that she had to purchase in order to perform her job. WFPS submitted her claim with the Labor Commissioner's Office. "This is just one example of the exploitation we see in agriculture," says WFPS. "Thirty-two dollars per week is not enough to support her family."

Mujeres en Acción

Mujeres en Acción supports women on the Central Coast to gain economic self-sufficiency and become leaders. During a Mujeres event in a small coastal town, several women shared their fear of termination if they reported workplace violations, especially in this climate of immigration enforcement. One shared concerns about unsafe working conditions that affected their family. Staff at Mujeres en Acción provided information about labor rights and workplace safety, connected them with local resources, and referred them to Cal/OSHA. They were relieved to learn that there are organizations and support systems to help workers facing unsafe or unfair conditions.

Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño

Many members of California's Indigenous communities are unable to read or write in Spanish, much less English, and require additional support when completing forms and navigating legal systems. Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO) has a team of bilingual and trilingual staff members who speak Indigenous languages and have been able to effectively reach Indigenous farmworkers and communities through meaningful one-on-one conversations. CBDIO organizes monthly meetings and clinics where Indigenous farmworkers learn more about their labor rights.

The Cambodian Family

The Cambodian Family supports refugee and immigrant families throughout Orange County. Through resource fairs, phone banking, and flyer distribution, Cambodian Family has reached 10,864 workers and distributed *No Entry Without Permission* signs and "Red Cards" to businesses throughout Orange County and Long Beach.

The Cambodian Family trains people to become peer educators. One Vietnamese-speaking worker attended a food distribution, spoke to outreach staff, and became a peer educator who provides in-language education for Vietnamese-American workers to identify wage theft issues. Another Arabic-speaking worker, who works in a warehouse, approached one of Cambodian Family's outreach tables at a local mosque during Friday prayer. Due to language barriers and fear of losing his job, he had avoided bringing up issues like unpaid overtime and missed breaks. The Cambodian Family arranged a visit to the Labor Commissioner to speak one-on-one in Arabic with staff who helped explain California labor laws in a way he could actually understand. He, too, became a peer educator.

Inland Empire Black Worker Center

A worker in the Inland Empire, who was employed part-time by a government agency, attended Workplace Rights Ambassador Project (WRAP) sessions offered at the Inland Empire Black

Worker Center. The worker learned about her right to paid sick leave. Although California law entitled her to 40 hours of paid sick leave, her employer provided only 24 hours. After using all of her available sick leave, she became ill and had to take unpaid time off from work. She knew her rights, and the Inland Empire Black Worker Center supported this worker in bringing this information to her employer's attention. The agency reviewed and updated its policy to comply with state law, and compensated her for the unpaid sick time.

The Jakara Movement

The Jakara Movement has helped Punjabi speaking workers across the Sacramento/Northern and San Joaquin Valley navigate lengthy and often complex complaint processes. A truck driver in Kern County recently received an award of $20,000 in back wages from the Labor Commissioner's Office from a wage theft complaint filed more than three years ago with support from the Jakara Movement.

Through CWOP, Jakara Movement developed strong partnerships with other local organizations like the Fresno Immigrant Refugee Ministries (FIRM), Valley Voices, and the Fresno-Madera-Tulare-Kings Central Labor Council (FMTK CLC). These organizations formed a regional CWOP coalition to share resources and reach workers.

Partnership for a Better San Diego

Partnership for a Better San Diego runs a food pantry and hiring hall to serve more than 10,000 families a year. They helped a service industry employee who had been physically assaulted by another employee at work and needed urgent medical attention, but hesitated because she did not have adequate health insurance and could not afford to pay out of pocket. The Partnership informed her that being injured at work, regardless of how it occurred, should be covered by workers' compensation insurance. The Partnership helped file a workers comp claim and consult with the adjuster, and she is now receiving benefits.

Starting Over Inc. (SOI)

Starting Over Inc. (SOI) provides the re-entry population in the Inland Empire with wraparound services. Through its extensive and trusted network of 200+ community-based partners, SOI engages workers using a culturally responsive, relationship-centered approach that prioritizes individual needs and builds long-term trust. A worker might visit a community college or a local business, and wind up with direct support at the California Civil Rights Department. As a result of SOI's impact during CWOP 4.0, a private foundation funded SOI to hire two additional staff members and expand into the Coachella Valley.

Conclusion

Story after story confirms the data: CWOP is California's first line of defense to protect workers vulnerable to violations of labor standards and federal immigration enforcement sweeps. All told, CWOP 5.0 has reached well over **776,000 workers in ten months**.

Appendix A: List of CWOP Grant Recipients By Region

Region	Organization Name	Role	Grant for CWOP 5.0
Bay Area	Worksafe	Regional Lead	592,500.00
	East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE)	Activator Plus	267,500.00
	Ayudando Latinos a Soñar (ALAS)	Activator Plus	250,000.00
	Chinese Progressive Association (CPA)	Activator Plus	250,000.00
	Trabajadores Unidos Workers United (TUWU)	Activator Plus	300,000.00
	Step Forward	Activator Plus	317,500.00
	East Bay Sanctuary Covenant	Activator	138,978.37
	Envision Your Pathway	Activator	140,000.00
	El Tímpano	Activator	130,000.00
	Hijas del Campo	Activator	130,000.00

	Nuestra Alianza de Willits	Activator	150,000.00
	Earthlodge	Activator Plus	300,000.00
	Millionaire Mind Kids (MMK) Reimagines Our Communities (ROC) (High Desert Black Worker Center)	Activator Plus	300,000.00
	Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement (Inland Empire Black Worker Center)	Activator Plus	290,000.00
	Los Angeles Black Worker Center (LA BWC)	Regional Lead	540,000.00
Central Coast	AFL-CIO Monterey Bay Central Labor Council	Regional Lead	555,000.00
	Mixteco Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)	Activator Plus and RSE Clinic Host	780,742.00
	Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)	Activator Plus	250,000.00
	Action Council of Monterey County, Inc. (Mujeres en Accion)	Activator	150,000.00
	San Luis Obispo County Child Abuse Prevention Council	Activator	190,000.00

	Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, Inc.	Activator	200,000.00
Inland Empire	AFL-CIO of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties (Inland Empire Labor Council)	Regional Lead	570,000.00
	El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center	Activator Plus	255,000.00
	Warehouse Workers Resource Center (WWRC)	Activator Plus	334,972.75
	Pomona Economic Opportunity Center, Inc.	Activator Plus	302,500.00
	TODEC Legal Center Perris	Activator Plus and RSE Clinic Host	450,000.00
	Way Resource Center	Activator Plus	352,500.00
	Starting Over Inc.	Activator Plus	252,500.00
	Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice	Activator Plus	250,000.00
Los Angeles Area and Orange County	The Southern California Coalition for Occupational Safety & Health: A Project of Community Partners - SoCal COSH	Regional Lead	667,500.00

	The Cambodian Family	Activator Plus	250,000.00
	Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Alliance (OCAPICA)	Activator Plus	300,000.00
	Instituto De Educación Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA)	Activator Plus	300,000.00
	United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1428	Activator Plus	250,000.00
	Pilipino Workers Center (PWC)	Activator Plus	305,000.00
	SEIU Education and Support Fund (ESF)	Activator Plus	267,500.00
	Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)	Activator Plus	305,000.00
	Garment Worker Center (GWC)	Activator Plus	340,000.00
	UCLA Labor and Occupational Safety and Health Program (LOSH)	Activator Plus	267,500.00
	Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)	Activator Plus	265,000.00
	CLEAN Carwash	Activator Plus	300,000.00

	Thai Community Development Center	Activator Plus	265,000.00
	Special Service for Groups, Inc. - APAIT	Activator Plus	250,000.00
	Los Angeles County Department of Public Health	Activator Plus	267,500.00
	Chinatown Service Center	Activator Plus	252,500.00
	East Los Angeles Women's Center (ELAWC)	Activator	200,000.00
	South Asian Network (SAN)	Activator	170,000.00
	SALVA	Activator	140,000.00
	Filipino Migrant Center	Activator	130,000.00
	Orange County Labor Federation, AFL-CIO	Activator	179,190.00
	April Parker Foundation	Activator	200,000.00
Sacramento / Northern	Center for Workers' Rights	Regional Lead	672,500.00
	Ring of Democracy	Activator Plus	300,000.00

	Sacramento Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO	Activator Plus	410,124.80
	UC Davis Labor and Community Center	Activator Plus	292,500.00
	Visión y Compromiso	Activator	200,000.00
San Diego / Imperial	Labors Training and Community Development Alliance/ Employee Rights Center	Regional Lead	510,000.00
	Partnership for a Better San Diego	Activator Plus	250,000.00
	Universidad Popular	Activator Plus	362,500.00
	City Heights Community Development Corporation (CDC)	Activator Plus	352,500.00
	Calexico Wellness Center	Activator Plus	365,000.00
	Comité Civico del Valle (CCCV)	Activator Plus	400,000.00
	UC San Diego Labor Center	Activator	150,000.00
San Joaquin	Fresno-Madera-Tulare-Kings, Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO (FMTK CLC)	Regional Lead	622,500.00

	Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO)	Activator Plus and RSE Clinic Host	575,000.00
	Westside Family Preservation	Activator Plus	300,000.00
	Valley Voices	Activator Plus and RSE Clinic Host	500,000.00
	Stanislaus Multi-Cultural Community Health Coalition	Activator Plus	337,500.00
	Jakara Movement	Activator Plus	352,500.00
	North Valley Labor Federation	Activator Plus	305,000.00
	Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN)	Activator Plus	250,000.00
	California Rural Assistance Legal Foundation (CRALF)	Activator Plus	300,000.00
	Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries	Activator Plus	300,000.00
	Education and Leadership Foundation (ELF)	Activator Plus	330,000.00

	Empowering Marginalized Asian Communities (EMAC)	Activator	150,000.00
	Regenerate California Innovation Inc. - Language Access Plus	Activator	150,000.00
Statewide	UC Davis Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety (WCAHS)	Activator Plus	255,000.00
	UC Berkeley Labor and Occupational Health Program (LOHP)	Activator Plus	290,000.00
	California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA)	Activator Plus and RSE Clinic Host	900,000.00
	Organización en California de Lideres Campesinas, Inc.	Activator Plus and RSE Clinic Host	700,000.00
	United for Respect	Activator Plus	250,000.00
	CA Healthy Nail Salons	Activator Plus	250,000.00
	California Human Development	Activator Plus	250,000.00
	Building Skills Partnership	Activator	150,584.60

	California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO	Activator	190,000.00
	California Farmworker Foundation (dba Central Valley Farmworker Foundation)	Activator	200,000.00
	UFW Foundation	Activator	200,000.00
Rural Strategic Engagement Clinics (RSE)	Inland Congregations United for Change	Activator Plus and RSE Clinic Host	550,000.00
	Central Valley Empowerment Alliance	Activator Plus and RSE Clinic Host	550,000.00