

LOCAL NEWS • Analysis

Inland Empire nonprofits stretch for new funding sources



Graduates of IEHP Foundation's Vibrant Health fundraising cohort. (Courtesy of IEHP Foundation)



By **GREGORY BRADBARD** | IEHP Foundation

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As government programs are being scaled back, nonprofits are often relied upon to fill service gaps and meet the needs of the most vulnerable. But, for those organizations that have relied heavily on government support and are seeing those funds reduced, concern for their ability to meet increasing needs is growing.

A 2024 report by the Urban Institute indicated that the percentage of nonprofit revenue from government agencies increased significantly in 2020 and 2021 in the wake of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). The report also found that the larger an organization's budget, the more reliant they were on government funding.

However, as the federal administration is actively reducing programs and funding across the country, local nonprofit organizations that have held federal contracts are feeling the pinch as core operating funds are being lost.

According to a recent survey of Inland Empire nonprofits conducted by IEHP Foundation, 57% of respondents received federal funding contracts within the past two years. Of those organizations, 91% shared that they have been impacted by recent federal funding cuts or policy changes.

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Like any well-balanced investment portfolio, diversification of funding sources is essential. More specifically, as grants from government and foundations fluctuate, contributions from local individuals and businesses are greatly needed – and will continue to be essential – to help fund mission

To address this challenge, IEHP Foundation recently hosted a seven-week training series for 22 nonprofit leaders focused on strengthening individual and major gift fundraising skills.

Of those that participated, 90% of organizations receive less than half of their annual revenue from individual donors. Additionally, 38% of participants shared that the program was their first time receiving formal fundraising training.

Representing a variety of organizations committed to improving health and wellness for families across the Inland Empire, the group of nonprofit professionals participated in a program focused on key fundraising skills including prospect identification, donor cultivation and effective stewardship strategies. The group met each week in Riverside, with members coming from various parts of the Inland Empire, some traveling from as far as Barstow and Newberry Springs.

Fundraising experts Lisa Wright, founder of Green Parakeet LLC, and Launa Wilson, founder of LW Consulting, guided the cohort through best practices, helping participants create practical tools, such as fundraising calendars and compelling donor messaging.

“We knew the participants were passionate about their work, but it was exciting to see them engage with one another, helping each other grow and learn,” Wright said. “For many, the most impactful aspect of the cohort was building relationships and their own networks.”

The cohort fostered a dynamic learning environment, including a blend of seasoned fundraising veterans and newcomers who exchanged ideas and experiences. Brandee Zaragoza, development manager at Moses House, expressed her enthusiasm: “As a self-taught fund raiser, this experience helped me grow both personally and professionally. I learned how to expand our donor base and engage more people in our mission.”

Although each participating organization has a strong mission focused on improving the lives of individuals in the Inland Empire, it takes intentionality and resources to build relationships with donors that will result in the dollars needed to sustain and grow their impact.

Michael Cornejo, donor relations manager at Catholic Charities, said the most significant takeaway was understanding the importance of donor stewardship. “As someone who is still kind of new to fundraising, through this training, I realized it is essential to make calls to donors and have meaningful conversations.”

Many participants expressed appreciation for the program’s structure and IEHP Foundation’s approach to listening to and supporting nonprofits in the region.

Deanna Alsdorf, development manager at Foothill Family Shelter, talked about the support she received, “it’s not a one-size-fits-all model, but rather a thoughtful, relationship-driven approach that strengthens our capacity and, ultimately, the well-being of the families we serve. That kind of commitment has been transformative for us as an organization and for the region as a whole.”

Graduates of the Summer 2025 Vibrant Health Fundraising Training Series include:

- **Barstow College Foundation** – Elizabeth Hulseley, executive director
 - **Catholic Charities San Bernardino & Riverside Counties** – Michael Cornejo, development manager
 - **Cedar House Life Change Center** – Jake Strommen, marketing and outreach coordinator
 - **Children’s Fund, Inc.** – Andrea Crawford, grants and appeals officer
 - **Desert Sanctuary** – Rosalinda Palakiko, executive director
 - **Family Promise of Riverside** – Claire Jefferson-Glipa, executive director
 - **Family Service Association** – Ahlam Jadallah, grants and development manager
 - **Feeding America Riverside and San Bernardino Counties** – Angela Jugon, development director
 - **Foothill Family Shelter** – Deanna Alsdorf, community development coordinator
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- **Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective** – Marlene Chavez, storyteller and grants manager
- **Inland Southern California United Way** – Jeanine Murphy, account executive
- **Legal Aid Society of San Bernardino** – Pablo Ramirez, executive director
- **Making Hope Happen Foundation** – Erin Brinker, vice president of development
- **Michelle’s Place Cancer Resource Center** – Amber Berkey, fundraising and development officer
- **Mission Hope** – Kristi Piatkowski, development director
- **Moses House Ministries** – Brandee Zaragoza, development manager
- **New Life Fellowship/Barstow Foursquare** – Rose Beardshear, grant writer
- **Operation New Hope** – Keilani Caldwell, fund developer
- **Sahaba Initiative Inc.** – Zayn Razi, chief operations officer
- **San Bernardino Valley College Foundation**– Phylcia Sanchez, development coordinator
- **The Heart Matters Foster Family Agency** – Julian-Anthony Wagner, community relations and donor manager

IEHP Foundation provides resources and support to strengthen the local leaders and nonprofit organizations that make Inland Empire families healthier. Because when everyone in the Inland Empire lives a full and vibrant life, our region thrives. Learn more about IEHP Foundation at iehpfoundation.org.

