

2025 Palm Desert ERC 1st Quarter Review: Innovations and Milestones



ENTREPRENEURIAL
RESOURCE CENTER

PALM DESERT

POWERED BY

City of Palm Desert
Riverside County Office of Economic Development
Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship at CSUSB



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**School of Entrepreneurship &
Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship at
California State University, San Bernardino
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the recently expanded Palm Desert Entrepreneur Resource Center (formerly known as Palm Desert Ihub), a vibrant hub of innovation and entrepreneurial spirit in the heart of Coachella Valley. The Palm Desert Entrepreneur Resource Center (ERC) is dedicated to fostering innovation, supporting startups, and driving economic growth. As a catalyst for entrepreneurial success and regional economic development, the Palm Desert ERC focuses on transforming the regional landscape for business and entrepreneurial opportunities.

In November 2023, the management of this dynamic facility was awarded to the School of Entrepreneurship (SOE) and Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship (IECE) at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). This marked a pivotal shift towards heightened professionalism, innovation, and performance, with the SOE and IECE jointly steering the center into a new era starting January 2024. This strategic partnership is designed to enhance the Palm Desert ERC's influence as a central player in both the local and broader Coachella Valley business ecosystems.

The pages that follow provide a detailed report on the progress and achievements in the 1st Quarter of 2025. We will delve into the initiatives undertaken, milestones reached, and significant outcomes that underscore the impactful contributions of the SOE and IECE at CSUSB. This report is a testament to our commitment to excellence and accountability, showcasing how our strategic management of the Palm Desert ERC has positively influenced the greater Palm Desert community and stakeholders.

This quarterly report not only reflects on past accomplishments but also outlines our future initiatives aimed at sustaining and expanding our impact. As we move forward, the Palm Desert ERC will continue to introduce innovative programs and partnerships that address the evolving needs of our entrepreneurial community. We are committed to leveraging cutting-edge technology and comprehensive support services to facilitate business creation and growth. Our ongoing efforts include enhancing our program offerings, expanding our network of industry experts, and providing entrepreneurs with the tools they need to succeed. By fostering a robust ecosystem of resources, the Palm Desert ERC is poised to remain at the forefront of economic development and innovation in the Coachella Valley.



KEY METRICS

Several key metrics from the first quarter highlight the impact and success of our initiatives at the Palm Desert Entrepreneur Resource Center. At the 15-month mark since taking over management, these metrics span various aspects of our operations and underscore our dedication to nurturing entrepreneurship and stimulating economic growth in Palm Desert and the broader Coachella Valley. These indicators include the number of new business startups initiated, businesses assisted, and the extensive reach achieved through business counseling, as well as networking and training events. Each metric provides valuable insight into our efforts to support and empower local entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, our effective team of business consultants, experts, and affiliates have aided business stakeholders make use of financial resources—such as SBA loans, business loans, and equity capital investments. This has been instrumental in fostering the growth and sustainability of businesses within our ecosystem. We also take pride in the PD ERC clients achievements in securing procurement contracts and boosting sales, which are clear indicators of the economic benefits reaped from our programs. In addition, we are committed to supporting a diverse range of business and entrepreneurial stakeholders, including minority-owned and women-owned firms, and entrepreneurs at various stages of their business journey. Lastly, we examine the composition of our incubator community, highlighting the number of companies currently housed and those that have successfully graduated, which reinforces our role as a catalyst for entrepreneurial success and development.

Economic Metric		Jan-Mar Q1	Apr – Jun Q2	Jul – Aug Q3	Sept- Dec Q4	Year-to-Date Total
1	Business Starts Number of entrepreneurs assisted that launched a new businesses or entity within specific time period.	10				10
2	Businesses Assisted Number of companies/entrepreneurs assisted through business counseling/consulting services provided at the PD ERC.	80				80
3	Business Events at PD ERC Business networking events, workshops, or technical training events hosted at the PD ERC.	19				19
3A	Virtual Events at PD ERC Events hosted from PD ERC facility.	16				16
4	I-Hub sponsored event attendance Number of attendees at PD ERC sponsored events.	460				460

5	Economic Impact Quantitative metrics utilized to measure economic impact of PD ERC through services provided to companies/entrepreneurs					
	SBA Loans Gross dollar amount of SBA-backed loans provided to companies/entrepreneurs as result of PD ERC provided services (i.e. 504, 7a)	0				0
	Business Loans Gross dollar amount of non-SBA backed loans provided to companies/entrepreneurs as result of PD ERC provided services (i.e. bank loans, lines of credit)	\$20,000				\$20,000
	Other Capital Additional forms of capital that exclude SBA Loans or formalized institutional loans (i.e. bank loans)	\$7,500				\$7,500
	Equity Capital and/or Investments Direct investments into companies that exclude debt capital (loans, lines of credit)	\$5,000				\$5,000
	Government and/or Procurement Contracts Gross dollar amount of contracts secured by companies serviced at PD ERC. These can include contracts with larger companies or governments.	\$0				\$0
	Increase in Sales This figure is directly reported by PD ERC service companies to track direct sales increases as result of business advisory, consulting, and/or coaching services provided.	\$534,397				\$534,397
6	Jobs Supported Number of jobs created or retained at PD ERC client companies.	148				148
7	Minority-owned firms assisted Number of minority-owned businesses and/or entrepreneurs that have received services at PD ERC	54				54
8	Woman-owned firms assisted Number of women-owned businesses and/or entrepreneurs that have received services at PD ERC	46				46
9	Companies in residence Number of entrepreneurs and/or companies maintaining residence within the PD ERC (excluding CSUSB)	6				6
10	Graduating companies Number of companies and/or entrepreneurs that have graduated from PD ERC- provided longitudinal programming (i.e. It's Your Time, Veteran Entrepreneurs, Mini-MBA)	0				0

1st Quarter 2025: PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Open House and Renaming event. On March 5, 2025, the team at CSUSB's School of Entrepreneurship and IECE celebrated the expansion and rebranding of the Entrepreneurial Resource Center (ERC), marking a major milestone in the City of Palm Desert's commitment to fostering



entrepreneurship, business innovation, and economic growth across the Coachella Valley. The event showcased expanded resources, strategic partnerships, and new programming designed to empower small businesses, startups, and innovators to scale, thrive, and succeed. Riverside County Supervisor and County officials, City of Palm Desert officials, along with other dignitaries throughout the Coachella Valley, were in attendance to show their support. Local entrepreneurs, business owners, and

community leaders joined the celebration to champion the expanded efforts.

Attendees learned about the enhanced resources now available through key partners, including the newly established AI Center, the Coachella Valley Small Business Development Center (CVSBDC), Coachella Valley Women's Business Center (CVWBC), AmPac Business Capital, First Choice Business Brokers, and Cal State San Bernardino's School of Entrepreneurship. These expanded offerings reflected a broader vision to strengthen the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem, support economic development, and create new opportunities for innovation and business growth.



AI Center Coachella Valley. In the first quarter, the Palm Desert ERC partnered for official launch of the AI Center Coachella Valley (AICV), managed by entrepreneur and AI enthusiast Sat Singh. Singh leads the development and execution of pioneering AI-driven projects, working to position AICV as the premier hub for AI innovation in the Coachella Valley. Under his leadership, AICV fosters a dynamic environment where collaboration among AI enthusiasts, founders, and content creators thrives. With a focus on experimentation, events, project coordination, and storytelling, AICV aims to transform ideas into MVPs and deliver impactful solutions that connect technology with enhanced user experiences.

Coachella Valley Small Business Development Center (CVSBDC) expansion. In March 2024, the Coachella Valley Small Business Development Center (CVSBDC) officially partnered with the Palm Desert Entrepreneurial Resource Center (ERC) as part of the Center’s broader expansion and strengthened collaboration with Riverside County. This partnership significantly enhances the breadth, scope, and depth of business support services available through the Palm Desert ERC, building upon the existing services already offered by the Center’s resource partners. With the addition of CVSBDC’s expertise, local entrepreneurs and small business owners now have greater access to specialized advising in startup assistance, marketing, operations, business planning, and growth strategies.

A key feature of this partnership is the integration of the Access to Capital Center, a program designed to assist entrepreneurs in navigating funding opportunities and securing the capital necessary to launch and expand their businesses. This new offering complements the ERC’s existing collaboration with AmPac Business Capital, creating a more comprehensive, coordinated support system for business financing. Together, these initiatives position the Palm Desert ERC as a critical driver for small business success and economic development throughout the Coachella Valley.

Coachella Valley Women’s Business Center (CVWBC). As part of the Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship (IECE) at CSUSB, the CVWBC has become an instrumental cornerstone in the PD ERC structure, bringing a wealth of resources that catalyze entrepreneurial success in the region.

The CVWBC offers an extensive suite of services at minimal to no-cost, encompassing business consulting, advisory services, and training workshops. This suite is tailored to empower not just women, but also underrepresented minorities and members of marginalized groups, positioning the CVWBC as a critical ally in their entrepreneurial journey. Since its relocation to the PD ERC in February 2024, the CVWBC has not only enriched the PD ERC’s ecosystem but has also been pivotal in redefining it as a hub of innovative programming and support.



This move has proven to be a driver in enhancing the Palm Desert ERC’s capacity to support small businesses and foster economic growth. The CVWBC ensures that entrepreneurs have direct access to essential resources, facilitating a collaborative environment that nurtures growth and success. Through this dynamic partnership, the Palm Desert ERC and CVWBC collectively bolster the foundation of a thriving business community, making a significant impact on the regional economy by turning potential into prosperity.

Success Stories



Matthew List, MSEI, Entrepreneur. Matthew List exemplifies the full circle of the entrepreneurial ecosystem cultivated through the Palm Desert Entrepreneurial Resource Center (ERC) and CSUSB's School of Entrepreneurship. A seasoned entrepreneur, Matthew founded several businesses throughout his career, most notably Desert Cornerstone Insurance based in Indio, California. Driven by a passion for continual growth, he pursued and completed the Master of Science in Entrepreneurship and Innovation (MSEI) program at CSUSB. Residing in

the Coachella Valley, Matthew emphasized how earning an advanced degree strengthened his entrepreneurial foundation and business acumen, enabling him to approach opportunities with greater strategic insight. In 2023, he successfully sold Desert Cornerstone Insurance, a major milestone that punctuated his entrepreneurial journey.

Following his personal success, Matthew has remained deeply committed to fostering entrepreneurship in the region. He has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Palm Desert ERC, actively engaging as a guest speaker in entrepreneurship classrooms and volunteering as a business coach and mentor. His contributions extend to advising undergraduate students and participants in the ERC's Mini MBA program, where his real-world experience and thoughtful guidance have proven invaluable. Matthew's ongoing involvement highlights how alumni of CSUSB's entrepreneurial programs can become pillars within the local business community.

Matthew's story is a powerful reminder of the importance of building an entrepreneurial ecosystem that nurtures talent across all stages—from aspiring entrepreneurs to seasoned business owners. His dedication to giving back underscores a core value shared by the Palm Desert ERC: fostering a culture of mentorship, collaboration, and opportunity. Matthew's journey stands as a testament to how investing in entrepreneurship education and community building produces ripple effects that strengthen the Coachella Valley's economy and entrepreneurial spirit.

Eric Cunningham, Writer, Comedian, Entrepreneur.

Eric Cunningham, founder of eecnunningham.com, was part of the inaugural Mini MBA cohort at the Palm Desert Entrepreneurial Resource Center. As an entrepreneur with a diverse background, Eric found the program instrumental in refining his business focus and strategy. He credits much of his recent success to the insights and networking opportunities the program provided.

"The Mini MBA program was just what I needed to find an intelligent focus for my business. As an entrepreneur, you instinctively want to do it all, tackle it all, and of course that's impossible. In just 6 sessions, the faculty helped me let go of all the extras and focus on my core business. And its breadth of material is one of its biggest assets. Because everyone's non-core extras may be different, being able to look at your company from all angles of a business is crucial."



Beyond the curriculum, Eric emphasized the value of the program's collaborative environment. Engaging with fellow entrepreneurs and industry experts provided him with diverse perspectives and practical solutions to business challenges. This experience not only enhanced his business acumen but also expanded his professional network, contributing to the growth and success of his ventures.

2025 UPCOMING PROGRAMMING & INITIATIVES

Mini MBA in Entrepreneurship (Cohort-based series)—A curriculum designed to empower current and aspiring entrepreneurs. From nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset to mastering financial considerations, human resources, strategy, and the secrets to scaling for growth, each session is packed with insights ready to be applied to a venture. This 6-week intensive course offers participants an opportunity to network with like-minded entrepreneurs, innovate within their companies, and apply new knowledge. (Ongoing)

Tu Si Puedes—Spanish language programming offered by the CVWBC and designed to help women start and grow their own businesses; laying foundations on helping them become successful entrepreneurs. (Ongoing)

CVWBC Accelerator—A Next Level is a six-week program to help businesses grow by providing intensive guidance, support, and structure. Business owners identify timing to scale their business and the types of growth. A program designed to help the business owner prepare to become an employer. (Ongoing)

Industry Insights—Featuring business owners from a wide array of industries in the Greater Coachella Valley. This series explores the latest trends, innovative techniques, and business strategies that will elevate, inform, and inspire entrepreneurs in all business life cycles. Participants uncover valuable insights from a distinguished panel of speakers and refine skills in this dynamic and ever-evolving series. (Ongoing)

Veteran's Entrepreneurship Program—A program designed for veterans, it aims to equip veterans, active-duty members and their spouses with the skills, knowledge, and mindset necessary to navigate the entrepreneurial landscape successfully. Spanning over five (5) months, the curriculum is divided into two phases and delivered in both virtual and in person formats, with the initial month focusing on foundational workshops and the subsequent four months dedicated to deeper exploration and individualized consulting. The top entrepreneur wins a \$7,000 prize to start their business. (Fall 2025)

CONCLUSION

As the Palm Desert Entrepreneurial Resource Center (ERC) continues to evolve and grow, it is important to recognize the significant progress we've made over the past year. Through a combination of robust programming and strategic initiatives, the ERC has measurably increased entrepreneurial activity and economic impact throughout the region. This year's key metrics—ranging from new business starts and the number of businesses assisted to the success of our incubator programs—reflect our steadfast commitment to building a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem. Among our most notable achievements is the graduation of 104 companies from our programs in 2024, a milestone that underscores the ERC's effectiveness in guiding ventures from idea to execution.



Looking ahead, the ERC is well-positioned to drive even greater innovation and impact across the Coachella Valley. In close collaboration with the Riverside County Office of Economic Development, CSUSB's School of Entrepreneurship, and the Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship (IECE), we are actively expanding initiatives that strengthen and scale our support offerings. These include the continued growth of our Mini MBA program, the launch of the new AI Center, and the introduction of industry-specific roundtables designed to deliver targeted education, foster connection, and facilitate business growth.

Together, these efforts serve not only to enhance our programming, but to lay the foundation for a resilient and adaptive entrepreneurial culture in the region.

In March 2025, the Palm Desert ERC officially transitioned into a fully integrated Entrepreneurial Resource Center, reflecting a comprehensive model designed to support the diverse needs of local entrepreneurs and small business owners. This transformation represents the culmination of collaborative efforts across city, county, and academic partners—and stands as a testament to our shared commitment to advancing entrepreneurship in Palm Desert and the greater Coachella Valley. With this renewed vision and structure, the ERC is poised to keep the region at the forefront of innovation, opportunity, and inclusive economic development.

Appendix

Explanatory Notes for Key Metrics:

Business Startup metric is comprised of clients served whose business is in one of three categories: (a) Less than 1 year in business, (b) pre-venture stage, and (c) startup phase. There is overlap between the pre-venture and launch phase. This is the result of the natural progression of the business life cycle from planning stage to launch. However, in the case of our reporting for 3rd quarter, we noted 129 distinct entrepreneurs that were served through our programs in the “startup” phase which includes businesses that in prelaunch phase of business through their first year after launching their business. Clients self-report their progress and for the purpose of our data collection, a business is considered “launched” when a client reports any of the following: first sale, obtain business license, incorporates, or files a fictitious name.

Businesses assisted consists of entrepreneurs and/or business owners that have obtained services from any of the ERC programs. This includes the Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship (IECE), Coachella Valley Women’s Business Center (CVWBC), Enterprise Funding Corporation, and the School of Entrepreneurship. This number does not include CSUSB students that attend regular undergraduate programs during CSUSB’s academic school year such as course sessions.

Business events at PD ERC exclude programming assumed from previous ERC manager (Riverside County Registrar of Voters polls, or City of Palm Desert Outreach programs). What are included in these events are unique programs hosted by CSUSB’s School of Entrepreneurship and Inland Empire Center of Entrepreneurship (IECE). These include Research Weeks, the Mini MBA program, business social and networking events, and Masterclass by CVWBC. In addition, ERC service providers provided virtual and webcast events to expand access and geographic footprint of services along with in-person events at the ERC. We’ve noted and distinguished the events held in-person at the ERC as well as events hosted virtually from the PD ERC facility. In addition, we note the distinctive event attendance for virtual versus in-person events.

Economic Impact figures are important quantitative figures utilized to measure impact on business clients serviced at ERC. These numbers are collected from service providers at the ERC and compiled for the purposes of this report. Each program administered through the ERC is tasked with collecting data on clients serviced. For example, the CVWBC intakes each new client and has regular follow ups where clients will report and document progress. Data is verified with documentation provided by each program through various methods.

Debt Financing: These figures include SBA-backed financing, bank loans and/or lines of credit that clients obtain as result of counseling, consulting, and advising services provided through ERC programming. Debt financing is a method of raising capital for a business or project by borrowing funds from external sources. The borrower is obligated to repay the principal amount borrowed, along with any interest or fees, over a specified period of time.

Equity Financing: These figures include funds that clients/entrepreneurs invest in their own firms as well as capital raised by selling ownership stakes in their firms. Equity financing is a method of raising capital for a business or project by selling ownership shares or equity stakes to investors in exchange for funds. Unlike debt financing, where the business borrows money and must repay it with interest, equity financing involves issuing shares of ownership in the company to investors, who become partial owners of the business.

Sales Revenue: For the purpose of this report, we track contracts that are awarded to client companies of the ERC such as government or procurement contracts. In addition, we track sales revenue increase that clients serviced at the ERC obtain as a result of services provided through the ERC such as professional or technical development workshops, training events, in addition to consulting and advisory services.

Jobs supported: This figure is directly reported by client companies of the ERC. It is a method utilized to quantify the direct number of jobs that are supported as result of ERC services. Part-time and full-time jobs are summarized in this figure. For example, a business owner that hires two (2) part-time employees would quantify as three (3) jobs. Or, a business owner and spouse that have two (2) full time employees would count as four (4). This figure typically includes the business owner and the employees. It is difficult to track part-time vs. full-time employees as many clients experience fluctuations in business and these numbers are self-reported by business owners and documented by ERC service providers.

Underrepresented Minority-Owned Firms: These figures include the number of minority-owned businesses as defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). These include firms that 51%+ owned by a female, Latino, Black, Asian-American and other groups classified as minorities.

Companies in Residence and Graduated Companies: This figure quantifies and tracks companies that are based in the ERC and pay a monthly rental for an office or cubical space. As of June 2024, there are 6 distinct companies that rent office space at the ERC. This excludes CSUSB faculty offices, classrooms, and the CVWBC.

Graduated companies are companies that sign up for a series of programs and obtain completion certificate upon completion of program requirements. In the 2nd quarter our partners gained momentum and we witnessed an increase in activity as result of CVWBC's It's Your Time and the School of Entrepreneurship's Mini MBA programs.