

2025 Palm Desert ERC 2nd Quarter Review: Innovations and

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PREFACE – IMPORTANT UPDATE REGARDING THE CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SCHOOL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN BERNARDINO

In May 2025, the California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees [formalized a generous endowment to CSUSB’s School of Entrepreneurship and the Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship](#). Randall W. Lewis, executive vice president for marketing with [The Lewis Group of Companies](#) and a recipient of an [Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree](#) from Cal State San Bernardino (2021), gifted the school and center with \$6 million. On May 21, 2025, the CSU Board of Trustees approved the renaming of the CSUSB School of Entrepreneurship and Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship to the ***Randall W. Lewis School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*** and the ***Randall W. Lewis Center for Entrepreneurship***.

The endowed gift and irrevocable estate gift aim to empower the Randall W. Lewis School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation to broaden its transformative impact across the university and throughout the region. The school will continue to champion interdisciplinary approaches to entrepreneurial thinking and practice, engaging all academic colleges and administrative divisions in advancing a culture of innovation and opportunity.

INTRODUCTION

The following is a comprehensive activity report for the recently expanded Palm Desert Entrepreneurial Resource Center (ERC) – formerly known as Palm Desert iHub – a vibrant center of innovation and entrepreneurship in the heart of Coachella Valley. The Palm Desert Entrepreneurial Resource Center (ERC) its commitment 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 Randall W. Lewis School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (RLSEI) and Randall W. Lewis Center for Entrepreneurship (RLCE) at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). This marked a pivotal shift towards heightened professionalism, innovation, and performance, with the RLSEI and RLCE jointly steering the Palm Desert ERC 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 2nd Quarter of 2025. We delve into the initiatives undertaken, milestones reached, and significant outcomes that underscore the impactful contributions of the RLSEI and RLCE. 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 developing and expanding comprehensive support services to facilitate business creation and growth. Our ongoing efforts include enhancing our program offerings, growing 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 remains at the forefront of entrepreneurial development in the Coachella Valley.



KEY METRICS

Several key metrics from the second quarter of 2025 highlight the impact and success of our initiatives at the Palm Desert Entrepreneurial Resource Center (ERC). At the 16-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 Palm Desert ERC client achievements in various aspects, encompassing 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 | 22 | | | 32 |
| 2 | Businesses Assisted Number of companies/entrepreneurs assisted through business counseling/consulting services provided at the PD ERC. | 80 | 214 | | | 294 |
| 3 | Business Events at PD ERC Business networking events, workshops, or technical training events hosted at the PD ERC. | 19 | 36 | | | 55 |
| 3A | Virtual Events at PD ERC Events hosted from PD ERC facility. | 16 | 25 | | | 41 |
| 4 | I-Hub sponsored event attendance Number of attendees at PD ERC sponsored events. | 460 | 776 | | | 1236 |

| | | | | | | |
|----|---|-----------|-----------|--|--|-----------|
| 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 | \$49.54M | | | \$49.54M |
| | 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 | 0 | | | \$20,000 |
| | Other Capital Additional forms of capital that exclude SBA Loans or formalized institutional loans (i.e. bank loans) | \$7,500 | \$5,000 | | | \$12,500 |
| | Equity Capital and/or Investments Direct investments into companies that exclude debt capital (loans, lines of credit) | \$47,232 | \$61,228 | | | \$108,460 |
| | 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 | | | \$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 | \$513,628 | | | \$1.04M |
| 6 | Jobs Supported Number of jobs created or retained at PD ERC client companies. | 148 | 409 | | | 457 |
| 7 | Minority-owned firms assisted Number of minority-owned businesses and/or entrepreneurs that have received services at PD ERC | 54 | 218 | | | 272 |
| 8 | Woman-owned firms assisted Number of women-owned businesses and/or entrepreneurs that have received services at PD ERC | 46 | 254 | | | 272 |
| 9 | Companies in residence Number of entrepreneurs and/or companies maintaining residence within the PD ERC (excluding CSUSB) | 6 | 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 | 38 | | | 38 |

2nd Quarter 2025: PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Coachella Valley Women’s Business Center (CVWBC). As a key part of the Randall W. Lewis Center for Entrepreneurship (RLCE) at CSUSB, the Coachella Valley Women’s Business Center (CVWBC) has become a vital force in the Palm Desert ERC. Since relocating to the PD ERC in February 2024, CVWBC has continued to expand its reach—providing no- to low-cost consulting, training, and advisory services to meet the evolving needs of local entrepreneurs.

Year-to-date, the CVWBC has directly supported 244 women-owned and 211 minority-owned firms. It has facilitated 22 new business starts and hosted 34 workshops with 509 attendees. In addition, the CVWBC has helped clients secure over \$66,000 in capital and generate more than \$513,000 in increased sales. With 271 jobs supported—including 86 Palm Desert-based companies—the CVWBC continues to play a meaningful role in supporting inclusive economic development and contributing to a stronger small business ecosystem in the region.

Mini MBA in Entrepreneurship. Launched in April 2024, this impactful and innovative six-week curriculum, crafted by top-tier faculty from the School of Entrepreneurship at CSU, San Bernardino, is specifically designed to bolster both current and aspiring entrepreneurs.



The program offers a comprehensive deep dive into essential business disciplines, covering everything from cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset to mastering key operational areas such as finance, human resources, strategy, and the nuances of scaling a business for substantial growth. Each session is brimming with actionable insights, enabling participants to directly apply new knowledge to their ventures.

This dynamic course series not only provides rigorous academic instruction but also fosters a vibrant community, offering participants the chance to network with peers and innovate within their companies. The presence of seasoned entrepreneurs, like Buzzbox, Inc. Founder and CEO Rod Vandebos, as well as Cristian Ojeda CPA, adds a layer of real-world experience and mentorship to the learning environment.

In its first 18 months, the Mini MBA has proudly graduated 53 entrepreneurs across four (4) cohorts, demonstrating significant success and impact. In the second quarter of 2025, the program graduated its third and fourth cohorts in April and May of 2025.

Lunch with an Entrepreneur. Held on April 30th, this annual event at the Palm Desert ERC brings together accomplished entrepreneurs and students from the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus for an engaging lunch-and-learn session. Designed to inspire and educate, the event creates a dynamic space where students pose thoughtful questions and gain firsthand insight into the entrepreneurial journey. From lessons learned to hard-won wisdom, the stories and advice shared are both candid and impactful. The event was attended by 27 Entrepreneurs and 25 students.



Beyond the conversation, the event fosters meaningful connections. Students and entrepreneurs build rapport in an informal yet purposeful setting, laying the groundwork for future mentorship, collaboration, and professional growth. By helping students expand their networks and confidence, this event plays a vital role in preparing the next generation of entrepreneurs for success.

AI Center Coachella Valley. In the first quarter, the Palm Desert ERC partnered for the official launch of the AI Center Coachella Valley (AICV), managed by entrepreneur and AI expert 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.



The AICV has launched regular programming at the PD ERC and been a contributor on bringing more awareness on the benefits and advantages of Artificial Intelligence for small

business and entrepreneurs.

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 Palm Desert 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.

FEATURED SUCCESS STORIES

Kassandra Rioseco-Jimenez, founder of *Con Amor, Nina y León*, has transformed her passion for baking and motherhood into one of the Coachella Valley’s most beloved artisan micro-bakeries. Named after her children, the business began as a heartfelt home project and quickly grew into a community favorite, known for its nostalgic Latin flavors and beautifully crafted pastries.



With guidance from the Coachella Valley Women’s Business Center (CVWBC), Kassandra successfully secured all necessary permits, licenses, and food safety certifications. Counselors Jennifer Douheret and Salima Nurani supported her in accessing commercial kitchen space, developing a financial plan, and connecting with the City of Palm Desert—leading to pop-ups on El Paseo, the luxury retail street where she once worked.

Today, Kassandra is not only building her brand through strategic collaborations and social media but also paving the way for a future bakery-bistro. Her journey is a shining example of creativity, resilience, and the power of community-centered entrepreneurship.

Kendra from Miti Boards, a Palm Desert-based business, pulled off a massive win—securing a contract to serve BOTH weekends of Coachella and Stagecoach for Lady Gaga’s team.

Known for her bold and elevated charcuterie creations, Kendra has grown Miti Boards into a luxury brand with a star-studded clientele. Over the past year, her sales have increased by more than 50%, fueled by relentless hustle, creativity, and strategic business growth.



She’s been scaling with the support of the Coachella Valley Women’s Business Center, where entrepreneurs gain the tools, guidance, and confidence to go after big opportunities—like feeding pop icons at some of the world’s most iconic music festivals.

2025 UPCOMING PROGRAMMING & INITIATIVES

Entrepreneur Meetup – as a part of our ongoing focus of making the Palm Desert ERC the go-to location for all resources and events related to entrepreneurship, in Fall 2025 we will be launching the Entrepreneur Meetup event that will give aspiring and existing entrepreneurs an opportunity to connect, share stories, and build meaningful relationships. The goal is to establish this as a monthly event that will provide a regular platform for entrepreneurs, investors, and industry experts to connect, collaborate, and gain valuable insights (New).

AI Launchpad—Interactive workshops to help entrepreneurs and small business owners turn ideas in to custom AI-assistants. The objective is to help regional businesses and entrepreneurs boost their company or passion projects. Utilizing the latest AI's such as ChatGPT, Gemini Gems, Cursor, Lovable, Bolt, and more. (Ongoing)

It's Your Time—A 12-week program 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 Accelerate—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 business owners prepare to become employers. (Ongoing)

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)

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 ERC continues to evolve and grow, it is important to recognize the significant progress we've made over the past 16-months as well as in the second quarter of 2025. Through a combination of robust programming and strategic initiatives, the Palm Desert ERC continues to measurably increase entrepreneurial activity and economic impact throughout the region. The YTD metrics—ranging from new business starts and the number of businesses assisted to the success of our incubator programs—reflect our team's 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. YTD Access to Capital is on-track to dwarf 2024 results with a 400% increase. In close collaboration with the Riverside County Office of Economic Development, 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 Entrepreneur Meetup and 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.

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 an 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 Randall W. Lewis Center for Entrepreneurship (RLCE), Coachella Valley Women’s Business Center (CVWBC), AmPac Business Capital, and the Randall W. Lewis School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (RLSEI). 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 the Palm Desert ERC exclude programming assumed from the 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 Randall W. Lewis School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (RLSEI) and Randall W. Lewis Center for Entrepreneurship (RLCE). These include Research Weeks, the Mini MBA program, business social and networking events, and Masterclass by CVWBC. In addition, Palm Desert ERC service providers provided virtual and webcast events to expand access and geographic footprint of services along with in-person events. We have noted and distinguished the events held in-person at the Palm Desert ERC as well as events hosted virtually from the Palm Desert 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 the Palm Desert ERC. These numbers are collected from service providers at the Palm Desert ERC and compiled for the purposes of this report. Each program administered through the Palm Desert 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 a result of counseling, consulting, and advising services provided through Palm Desert 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.

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 Palm Desert ERC obtain as a result of services provided 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 Palm Desert 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 Palm Desert 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.