



# UPDATE

## Quarterly news

### Working to make Imperial Valley a better place to live for ALL

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#### Note from Roque

##### Building Civic Infrastructure: A Path to Sustainable Community Change

When people hear about our work in Imperial Valley, they often say, "How exciting to build a new Foundation!" But I gently redirect them: We're not building another institution – the last thing our communities need is another organization competing for resources. Instead, we're building civic infrastructure to create the framework for lasting, community-led change.



ROQUE BARRIOS, JR.  
Executive Director, Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation

What does it mean to build civic infrastructure. "Civic infrastructure is the foundation on which ordinary people participate in ordinary civic life...It is the places, policies, programs, and practices that enable us to connect with each other, define and address shared concerns, build community, and solve public problems." (*Stephen Patrick & Sheri Brady, Aspen Forum for Community Solutions, 2015*)

At IVWF, we further define civic infrastructure as investing in the essential elements that enable communities to drive their own transformation: places where people can gather and organize, policies that support community priorities, programs that build local capacity, and practices that strengthen community leadership. Most importantly, it means ensuring resources and power flow to communities.

We've embraced a fundamentally different approach to community development. Instead of hiring staff to "do the work," we focus on bringing resources directly to community groups and building their capacity to lead and create the change they want to see. As a Rural Development Hub, we serve as coaches, mentors, and facilitators – helping communities identify their own priorities, develop their own strategies, and most critically, attract, invest, and manage the resources they need to thrive.

This approach stems from a deep belief that sustainable change can only come from within communities themselves. When we sit down with a community group, we start by listening. Every community has its own starting point, its own assets, and its own vision for the future. Our role isn't to prescribe solutions but to help build the skills, connections, and infrastructure needed for communities to lead their own transformation.

Through Learning Exchanges, we create bridges between community groups and larger institutions, fostering partnerships that focus squarely on community priorities. But unlike traditional institutional approaches that can inadvertently compete with communities for funding and attention, we ensure resources and decision-making power remain in community hands.

This is admittedly a longer-term approach to change. Building civic infrastructure – the capacity of communities to attract, invest, and manage resources – takes time. But we've seen how this investment in community building creates deeper, more sustainable transformation than traditional institutional interventions. When communities have the infrastructure to drive their own change, they build solutions that truly last.

#### 2024 Mission Support Grantees Announced

##### One-year grant funding for 12 Imperial Valley nonprofits

The 2024 IVWF Mission Support Grant Committee selected 12 nonprofits providing service to those with the greatest social and health inequities in Imperial County through a focus in health and wellness, community engagement or nonprofit capacity building. The Mission Support fund this year was \$80,000 and funding ranged from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per recipient.

"We are deeply thankful to the incredible nonprofits that applied for mission support funding. Your unwavering dedication to serving the people of Imperial County shines through in every effort, stated Antonio Romayor, Jr., Chairman, Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation. "Together, we are building a healthier, more vibrant community, and your work is at the heart of this mission."

### Investing in Community You helped us before and made a difference. We need your help again.

We need your support as we continue to work with communities that want to be seen and heard by those who make the decisions that are impacting their lives!

**DONATE TODAY**



Sent by AHF on behalf of Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation (IVWF). Advancing the health and wellness of vulnerable populations in Imperial County.  
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