

Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF)

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1.Introduction

1.1 Overview of CERF

The Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF) was created to promote a sustainable and equitable recovery from the economic distress of COVID-19 by supporting new plans and strategies to diversify local economies and develop sustainable industries that create high-quality, broadly accessible jobs for all Californians.

To achieve this goal, the State allocated \$600 million across thirteen designated regions to fund the development of region-specific economic development strategies that support the creation of quality jobs and equal access to those jobs.

Kern County is one out of the 13 regions that received planning and implementation dollars through a competitive process. The Kern Coalition is the regional convener for the Kern region and is composed of five entities, Better Bakersfield and Boundless Kern (B3K), Building Healthy Communities (BHC) Kern Inyo Mono, Inyo Labor Council (KIM CLC), Community Action Partnership of Kern (CAPK), and the Kern Community College District (KCCD). The Kern Community College District serves as the fiscal sponsor for the Kern CERF region.



[1.2 Importance of Community Engagement in Workforce Development](#)

Workforce development is a crucial element in shaping the economic prosperity of any region. However, the success of such efforts lies in the active participation and engagement of the community it seeks to serve. The Kern Coalition firmly believes that equity and inclusion must underpin all economic planning initiatives, making it essential to involve community stakeholders in workforce development endeavors. Through strategic partnerships with trusted community-based organizations, the Kern Coalition aims to uplift marginalized communities and ensure their voices are heard in shaping Kern County's economic future.

Creating Stronger Communities through Inclusion

Government support plays a crucial role in fostering community development. True transformative change is only possible when disenfranchised people are empowered to drive it. The Kern Coalition's implementation and development of the Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF) endeavors to support all people, local governments, businesses, and community stakeholders in crafting new economic plans that generate high-quality job opportunities that are accessible to all residents of Kern County. To achieve this ambitious goal, the Kern Coalition recognizes the indispensable need to actively engage with the community and understand their unique needs and aspirations.

Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations

To ensure that the voices of underrepresented and marginalized communities are heard, the Kern Coalition actively collaborates with trusted community-based organizations. These organizations have a proven track record of providing outreach and education to marginalized communities and ultimately driving resident participation to the sub-regional meetings.

Uplifting Under-Voiced Community Needs

By engaging the community in workforce development, the Kern Coalition aims to uplift the needs of under-voiced segments of the population. These individuals often face barriers to accessing quality jobs, affordable healthcare, and social safety nets, making them particularly vulnerable to economic crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Creating Inclusive Economic Recovery Plans

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the stark inequality that exists in communities lacking access to quality jobs and essential services. By involving the community in workforce development initiatives, the Kern Coalition ensures that recovery plans consider the diverse needs of the population, providing a fair chance for all to thrive.



Community Readiness for a Sustainable Future

In addition to addressing immediate economic challenges, CERF also focuses on mapping and supporting local community readiness for a transition towards a carbon-neutral future. Engaging the community in discussions around sustainability and environmental responsibility fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among residents. It encourages them to actively participate in shaping a greener tomorrow while providing benefits from new opportunities and industries emerging in the sustainable sector.

Engaging the community in workforce development efforts is not just essential; it is a moral imperative. The Kern Coalition's commitment to equity and inclusion in economic planning drives its partnerships with community-based organizations, ensuring marginalized voices are heard and uplifted. By actively involving the community in shaping economic strategies and fostering inclusive economic recovery plans, the Kern Coalition paves the way for a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future for all residents of Kern County.



2. Understanding Community-Based Workforce Development

2.1 Definition and Objectives of CERF

CERF was created to promote a sustainable and equitable recovery from the economic distress of COVID-19 by supporting new plans and strategies to diversify local economies and develop sustainable industries that create high-quality, broadly accessible jobs for all Californians.

Specifically, CERF aims to support communities and regional groups in producing regional roadmaps for economic recovery and transition that prioritize the creation of accessible, high-quality jobs in sustainable industries.

Initially, CERF's Program funding of \$600M was appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Fund of 2021 until the 2022 budget revised the source of funds to the State General Fund in SB 115 (2022).

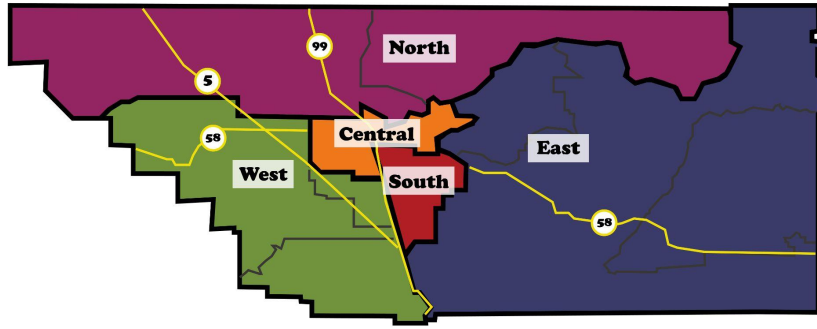
The objective of CERF is to build an equitable and sustainable economy across California's diverse regions and foster long-term economic resilience in the overall transition to a carbon-neutral economy.

CERF identified 13 regions across the State of California to engage in the initiative. Kern County was selected as a region of its own.

The CERF Planning Phase I is currently occurring within each of the five (5) Kern County subregions: East, West, North, South, and Central Kern. The CERF Planning Phase I invites community stakeholders to provide input on workforce development and economic development via businesses and industries to provide good, quality jobs. Another aspect of this phase is to develop a plan, called the Regional Plan, to create good, quality jobs for people who struggled before and during the pandemic.

Through the sub-regional partners and the **Governance Council** (see section 2.3), projects will be developed to address CERF objectives of equity, sustainability, job quality, economic competitiveness, and economic resilience. These projects will be recommended for implementation as part of CERF Phase II Implementation.





The Kern Coalitions Sub-Regional Collaborative Approach (image above)
Each region has unique micro-economies, challenges, needs, and perspectives.



2.1 Definition and Objectives of CERF (continued)

CERF Timeline

Planning Phase I (2022-2024)

During the planning phase, the subregional collaboratives will provide input in developing a regional summary and a regional plan by 2023 that comprehensively accounts for sub-regional economies to create good, quality jobs for the un- and/or under-employed through sub-regional collaborative meetings.

Planning Phase II (2024-2026)

Upon completion of the regional plan, the subregional collaboratives will develop subregional and regional proposals anchored to the plan to bring job opportunities to the sub regions in Kern County to benefit the unemployed and underemployed. These proposals will be present to the Governance Council who will be voted in by the fall of 2023.

Regional Summary

This report will draw from the research presented in the Kern Coalition CERF proposal and from other sources to provide an overall summary of Kern County's regional and subregional demography; economic opportunities and inequities; environmental impacts, inequities, and opportunities; and health inequities among disinvested communities to support a high road strategy for jobs. This summary will be part of a broader integrated, localized regional and subregional recovery and transitional plan that will be developed through a collaborative process of critical stakeholders that facilitates economic diversification, sustainability, and equity.

Regional Plan

The Regional Plan will be informed by community input (surveys and notes from subregional meetings), from previous economic studies regarding Kern County, and from new research related to building a resilient, sustainable economy that can endure challenges. This plan includes two parts that will be instrumental in developing proposals that align with CERF funding grants and other federal and statewide grants.

Subregional Meetings

Community input from sub-regional meetings across Kern County will be collected from discussions to help with the development of the Regional Summary and Regional Plan.



[2.2 Key Principles and Approaches in CERF](#)

The Kern Coalition's **mission** is to unify and bolster local efforts that advocate for the equitable attainment of good, quality jobs that promote a resilient economy with positive health, social, and environmental outcomes in disinvested communities through diverse representation and direct investments leading to economic development strategies.

The **vision** of the Kern Coalition is to eliminate generational poverty and promote equitable, economic mobility for all in Kern County by ensuring investments dismantle systemic barriers.

Inclusive Regional Planning with a Focus on Equity

Economic inequity, environmental inequity, and health inequity are interrelated as all are rooted in systemic injustices that disproportionately affect marginalized communities. For example, low-income and communities of color are more likely to be exposed to environmental hazards and have limited access to quality healthcare, education, and good quality job opportunities. And this ultimately impacts the health outcomes and life expectancy of people living in disadvantaged communities.

Principles to Achieving Inclusivity in the Regional Plan

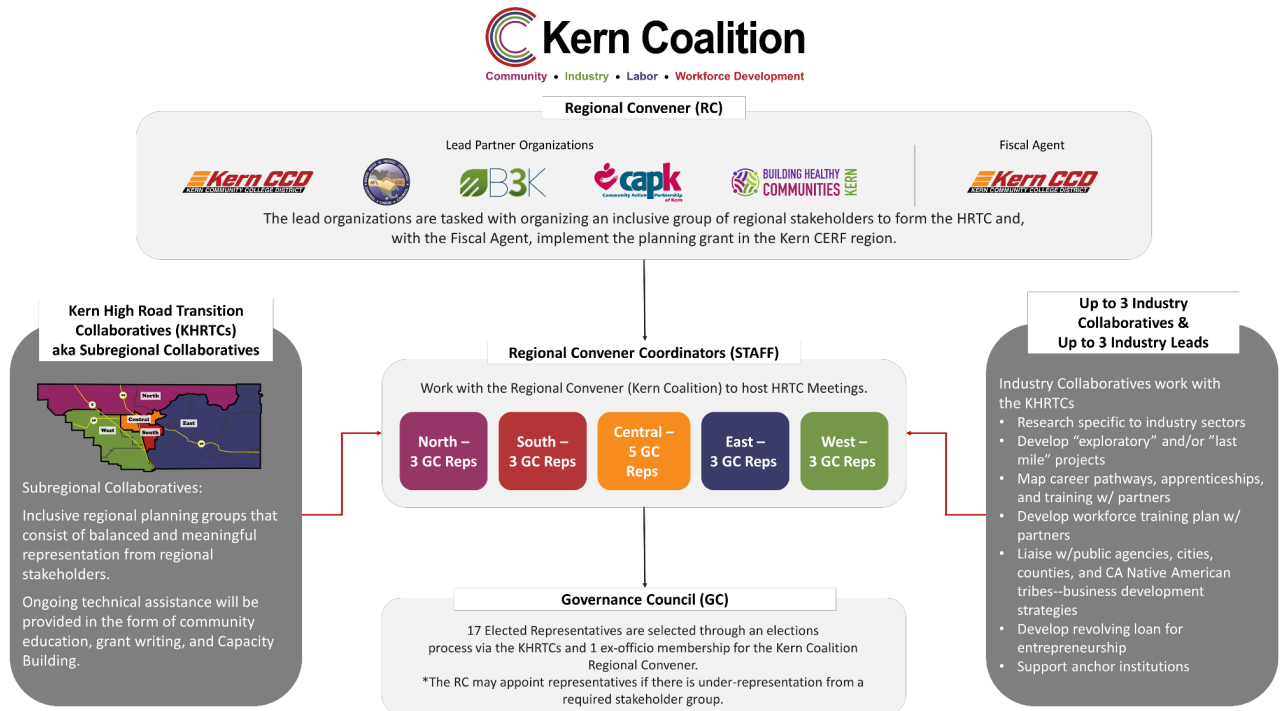
- **Economic Equity**
Focus on eliminating barriers for all people, regardless of race, gender, or nativity, so that they can contribute to and access the opportunities of a strong, resilient economy.
- **Environmental Equity**
Focus on projects that promote sustainability and do not cause harm to the environment.
- **Health Equity**
Focus projects that prioritize holistic health and the health of the community.



2.3 Governance Council

Authority

The Governance Council receives its authority to vote on investment proposals for the CERF projects via an election through the CERF subregional high road transition collaboratives, also called subregional collaboratives: South, North, Central, East, and West. A minimum of 18 representatives will be elected with 3 representatives per region with the exception of the Central region, which will have 5 representatives.



The Structure of CERF with the Governance Council (image above)

Elections Process

Eligibility [to apply](#) to be elected as a representative on the Governance Council is determined by the following criteria:

- be a verified member of one of the subregional collaboratives of which s/he will represent;
- live in and/or work in the subregional collaborative service area;
- demonstrate experience and a commitment to one of these key stakeholder areas: labor, community organization, education/workforce, and/or economic development.



Eligibility to vote for a Governance Council representative is determined by verified attendance at one of the CERF subregional collaboratives.

Applications to be elected to serve on the Governance Council shall become available in August of 2023.

The Kern Coalition, as the Regional Convener, shall appoint a third-party, impartial entity to oversee the elections.

Elections shall be held in-person during the week of September 25, 2023.

Once votes are confirmed, Governance Council members will be confirmed through a swearing in ceremony.

In the event that there is insufficient representation from key stakeholder groups, the Kern Coalition shall appoint at-large members to the Governance Council with priority given to those who live in, serve, and/or are from under-represented communities. The Kern Coalition may remove a Governance Council Representative by consensus at any time, with or without cause.

Operations and Decision-Making

The Governance Council representatives will commit to attend two to three meetings per month for the duration of the CERF grant and any affiliative CERF grant. The Regional Convener will facilitate Governance Council meetings as an impartial, non-voting participant. A majority (66%) of Governance Council members will constitute a quorum.

Approvals of investment proposals will require a vote of a majority of the Governance Council members present at a meeting at which a quorum is present.

The Governance Council will include a chair and co-chair and will record its activities to the Kern Coalition on a regular basis and will keep minutes of its meetings.

The Regional Convener Coordinator will serve as the Council's staff liaison to develop agendas and minutes.

Unless the Regional Convener, in concert with the Governance Council, directs, all meetings will be open to the public.

To ensure established protocols and procedures are in accordance with the CERF grant, the Kern Coalition, in concert with the Governance Council, will co-develop a charter that is reviewed periodically.

Amendments to the Governance Council charter can be made at any time.



Prior to a vote, the Regional Convener Coordinator will remind Governance Council representatives to opt out if a financial interest is foreseeable.

No action by the Governance Council shall occur outside scheduled meetings listed in the final meeting agenda.

Notifications of meetings shall be posted on the Kern Coalition CERF website and will be communicated through social media outlets and platforms.

Responsibilities of Governance Council Representatives

1. Read the Kern CERF grant proposal, the work plan, the metrics, and the regional plan.
2. Participate in an onboarding process and on-going training that includes diversity, equity, and inclusion orientation, training in the CERF Theory of Change, governance, inclusive economic development, power-sharing, and other relevant topics.
3. Have knowledge of economic development, equity in health, the environment, and in the economy.
4. Read and review proposals.
5. Vote, and make recommendations for funding or for further technical assistance.
6. Review research and data related to CERF investment proposals.
7. Sign a confidentiality agreement and a commitment to equity agreement.
8. Disclose any matter that will have a direct financial impact on the representative's financial interests and may not vote.



3. Stakeholder Engagement

3.1 Definition of Stakeholders

The Kern Coalition is committed to working with a variety of stakeholder groups to ensure long-term success. As such, it will work with local organizations committed to advancing local climate initiatives that advance environmental justice and include balanced representation from labor, business, community, government, and other stakeholders, including, but not limited to, economic development, philanthropy, education, and workforce partners. Together, these partners will form the Kern Coalition to plan for strong economies and opportunities that lead to high quality jobs accessible to all.

3.2 Role of Key Stakeholder Groups

CERF identifies thirteen key stakeholder groups: labor organizations; employers, businesses, and business associations; grassroots and community-based organizations, community organizers, and community members; government agencies, economic development agencies, philanthropic organizations; education and training providers; workforce entities; environmental justice organizations, worker centers; disinvested communities; California Native American Tribes; and other regional stakeholders. The goal of the stakeholder groups is to engage in sub-regional collaboratives, together with the other diverse stakeholders and identify, plan, and develop stronger and more resilient economic plans for their communities. The Kern Coalition will serve as the convener to provide support and guidance to subregions engaged in the CERF process.

3.3 Transformative Collaborations

CERF provides the platform to develop transformative collaborations that will leverage resources and community assets to ensure communities are equitably represented with a focus on environmental, economic and health equity. Diverse representation of stakeholders within the subregional collaboratives are key to identifying gaps and opportunities resulting in transformative change.

