

CALIFORNIA



Education, Diversity, and Growth in the Economy



EDGE 2024 Annual Report

Mission

To advance state policy and investments that create and sustain pathways into the middle class for all Californians, including those facing barriers to social and economic mobility.

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A Message From the Executive Director

As we reflect on another impactful year for the California EDGE Coalition, I am filled with gratitude for our coalition partners and who support our shared mission. We remain steadfast our commitment to advancing economic mobility and closing opportunity gaps to ensure that every Californian has access to high-quality education, meaningful training, and equitable opportunities for economic advancement.



In a time of budget constraints and economic challenges, EDGE has stood alongside allies, legislators, and the Administration to protect and expand critical investments in workforce development. Together, we have preserved essential programs—from apprenticeships for young Californians to support systems for working parents and training for high-demand, good jobs that provide family-supporting wages. These efforts underscore the importance of a resilient, inclusive economy where pathways to prosperity are accessible to all.

EDGE's coalition is as diverse as the state we serve. Over the past year, we collaborated with organizations across education, labor, business, workforce development, and social justice sectors, each dedicated to advancing equity and economic opportunity. Together, we have strengthened policies that support Californians in achieving their educational and career goals and have championed investments that benefit today's workers and future generations alike.

This year's report is more than a reflection of our achievements; it's a testament to the power of collective action. Our progress would not be possible without your partnership. Together, we are building a California where prosperity is within reach for all.

Thank you for your ongoing collaboration. I look forward to our continued work together, advocating for policies that uplift communities, expand career opportunities, and create a brighter future for all Californians.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Zima Creason". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Zima" being more prominent.

Zima Creason
Executive Director
CA EDGE Coalition

How We Coalesce for Shared Prosperity

Influencer Engagement and Partner Collaboration

Participation in statewide summits, meetings, webinars, podcasts, and influencer videos to engage legislators, staff, and allies in the fight to improve education, training, and employment opportunities for Californians paid low wages.





How We Work

EDGE unites business, labor, social justice, education and workforce organizations, and we've worked collaboratively with our partners to build a broadly shared prosperity. Our partners over the last year include, but are not limited to, National Skills Coalition, ReWork the Bay Equity at Work Council, New Ways to Work, California Opportunity Youth Network, California Alliance of Dual Enrollment Partnerships, Center for Caregiver Advancement, California Higher Education Equity Coalition, and Mental Health America of California.

Who We Represent

EDGE is widely recognized for the depth and diversity of our coalition along with the expertise we offer policymakers on improving career technical education, adult education, basic skills education, job training, and other issues related to closing California's opportunity gap. The EDGE Coalition includes the California Hospital Association, California Manufacturers and Technology Association, California Workforce Association, Career Ladders Project for the CA Community Colleges, Latino Coalition for the Healthy California (LCHC), PolicyLink, Small Business Majority, SEIU-UHW Joint Employer Education Fund and the Shirley Ware Education Center, California Workforce Association, and the State Building and Construction Trades Council of California.

Impact

During this year's 2024-25 state budget cycle, a \$297.9 billion spending plan was approved by the Governor and Legislature, with \$211.5 billion from the General Fund, to address a \$46.8 billion deficit through cuts, delays, and reapportionments. Despite financial challenges, the budget protects key education investments, including funding for community colleges, student support services, and workforce development programs like youth apprenticeships. However, there were cuts in critical areas such as the healthcare workforce sector and limited funding for programs helping Californians with barriers to training and employment. While the budget supports students, working families, and industries, more needs to be done to advance racial and economic equity for those still left behind. EDGE is committed to promoting policies that expand pathways to economic mobility and will work with the Administration, Legislature, and partners to ensure underserved communities remain a priority in future budget discussions.



Meet Our Board



Linda Collins,
EDGE Board President;
Executive Director,
Career Ladders Project



Peggy Wheeler,
EDGE Board Vice President/Secretary;
Vice President, Rural Health and
Governance, California Hospital
Association



Rita Medina,
EDGE Board Treasurer;
Deputy Director, Latino Coalition for a
Healthy California



Bianca Blomquist,
California Policy Director/Northern
California, Outreach Director National
Future of Work, California Small
Business Majority



Lawrence Gayden,
Policy Director, California Manufacturers
and Technology Association



Rebecca Hanson,
Executive Director, SEIU-UHW Joint
Employer Education Fund and the
Shirley Ware Education Center



Abbie Langston,
Director Equitable Economy, Policy Link



Isis Medina Orellana,
Policy Analyst, California
Workforce Association



Jeremy Smith,
Chief of Staff and Director of Workforce
Development, State Building and
Construction Trades Council

Meet Our Staff



Zima Creason, Executive Director



Anna Alvarado, Policy Director



Jaclyn Moreno, Program Director



Jason Henderson, Policy Analyst




Leola Roberts, Administrative Assistant


Top 10 from the Capitol

Below are the top 10 legislative and budget victories that EDGE supported and advocated for throughout the 2024 legislative session. Full highlights of EDGE's accomplishments can be found [here](#).


1

Chaptered  AB 2458 (Berman) The Greater Accessibility, Information, Notice, and Support (GAINS) for Student Parents. This bill seeks to empower student parents by easing financial burdens, facilitating enrollment, and enhancing graduation rates in their pursuit of higher education. This legislation strives to guarantee that student parents access the financial assistance they need, factoring in childcare costs. Furthermore, it mandates college campuses (UC, CSU, CCC) to gather and analyze data to propel student-parent achievement. Student parents face significant socioeconomic barriers and need targeted support to navigate the education system while balancing family responsibilities and pursuing their career goals.


2

Chaptered  AB 2723 (Irwin) Cradle to Career Data System. This bill updates C2C rules by clarifying that C2C maintains data, ensuring individuals exercise intellectual property rights at the data source, and correcting an error to align C2C's definition of personal data with state law, protecting names, IDs, phone numbers, addresses, and job history. The C2C Data System is a statewide platform that connects education, workforce, financial aid, and social service data to help policymakers, educators, and the public address disparities and improve outcomes.

3

Chaptered  AB 2873 (Garcia) Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative. This bill would make changes to the Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative (BB2E) by setting aside 15% of any future allocated funds to prospective grantees, like community-based organizations, who were unable to secure a workforce board partner entity before the deadline but were able to meet all other requirements. Any funds not used in this allocation will roll over to the next application cycle. BB2E enhances workforce and education programs by offering services to support individuals facing employment challenges.

4

Chaptered  AB 3240 (Calderon) CA Ban on Scholarship Displacement: Cal Grants. The California Ban on Scholarship Displacement Act of 2021 prevents colleges from reducing a student's institutional aid due to private scholarships unless the total aid surpasses the cost of attendance. It also prohibits colleges from factoring in private scholarships when determining a student's eligibility for institutional aid. This bill would extend these protections to students eligible for Cal Grants. Student financial aid remains vital for helping students access education and training, achieve their goals, and prepare for workforce opportunities.

5

Protected investments for Women in Construction. The budget preserved \$15 million in ongoing funding for the Women in Construction Unit at the Department of Industrial Relations, including 5 permanent positions to support women and nonbinary individuals in the skilled trades sector.

Top 10 from the Capitol Continued

6

Protected investments for the CA Youth Apprenticeship Program. The budget preserved \$25 million in funding for the CA Youth Apprenticeship Program to develop innovative ways to boost opportunity youth participation in pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, demonstrating positive employment and earnings outcomes.

7

Protected investments for the High Road Training Partnerships. The budget preserved funding for High Road Training Partnerships by rejecting \$45 million in cuts and reallocating \$15 million to expand these programs at the Workforce Development Board. HRTTP supports worker-focused, industry-led training that emphasizes equity, job quality, and sustainability.

8

Advancing credit for prior learning. The budget allocated \$6 million in one-time funding for the Mapping Articulated Pathways for Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) project. This initiative helps working adults access high-demand careers by supporting colleges in establishing CPL practices, using technology to automate credit transfers, and providing grants for faculty development and technical assistance. CPL enables learners to obtain credit for experiences that result in college level competence gained outside of college or university credit-bearing, course classrooms.

9

Protecting child care investments. The budget reaffirms the expansion of over 200,000 subsidized childcare slots by 2028, as approved in 2021. It also fully funds 11,000 awarded expansion slots from current appropriations. Child care access is a cornerstone of a strong workforce, boosting employee productivity, economic stability, and long-term societal benefits.

10

Protecting health care access for immigrants. The budget sustains funding for Health4All, expanding Medi-Cal coverage to undocumented immigrants aged 26-49. Initially approved in 2022, this included \$835.6 million in 2023-24 and \$2.6 billion annually which began January 2024. Accessible health care is essential for immigrant communities, as it promotes well-being and ensures a healthy, thriving workforce that contributes to economic growth and societal stability.



“ This year, California faced another tough budget year, but thanks to organizations like EDGE, we were able to protect crucial funding for workforce development. California can become the center of good-paying jobs, but only if we address our critical skills shortage by investing in quality training programs. I am grateful for the commitment of EDGE and look forward to continuing our work toward building an inclusive economy that benefits all Californians. ”

~ State Senator María Elena Durazo

Lending our Expertise to Connecting Work and Postsecondary Learning

ReWork the Bay: EDGE Executive Director, Zima Creason, serves on ReWork the Bay's Equity at Work Council. ReWork brings together values-aligned leaders across economic justice, education and training, business, and philanthropy to achieve an equitable Bay Area future where everyone has access to quality jobs that enable full lives with security, dignity, and agency.

SkillsSPAN: EDGE plays a key role in advancing workforce development efforts as the lead organization for SkillSPAN in California. As part of the National Skills Coalition's nationwide initiative, EDGE collaborates with a diverse network of partners to advocate for policies and programs that strengthen skills development, promote economic mobility, and ensure that California's workforce is prepared for the demands of a rapidly changing economy.

EDGE Network Table Talk: EDGE led an engaging table talk on apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and earn-and-learn opportunities in California where experts discussed the current status of these programs and the impacts of recent state policies and investments on them. By examining best practices, challenges, and innovative approaches, we aimed to create a space for discussion that will lead to policy changes and investments that empower individuals while meeting the evolving needs of California's dynamic labor market.



Silicon Valley Education Foundation Presentation: Zima Creason and Jason Henderson led an engaging session on how the CA EDGE Coalition is driving systemic change in workforce development, education, and training through strategic advocacy and coalition building. The session offered an overview of the Coalition's efforts to advance economic mobility for communities historically excluded from California's prosperity, while also addressing critical workforce shortages.

AB 705 Coalition: EDGE is a member of the AB 705 Coalition where we provide input and feedback on issues related to AB 1705/705 implementation - equitable placement for community college students, including advocacy opportunities.

California Higher Ed Equity Coalition (CHEEC): EDGE is a member of the CA Higher Ed Equity Coalition group where we partner with other organizations to ensure California provides equitable access to education and economic mobility. Our shared vision is that every Californian, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or income has the skills and education they need to be upwardly mobile, participate in the workforce, and contribute to civic life.

California Alliance of Dual Enrollment Partnerships (CADEP): EDGE was elected to serve as an organizational representative on the CADEP Board of Directors. CADEP is a unified coalition committed to the advancement of equity, student success, and quality in dual enrollment programs in California.

California Opportunity Youth Network (COYN): EDGE joined the COYN network and serves on the steering committee. COYN works to transform systems, policies, investments, and narratives to ensure all youth and young adults in California have the opportunity to flourish in adulthood.

Center for Caregiver Advancement (CCA): EDGE Executive Director, Zima Creason, was elected to serve on the CCA Board of Directors. CCA focuses on building a workforce of highly trained caregivers, high-quality training options, research, policy, and advocacy.



Thank You!

Special thanks to our investors!

National Skills Coalition (NSC)

works closely with EDGE, the lead organization for SkillSPAN in California, to advance a shared vision of creating an inclusive economy where all individuals have access to high-quality education and training opportunities.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

supports EDGE's advocacy efforts on the Cradle-to-Career statewide longitudinal data system, financial aid reform, developmental education, and dual enrollment implementation.

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

supports EDGE's efforts to center Opportunity Youth and address their unique barriers through our advocacy in workforce development, education, and training.

ReWork the Bay

supports EDGE's participation in ReWork the Bay's Equity at Work Council. ReWork brings together values-aligned leaders across economic justice, education and training, business, and philanthropy to achieve an equitable Bay Area future where everyone has access to quality jobs that enable full lives with security, dignity, and agency.

The James Irvine Foundation

supports EDGE's goal of advancing economic mobility and shared prosperity for all Californians through statewide advocacy and policy-maker education focused on workforce development and training.

Tipping Point Community

supports EDGE in strengthening its network to expand advocacy efforts, set impactful policy priorities, and engage diverse stakeholders. Through this partnership, EDGE is driving initiatives that protect crucial workforce funding, enhance whole student support, foster industry collaboration, and expand earn-and-learn opportunities for Californians.

The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation

supports EDGE in strengthening organizational capacity to better serve Angelenos and engage them in state advocacy efforts. This partnership enhances EDGE's ability to connect with LA communities and amplify local voices.

The EDGE Network

The EDGE Network is a statewide network of organizations advancing workforce development policies that remove systemic barriers and promote an inclusive economy for all Californians. The EDGE Network is led by the CA EDGE Coalition and EDGE is a member of the National Skills Coalition's SkillSPAN Network. The EDGE Network's guiding principles are equity, pathways to good jobs, and systems innovation. We believe that access to, and completion of, high-quality education and training are critical to advance economic mobility for all Californians. More information about the EDGE Network and our shared policy goals can be found [here](#).

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