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STATE BOARD AWARDS GRANT FOR KERN COUNTY WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION PLANNING PROJECT

Bakersfield, CA — The California Workforce Development Board has awarded a multimillion dollar grant to support the development of a regional plan to diversify Kern County's economy and workforce. The Center on Race, Poverty, & the Environment will team up with Bakersfield College and the UC Merced Community and Labor Center to coordinate a regional planning process. The Kern Community College District is the project's fiscal sponsor.

The Kern High Roads Regional Workforce Project is part of the California Workforce Development Board's High Road Training Partnership, which is funded through California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health, and the environment — particularly in disadvantaged communities. The High Roads Training Partnership (HRTP) Grant will bring Kern County stakeholders together to identify economic opportunities and barriers for the region, as well as develop strategies to diversify the region's workforce and economy. The project will be designed to give prominence to worker and community perspectives and prioritize opportunities that will bring good jobs and community benefits to the region.

High Road Training Partnerships are part of the State of California's efforts to increase local quality jobs and economic resiliency while addressing environmental concerns. The approach lifts up workers hardest hit by discrimination, economic exclusion, and exploitation—including Black and undocumented workers. The Kern High Roads Regional Workforce Project grant is one of the first awarded under the State Board's new regional strategies framework. HRTP regional strategies support workers and communities in adapting to and creating new workforce opportunities in the transition to a carbon-neutral economy. Kern County's economy and workforce has been particularly hard hit by the continuing decline in the state's production of fossil fuels.

"We are absolutely invested in finding ways to help diversify Kern County's economy, bring benefits to communities and workers, and center voices that too often are left out of important conversations and decisions. We are excited to work with our partners and stakeholders across Kern to fashion real solutions in response to a rapidly shifting economy," said Ingrid Brostrom, Assistant Director with the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment.