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Grant to aid bilingual business education Groups have chance to extend funding for three additional years

By VICTOR CALDERON
The Salinas Californian

Three Central Coast business-leadership organizations will be able to offer more bilingual business-education programs, thanks to a private grant secured this past month, officials announced Wednesday.

The organizations, collectively known as the Salinas and Pájaro Valleys Small and Micro-Business Initiative, have been selected to share \$150,000 per year for two years to increase ownership and wealth-creation opportunities among area farm workers and other low-income residents.

▼ ADVERTISEMENT ▼ The organizations, which will each receive \$50,000 annually, are the Salinas-based Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association farming cooperative, the Salinas United Business Association and El Pájaro Community Development Corp., a Watsonville-based business incubator.

The grant is from the Dallas-based National Rural Funders Collaborative, an initiative of 11 private U.S. foundations organized to expand resources for families and communities in regions of persistent poverty.

The funding may be extended for an additional three years, local business-initiative officials said.

“This grant will allow us to further develop leadership among minority-owned businesses and encourage these businesses to get more involved in the community,” said Gary Peterson, communications and development director for ALBA.

ALBA operates two farms, with a total of 305 acres, on which student farmers participate in a six-month small-farmer education program before entering a farm incubator to grow their own crops for several years. ALBA also has a produce distribution company, ALBA Organics, which accounts for 25 percent of fresh produce sales by those who participate in ALBA’s programs.

The three organizations will launch business-education and leadership-development workshops and lead policy debates, Peterson said.

SUBA, a business-supported nonprofit that works toward revitalizing the economy of east Salinas, held a small-business resource fair and mixer this past month as the first of a series of events aimed at assisting the local business community.

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