



April 2026 (BOS Presentation May 2026)

MICROENTERPRISE SUPPORT PROGRAM (MSP)

PROGRESS REPORT

2026



GLOSSARY

Apoyo - refers to the new program created with MSP funding called “Apoyo a Negocios”

EIN - Employer Identification Number

Emprende - refers to the new program created with MSP funding called “Emprende West Marin”

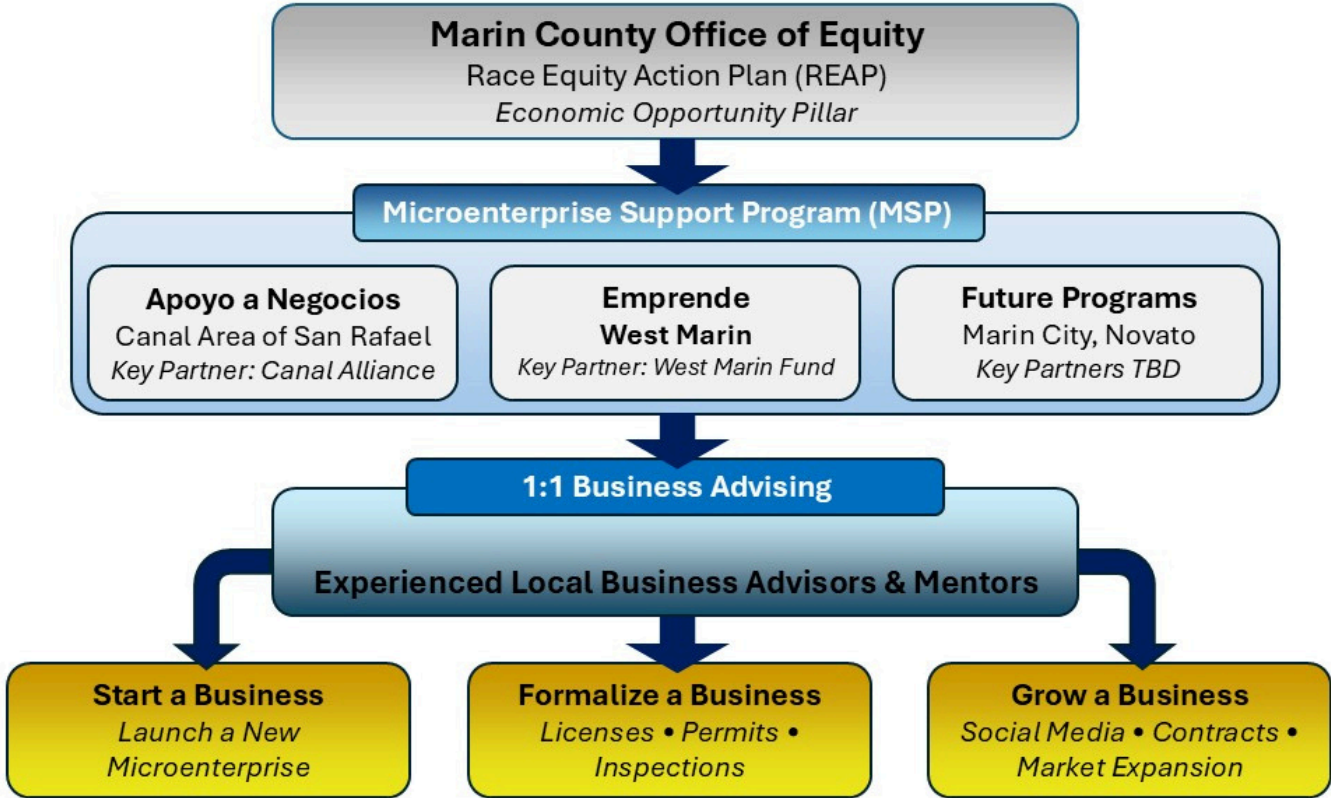
FBN - Fictitious Business Name

MEHKO - Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations

MSP - Microenterprise Support Program

REAP - Race Equity Action Plan

HOW REAP FUNDING SUPPORTS MICROBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN MARIN COUNTY



The Microenterprise Support Program brings business advising into trusted community spaces, helping entrepreneurs start, formalize, and/or grow their businesses.

INTRODUCTION

The Microenterprise Support Program (MSP) was created as part of the Marin County Office of Equity's Race Equity Action Plan (REAP) Economic Opportunity pillar to address gaps in access to business support for microentrepreneurs in Marin County. Through trusted partnerships, the program delivers business advising and training in community spaces across Marin County.

In 2024, the Marin County Office of Equity invested \$250,000 into the MSP to promote local economic growth and generational wealth, particularly in communities of color, immigrant communities and rural communities. The goal of MSP is to focus on four target areas where barriers to business ownership are more relevant: Marin City, the San Rafael Canal, Novato, and West Marin.

The initial phase of the MSP contract focused on serving Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs through trusted, place-based partnerships in San Rafael and West Marin. For San Rafael, the primary entry point was the Canal, where Canal Alliance serves Spanish-speaking residents across San Rafael and Novato. For West Marin, the entry point was working with West Marin Fund to create an in-person information gathering for interested participants to better understand their needs. Using existing infrastructure, trusted community partnerships, and advising expertise, it was possible to quickly implement two new programs: Apoyo a Negocios and Emprende West Marin. The MSP contract allowed for partnerships to be created and strengthened to accelerate the implementation of these programs.

The data and outcomes presented in this report reflect only programming funded through the MSP from April 2025 - March 2026. This report highlights the two new programs, Apoyo a Negocios and Emprende West Marin, which were developed and launched as a direct result of the MSP funding.

OVERVIEW SNAPSHOT

18

Training Events/
Gatherings

248

Attendees

12

Community
Meetings

2

New Multi Week
Programs Launched

Program Highlights

40

Attendees at first
Apoyo a Negocios

51

People applied for
Emprende West Marin

23

Graduated from the
Emprende program

"I learned how to start, the steps to make the business legal and done correctly. Thank you."

- Apoyo Attendee

40%

Apoyo participants received
Business Advising

Overall Attendee
Gender Insight



68%

Female



32%

Male

KEY PARTNERS

Strategic Partners



Ways Supporting the Program

Lead strategic partner

- Funding arm to further the expansion in the community
- Connections to new potential key partners
- Brainstorm initiatives and provide feedback on design and flow of program

Lead San Rafael partner

- Outreach, marketing, needs analysis
- Apoyo location + support
- Data collection
- Able to support clients when needed in West Marin, Marin City and Novato

Lead West Marin partner

- Developing Emprende Program
- Creating Fund for Emprende Grant
- Outreach and marketing
- Connecting to local community contacts

Supporting Emprende West Marin Program

- Outreach
- Administering the distribution of grant funds

Supporting Emprende West Marin Program

- Providing space in West Marin for classes
- Outreach
- Connecting with childcare providers

Partners Providing Marketing & Outreach Support



APOYO A NEGOCIOS

The purpose of the program is to create accessible, in-person regular monthly sessions where Spanish-speaking clients can receive immediate answers to business questions and get information to take important steps in moving their business forward. The program is intentionally designed to be place-based, hosted by Canal Alliance, a trusted resource partner where participants live and work, reducing barriers to participation and strengthening engagement. It builds awareness in the Canal community that there is support for local residents in launching or growing a business. Each session covers one topic and is on the second Wednesday of the month from 6:00-7:30 pm at the Canal Alliance offices on Grand Ave in San Rafael. Topics covered included: business licensing, Canva, website vs social media, digital marketing, and business taxes.

Events	Attendees	Received Advising After Apoyo	Hours of Biz Advising
10	130	40%	75

Clients Served

- Attracted clients who are motivated, come with specific, immediate business needs and demonstrate a strong readiness to act once they receive guidance, showing a “tell me what to do next” attitude.
- Clients were interested in a variety of industries such as child care, construction, retail, ecommerce, house cleaning, and food.



Of the 40 participants in the first Apoyo, 80% were looking to start a food business.

All Apoyo Attendee Gender



APOYO A NEGOCIOS

Support Sought by Participants

- Legal structure and licensing
- Startup steps
- Sales tax, permits, and compliance
- Early-stage financial setup
- Sector-specific barriers (MEHKO, home-based operations, etc.)

Anecdotal Successes from Advising

Apoyo participants receiving business advising are in the process of or already have:

- Obtained a Fictitious Business Name (FBN)
- Applied for EINs successfully
- Created financial projections
- Set up bookkeeping systems
- Implemented new marketing strategies

Wins

- Overall, very positive evaluations from participants.
- Deeper solidification of partnerships in the community.
- Developed system for follow-up and notifying clients of next steps - spent many hours in calling, emailing, texting to make sure clients were able to move forward.
- Created topics based on the needs from clients and what was communicated in one-on-one sessions.
- Attracted existing business owners as well as newly starting businesses
- Worked with Canal Alliance to ensure participants felt comfortable and safe given the government instability.

“

I learned how to open my own business
and identify who my customers are.

APOYO ATTENDEE

”

APOYO A NEGOCIOS

Key Takeaways

Structure Changes: Some topics were split into an online workshop prior to the in-person Apoyo to allow maximum exposure to material before the clinic. While this was helpful in delivering content, it might have created some confusion about what people were attending and what to expect. This will be modified in 2026.

Tech barriers: Important to consider how to deliver content to clients with varying levels of technology literacy. For instance, in the Canva Apoyo participants varied greatly in their range of abilities in basic computer skills. This made it challenging for everyone to learn what they desired to learn. The partner organizations are discussing ways to better support clients with different levels of computer literacy and have already adapted some of this learning in the Emprende West Marin Program.

Food Business Legality: Not many options yet in Marin for participants to legally start a home based food business (i.e. no Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKO) program). There is a large number of participants who want to start a food business so there is a challenge in helping them be legitimate businesses.

“

I think everything was excellent. The presenter, Laurie, answered every question kindly.

APOYO ATTENDEE

”

APOYO A NEGOCIOS NEXT STEPS



STRUCTURE CHANGES

The Apoyos will be kept separate from the workshops to help minimize confusion. Apoyos will be on Wednesdays in-person and workshops will be online on Tuesdays or Thursdays. Apoyos are clinics where participants can answer questions and get specific assistance. The workshops are where content will be delivered.

The schedule for the Apoyos has been set for the entire 2026 to help market the topics together and draw in new participants. Please refer to flyer on page 22 for details on topics in 2026.



EXPANSION

Connect with partners in Marin City and Novato to understand the needs of that community and determine if it would be helpful to organize Apoyos in their area - possibly in English.



TRUST

Continue to build trust and ensure the Apoyos are a safe space in a climate of instability.

EMPRENDE WEST MARIN

The purpose of this program is to create an opportunity for the West Marin Spanish-speaking community to receive in-person practical skills and knowledge to start or grow a business. Originally, the program was designed to support the displaced ranch workers and grew into assisting any Spanish-speaking member in the community who wants to start a business. To accommodate the needs of the large group who attended a pre-program meeting, two cohorts were created; one being fully in-person and one being hybrid in-person and online with both providing child care during the in-person sessions. The program is designed to be 15 weeks of instruction with a potential opportunity to receive seed funding from West Marin Fund. The course covers all aspects of a business plan including vision, mission, sales and marketing strategies, financial projections, accounting and operations.

Applications	Kickoff Session Attendees	Active Cohorts	Number Graduated
51	43	2	23

Clients Serving

- Participants are highly motivated and demonstrate clear entrepreneurial intent.
- Participants include parents with young children, multiple members of the same family, and young adults.
- Participants are launching microbusinesses in: food and beverage, cleaning and home maintenance services, landscaping and construction support trades (handyman services), services (childcare, tattoo, translation, photography, car detailing).



Childcare provided to support attendee needs

Emprende Attendee Gender



72%
Female



28%
Male

EMPRENDE WEST MARIN

Unique Aspects of This Program

To ensure the needs of the participants were met, and to build trust within the community, there was an initial meeting organized before starting the program. This entailed renting a space, providing food and child care. The feedback and knowledge gained from this session helped in the intentional design of the curriculum and determine how to best create the cohorts.

West Marin Fund hired a local trusted person to assist with outreach (and she was a participant herself). This was vital to gaining trust and attracting participants and possibly the reason there was a large turnout.

Based on learnings from the Apoyos, extra spent was time reviewing the applications. The original design of the program was altered from one cohort to two cohorts to meet the needs of the participants and accommodate differences in technology access, digital literacy, and transportation. Participants that had access to computers and more knowledge were placed in Cohort 1. Participants who needed additional technology support were placed Cohort 2. The curriculum design was also adapted to accommodate only in-person meetings for Cohort 2 since the participants didn't have ongoing access to computers.

Wins

- First time a program in West Marin had 51 people apply - everyone amazed!
- Changed the model of the program to accommodate the large interest and built it into two cohorts instead of one.
- Developed new curriculum as the program unfolded to better support the needs of participants.
- Participants reported understanding the curriculum and felt the pace of the course was appropriate. There was consistent engagement with a 90% average attendance rate.
- Supervisor Rodoni's office was able to provide 19 computers to participants. All partners worked together to create a system to gather interest and need for distribution.

EMPRENDE WEST MARIN

Key Takeaways

Community dynamics:

- It is a small community so some people did not feel comfortable sharing as much and letting others know of their ideas (proprietary issues).
- Participant support extended beyond instruction to meeting essential needs, including childcare, refreshments, and printed learning materials, ensuring attendees could focus fully on the program.

Tech barriers:

- It is important to consider how to deliver content to clients with varying levels of technology literacy.
- Many participants were not as computer savvy and had challenges with the internet which prevented them from keeping their videos on during the zoom training sessions.
- There were more people who could benefit from this program, but some did not have an email, and it was hard to stay in contact with them, even with multiple phone calls and door-to-door outreach.

Next Steps



Work with clients to help plan how they will utilize the West Marin Fund seed grant to launch their business and provide guidance on specific steps to progress their business plan.



Continuing the conversation about delivering the same program but in English, and also offering another Spanish program in 2026 due to demand.

EMPRENDE WEST MARIN GRADUATION

Highlights from Event

On March 3, 2026 from 6:00-8:30pm there was a beautiful graduation celebration event honoring the graduates of Emprende West Marin and gathering community members, local leaders, funders and county representatives. In total there were about 80 people in attendance and the graduates were able to bring their families to celebrate as well.

The event highlighted four program graduates who are starting food businesses as they were selected to provide tacos with toppings, bacon-wrapped hot dogs, fresh-pressed juices, and gelatinas for dessert. One graduate took photographs of each classmate to be displayed on the wall at the event. Other aspiring business owners were connected to the county to begin vending relationships for translation services and caterers for events.

To further support participants in promoting their businesses, a gallery section was created in the event space featuring profile photos of each participant. A dedicated table at the back of the room displayed printed marketing materials from participants ready to begin promoting their businesses. Supervisor Rodoni's office printed these materials and made them available for attendees to take, giving Emprende graduates a chance to formally introduce their businesses to the community and begin building visibility and customer connections.

Graduates who were parents not only brought their children to the event, but one even brought her child on stage to receive her certificate, highlighting the broader family impact of the program and its role in advancing economic opportunity across generations. Some of the children who attended were intrigued about entrepreneurship and encouraged their parents to turn their dreams into reality.

EMPRENDE WEST MARIN GRADUATION



Gallery of graduate profiles



Gelatinas for dessert with business owner



Opening remarks from Supervisor Rodoni

Photo credits: Jode Hamilton

EMPRENDE WEST MARIN GRADUATION



Graduate and her son receiving certificate



Graduates and their families



Graduates and County Officials

Photo credits: Carlos Porrata

OTHER ACTIVITIES

1 | CROSS-PARTNER DATA DEVELOPMENT

Canal Alliance built out a data collection system and tracking of clients to determine progress and growth for all the programs under MSP. This initiative was added to the scope of the MSP contract, given the changing federal government context and the need to make sure client data is safe and protected.

Key Takeaways

- Canal Alliance worked with Salesforce to build out their data system to incorporate new categories for tracking to help all partners work better with program participants and monitor progress.
- They also developed a new system to be able to take registrations for programs through their website which is now being used for the Apoyo a Negocio programs.

Next Steps

- Create dashboard that enables partners to better understand the impact of the program and monitor participant progress.
- Partners to collaborate on the development of a database to improve tracking of participant progress.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

2 | COMMUNITY MEETINGS

There was a MSP presence at events in West Marin, Marin City, Canal Alliance Local Vendor Market and San Rafael Job Fair. MSP representatives attended multiple Food Policy county-wide meetings and met with the Health Department to better understand the legal options for food business providers.

There was also a meeting organized with key players in Marin City, involving Marin City Community Development Corporation, Marin City Community Services District and the Marin City Liaison for the County. The intention for this meeting was to introduce potential Marin City partners to the successful MSP programs already happening and to generate ideas about the needs of the community members. A couple Marin City partners brought up specific business industries they believe would be interested in support such as haircare, food, house cleaning and landscaping.

Next Steps

The next steps will be to do an in-person visit to possible locations for workshops and gather the topics of interest to begin programming in Marin City hopefully by May or June 2026.

PLANS FOR 2026



EXPANSION

- Establish a presence in Marin City by hosting a meeting that brings together the three community organizations for a conversation and hear what the community needs.
- Work with Novato organizations to determine if doing an Apoyo program would be beneficial.



COMPLETION

- Roll out the first seed funding for Emprende West Marin where West Marin Fund is the administrator and funding organization for the seed grants. The MSP partnership is assisting in application creation and review and all aspects related to the grants are going through West Marin Fund.
- Evaluate the Emprende West Marin curriculum with partners and potentially roll out 2 more cohorts in West Marin (one in English and one more in Spanish).



REFINEMENT

- Create a 6-month calendar for Apoyos and other Spanish workshops to let people know ahead of time.
- Continue to refine curriculum and structure to better support different levels of technology literacy.
- Work with Canal Alliance on finalizing development and implementation of database system.

FLYERS FOR MSP PROGRAMS

**WANT TO WORK FOR YOURSELF?
START A BUSINESS?
GROW A BUSINESS WITH 5 OR FEWER EMPLOYEES?**



You can receive free guidance to:

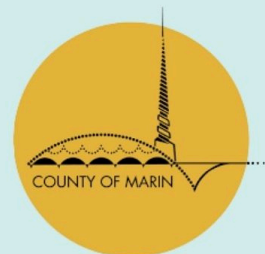
- Get answers to your specific questions from business experts
- Assist you with all stages of business growth
- Connect you with other business owners and organizations

All industries & levels of business knowledge are welcome.

Services are in English and Spanish. Other language support is provided, if needed.

**The County of Marin dedicated funding
to assist you through a Microenterprise
Support Program (MSP).**

More Information



FLYERS FOR MSP PROGRAMS

EMPRENDE WEST MARIN

¿Quiere iniciar o hacer crecer un negocio con capital semilla?



Este programa le brindará el conocimiento, la mentoría y la comunidad que necesita para construir el negocio que imagina. Los participantes que cubran los requisitos del programa serán elegibles para solicitar una subvención de hasta \$5,000. Se invita a postular a negocios de todos los sectores.



▶ Qué Esperar

- 12 a 15 clases en Español, **a partir del 7 de octubre**
- **Clases los martes, 6-8:30 p.m.** – en persona y en línea (alternadas)
- Capacitación gratuita como parte del Programa de Apoyo a Micronegocios del Condado de Marín (MSP), con apoyo de West Marin Fund para otorgar subvenciones a negocios elegibles.

▶ Las clases cubren:

- Desarrollo de un plan de negocios
- Creación de visión, misión y objetivos
- Finanzas y punto de equilibrio
- Marketing, relaciones públicas y ventas
- Contratación de personal
- Operaciones y administración



Fecha límite:
30 de septiembre

¡Aplique Ahora!

Sesión informativa

21 de septiembre en la feria de recursos “West Marin Connect”

¿Preguntas? Envíe un correo a programs@westmarinfund.org o envíe un mensaje de texto a Rosa Rodríguez, promotora comunitaria, al (559) 310-8273



FLYERS FOR MSP PROGRAMS

APOYO A NEGOCIOS

Únase cada mes y converse con expertos en negocios que responderán a sus preguntas. Estas sesiones se adaptarán a sus necesidades y le ayudarán a iniciar o hacer crecer tu negocio.



PROGRAMA DE 2026

11 FEBRERO	Acuerdos y contratos básicos
11 MARZO	Cómo fijar precios para productos o servicios
8 ABRIL	Licencias comerciales y pasos obligatorios para iniciar un negocio
13 MAYO	Redes sociales
10 JUNIO	Estrategia de ventas, servicio al cliente y aumento de ingresos
8 JULIO	Creación de un presupuesto y seguimiento de gastos e ingresos
12 AGOSTO	Licencias comerciales y pasos obligatorios para iniciar un negocio
9 SEP	Aplicaciones de Google
14 OCTUBRE	Marketing: cómo promocionar tu negocio
11 NOV	Canva para promocionar tu negocio



HORARIO:
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM



LUGAR:
EN PERSONA EN
SAN RAFAEL



GRATIS
POR UNA BECA
DE MARIN
COUNTY MSP



REGÍSTRESE AQUÍ:
FORMS.CANALALLIANCE.ORG/WFKVNYJ



CONTACT INFO

Microenterprise Support Program Website:

www.marincounty.gov/departments/executive/economic-vitality/microenterprise-support-program

