

**California Jobs First:
Regional Investment Initiative
Annual Report
December 31, 2025**

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Executive Summary

The Regional Investment Initiative, formerly known as Community Economic Resilience Fund Program, is a new approach to economic development that seeks to center disadvantaged communities as part of California's transition to a clean energy, carbon neutral economy, creating good-paying jobs and prosperous communities for all. In 2025, the Inter-Agency Leadership Team, comprised of the Labor and Workforce Development Agency and the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development with the administrative/contracting support of the Employment Development Department, Workforce Services Branch continued to support the implementation of the Regional Investment Initiative programs including the following major accomplishments:

- In February 2025, Governor Gavin Newsom announced the California Jobs First State Economic Blueprint (Blueprint) to streamline the state's economic and workforce development programs. The Blueprint set the statewide strategy for job creation, retention, and access to good paying jobs. Following the release of the Blueprint, the Regional Investment Initiative advanced economic development with a core focus on fostering equity and sustainability.
- The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development released a request for proposals for the Tribal Investment Phase and Implementation Phase in February 2025. The Tribal Investment Phase request for proposals was designed as a flexible fund, with \$15 million available, for California Native American Tribes, coalitions of Tribes, and tribally led organizations to support planning, pre-development, and/or implementation projects.
- The California Jobs First and Council Co-Chairs awarded the full \$15 million in available funding to 14 projects in June 2025.
- In August 2025, the California Jobs First and Council Co-Chairs awarded \$80 million to 11 projects across seven regions supporting 23,000 jobs in the following sectors: life sciences, aerospace and defense, agriculture and technology and farm equipment, and bioeconomy. These investments build on the \$182 million awarded to the 13 Jobs First regions in 2024 to design and pilot projects tailored to the unique needs of their local communities. Building on statewide momentum, the California Jobs First Council accelerated the second round of implementation funding to October 2025, approximately three months ahead of schedule.

Regional Investment Initiative Objectives

The initiative's objective is to build an equitable and sustainable economy across California's diverse regions and foster long-term economic resilience as the state moves toward carbon-neutrality. To achieve this objective, the program focuses on investments that target equitable economic outcomes for workers through regional and worker-centered inclusive economic planning, while aligning with and leveraging state investments (e.g., High Road Training Partnerships, infrastructure investments, community capacity building programs), federal investments (e.g., Economic Development Administration's Building Back Better Regional Challenge), and philanthropic and private-sector investments.

Annual Summary of Awards

The following provides summary information for ongoing or recently completed project phases, or detailed information on grants that were not included in previous reports. For a complete synopsis of the Regional Investment Initiative awards (previously CERF), visit [EDD's Legislative Report webpage](#).

Economic Development Pilot

Funding Awarded: \$40.3 million

Number of Awards: 8 projects

The Economic Development Pilot funds projects that align with the values of the Regional Investment Initiative program and demonstrate potential uses of implementation funds. The Economic Development Pilot is funding a total of eight projects that emerged from existing regional processes or plans and are ready for implementation. All eight projects are currently underway and will have a 24-month period of performance. At least three of the projects are leveraging other sources of funds to carry out their full scope of work. Additional sources of funding include state, federal, and philanthropic funds.

Three Economic Development Pilots are expected to conclude in late 2025:

1. Bioeconomy, Agriculture, and Manufacturing Initiative – Award - \$3,602,786

Applicant: Stanislaus Business Alliance, Inc d.b.a. Opportunity Stanislaus

Project Status: The Bioeconomy, Agriculture, and Manufacturing Initiative is a cross-sector collaboration to advance the circular bioeconomy in the North San Joaquin Valley, with a focus on growing a bio industrial manufacturing industry cluster that will generate inclusive access to family sustaining jobs across the region. The initiative advanced equity in the North San Joaquin Valley through the Beam Talent Solutions Navigator, Bioindustry Careers Early Exposure Fund, Research and Commercialization Access Match Fund, the Bioindustrial Manufacturing Innovation Voucher Program, and the Bioproduct Supply Chain Integration Technical Assistance Program.

2. High Roads to Good Jobs and Prosperity in the Central Valley – Award - \$10,000,000

Applicant: United Way Fresno and Madera Counties

Project Status: The objectives of this program were to expand access to good jobs that meet labor standards, increase opportunities for entrepreneurship and access to capital, and improve digital infrastructure in underserved communities. During the period of performance, United Way Fresno and Madera Counties assisted residents with PG&E cost-reduction applications, connected families to services that help reduce financial strain, and participated in community outreach to support awareness of available resources. The project also advanced local entrepreneurship by engaging in business development events and promoting training and support programs for new and growing small businesses.

3. Latino Workers and Entrepreneurs Resiliency Pathway – Award - \$3,496,179

Applicant: Ventures

Project Status: Latino Workers and Entrepreneurs Resiliency Pathway, which includes the Ventures' Familias con Mas financial capability model, prioritizes financial education and individual coaching as foundational steppingstones for underserved communities in San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties. Ventures and the El Pajaro CDC conducted the following activities: annually served 500 working-class Latinos by providing in-person classes, web-based workshops, and individual coaching that focused on predatory lending, budgeting, credit/debt, and banking. Participants gained knowledge about credit building and entrepreneurship to further financial goals and awareness of other programs. El Pajaro CDC supported the project with its Emprasari@ Business Program incubation, which offered lower-resourced startup companies assistance in establishing and raising capital for their businesses. Additionally, it established the Business Development Loans program, with 60% of approved loans supporting women-owned business, 20% childcare business, and 20% in agriculture/farming.

Tribal Investment Phase

Funding Awarded: \$15 million

Number of Awards: 14

In February 2025, the Regional Investment Initiative's Interagency Leadership Team released a Solicitation for Proposal for the Tribal Investment Phase totaling \$15 million to support California Native American tribal partners in supporting economic planning, pre-development activities, and/or implementation efforts. In June 2025, the Governor and the Interagency Leadership Team [announced](#) the 14 awards as follows:

Summary of Awards:

1. Berry Creek Rancheria of Maidu Indians: \$1,510,573.30

Project Type: Implementation

The Berry Creek Rancheria of Maidu Indians of California aims to be a leading provider of sustainable energy solutions for their Tribal Nation. By identifying and convening with key stakeholders in and around the community in Northern California, they will form a robust leadership team to plan and pre-develop an energy vision that assesses overall energy needs and resources.

2. California Indian Museum and Cultural Center: \$587,032

Project Type: Pre-Development

The California Indian Museum and Cultural Center, a 100% Native governed and led non-profit organization, will finish developing a pilot program titled Climate-Ready Tribal Community Health Representatives. The short-term objective of this culturally sustaining, career pipeline program is to help Native Americans, especially youth, secure jobs as Community Health Representatives/Community Health Workers in the high-growth healthcare sector.

3. Kashia Band of Pomo Indians: \$999,912.50

Project Type: Pre-Development

The Kashia Band of Pomo Indians views the establishment of the Kashia Aquaculture Center as a critical component of their legacy as stewards of the North Coast. The funding will directly support restoration infrastructure and development at the Kashia Coast Reserve property as well as Kashia's economic objectives to establish a commercial red abalone farm that will reliably provide a native, indigenously produced seafood to west coast Tribes and seafood markets, providing jobs and economic opportunities for the Tribe and its members.

4. Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria: \$500,000

Project Type: Pre-Development

The Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria currently does not have a location to provide community support services in emergency or nonemergency times. The Resilience Hub and Multi-Functional Community Center (the Hub Center) is intended to support Tribal members through planning, withstanding and recovering from disasters, while also providing space to deliver the following: educational training for climate adaptive and mitigation initiatives, Tribal small business and entrepreneurial technical assistance, Mechoopda Indian Tribe economic development strategic planning sessions, and culturally relevant workforce development programs focused on career readiness, skill-building for all ages, and job creation. Additionally, the Hub Center will provide wraparound services including childcare/after school programs, recreational programs, food access and distribution programs, wellness programs, and others as identified by the Mechoopda Indian Tribe.

5. Native Development Network: \$776,697

Project Type: Pre-Development

The Native Development Network will identify viable, livable-wage employment pathways for American Indian/Alaska Native individuals across healthcare, renewable energy, environmental protection, fire protection, water conservation, and technology sectors. Through comprehensive research, community engagement, and coalition building, the Native Development Network aims to empower Native communities to achieve economic stability, good-paying jobs, educational attainment, and career advancement while promoting gender equity and self-sufficiency.

6. Native First Lending: \$1,000,000

Project Type: Implementation

Native First Lending will provide an ecosystem of affordable access to capital for Native American business communities that promote sustained resources for community business growth, climate-friendly business practices and support for high-quality job creation. The creation of a \$750,000 revolving loan fund will expand Native First's lending services, allowing Native First Lending to increase its support of Native American business communities across Los Angeles County. A portion of the grant will support loan underwriting, closing and servicing services, workshops, one-on-one counseling, and specialized technical assistance.

7. California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project: \$744,744

Project Type: Implementation

The California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project is a tribally guided nonprofit of the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe that acquired properties on Deer Creek and the Nisenan village known as Yulića. Both properties hold cultural significance and will help build capacity and heal trauma. Restoration of the properties will address deferred maintenance, including aging buildings and environmental degradation. Property improvements will provide shared community spaces and support the planning and presentation of a Tribal Workforce Development Speaker and Practicum Series.

8. Owens Valley Career Development Center: \$1,995,136

Project Type: Implementation

Owens Valley Career Development Center, along with coalition partners, will build more equitable regional solar jobs and an energy ecosystem for Tribal members by investing in regional partnerships, building local capacity, and offering intensive training and pathways to employment in the solar industry, with additional opportunities for trainees to learn how to initiate, develop, and implement solar projects in their own communities.

9. Pit River Tribe: \$954,972.10

Project Type: Pre-Development

The Pit River Tribe will develop a comprehensive land use assessment that will guide actionable economic opportunities and strengthen long-term self-sufficiency for Tribal members, specifically in Region 1-North State, where the highest concentration of Pit River Tribal members reside.

10. Scotts Valley Energy Corporation: \$1,000,000

Project Type: Implementation

The Scotts Valley Energy Company, a wholly tribal subsidiary corporation of the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians, has been in the planning and development phase of a bioenergy production facility on its small piece of fee land, for the last five years. The goal of this energy production plant is to generate revenue for the welfare and benefit of the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians and its 315 members. The production facility will transform agricultural and forest waste material into 100% renewable bioenergy (carbon neutrality). The facility will also create a residual biochar byproduct, which will be a saleable product to store carbon for agricultural use.

11. Southern California Tribal Chairperson's Association: \$1,933,782

Project Type: Implementation

Southern California Tribal Chairman's Association will transform the region into a magnet for innovation-based economic development with the Innovation Ecosystem which will rapidly advance the development of viable businesses and technologies that propel innovation in clean energy and climate change. The Ecosystem vision focuses on developing a complementary portfolio of clean energy and climate change technologies, services, and solutions that support and enable one another's success, while strengthening economic resiliency and improving the conditions for economic growth in the region.

12. Table Mountain Rancheria: \$950,000

Project Type: Pre-Development

Table Mountain Rancheria will conduct pre-development activities toward the construct of the Table Mountain Rancheria Healthcare Center on Tribal lands. The pre-development project is to complete a full package of engineering and design work for both the site and the facility itself, culminating in a complete set of construction documents that will serve as the basis for funding and construction of the new Healthcare Center. This facility, once constructed and operational, will support improved health and wellness in the Tribal community, enhanced workforce opportunities, and increased Tribal revenues for reinvestment into community-oriented priorities.

13. The Sierra Fund: \$945,875

Project Type: Pre-Development

The Sierra Fund will collaborate with two Tribal Coalition partners on the project entitled, “The Sierra Tribal Economic Futures” which envisions a future in which Tribes across the Sierra Nevada and eastern California lead and benefit from culturally grounded, regenerative economic development.

14. Tule River Economic Development Corporation: \$1,600,000

Project Type: Implementation

Tule River Economic Development Corporation will launch a clean energy and zero-emission vehicle finance initiative in coalition with CALSTART and key regional partners. This initiative will accelerate Tule River Economic Development Corporation’s clean transportation and renewable energy goals, expand access to solar homeownership, and upskill rural and tribal workforces to participate in California’s clean economy.

Catalyst Program

Funding Awarded: \$182 million

Number of Awards: 13

On March 8, 2024, Governor Newsom [announced](#) the Catalyst Program awards, which invest in sector-specific pre-development activities, enabling regions to take projects from exploratory and last-mile to ready-to-go projects that can access local, state, and federal funds, as well as private and philanthropic investments.

As of November 2025, the state awarded over \$182 million through the Catalyst Phase of the Regional Investment Initiative. These funds were distributed across California’s 13 economic regions, providing each region up to \$14 million to support high-impact, community-driven efforts that align with their respective regional Jobs First strategies, ultimately supporting 221-plus projects statewide.

Implementation Phase

Total Award: \$125 million

Funding Awarded (Round 1): \$80 million

Number of Awards (Round 1): 11

Funding Available (Round 2): \$45 million

During the Implementation Phase (2025-2030), the Regional Investment Initiative will fund an estimated 20 implementation projects on a rolling basis using specific criteria, such as demonstrated community support, alignment with state climate goals, and demonstration of labor standards and job quality. The Implementation Phase program criteria was presented to the Jobs First Collaboratives during the Jobs First Convening in February 2024.

Projects selected include two or more of the following categories:

- **Ecosystem Support:** Address cross-cutting gaps in a sector ecosystem (e.g., support for backbone organizations, capital and technical assistance to support new and expanding businesses, targeted investment into market relevant research and development or supply chain advancements).
- **Infrastructure:** Invest in targeted infrastructure or real estate development to support sector specific activities.
- **Workforce Development:** Support workforce training and/or supportive services that advance critical skills for prevalent occupations for the sector.
- **Additional Anchors:** Invest in an “Anchor” activity (as defined in the state Economic Blueprint) that has been identified by employers and/or workers as a critical barrier to the creation of and access to good-paying jobs in the tradable sector identified by the regional coalition.

The Implementation Phase Solicitation for Proposal was released in February 2025. Round one awards were [announced](#) in August 2025 to four project clusters:

- Aerospace & Defense
- Agriculture Technology & Farm Equipment
- Bioeconomy
- Life Sciences

In total, these projects are expected to support more than 23,000 jobs across California.

The solicitation for the second round of Implementation Phase funding was released in October 2025.

Summary of Awards (Round 1):

Aerospace & Defense:

1. REACH Central Coast: \$9,499,467.23

Project Type: Ecosystem Support

Project Name: Space Vandenberg: Uplifting Communities by Launching California’s Space Economy

Space Vandenberg is California’s moonshot: a bold initiative to transform Vandenberg into the nation’s premier spaceport and launchpad for innovation and equitable job access, while powering a thriving Space Triangle connecting the Central Coast, Kern and Los Angeles Counties. Backed by years of coalition-building, this initiative will launch a dedicated entity to unlock infrastructure,

expand career pathways, and drive innovation. This catalytic investment will advance statewide coordination on the space, defense, and satellites sector, secure California’s leadership, and uplift communities historically left out of the opportunity equation.

2. Monterey Bay Economic Partnership: \$7,452,000

Project Type: Infrastructure

Project Name: California Advanced Air Mobility Corridors Initiative (CAAMCI)

This project will establish California's first Federal Aviation Administration-compliant testing corridor for clean energy-powered defense drones and advanced aerospace vehicles. Anchored in the tri-county Monterey Bay region and strategically integrated with innovation assets in Kern and Ventura Counties, the California Advanced Air Mobility Corridors Initiative underscores the cluster's mission: to build connected infrastructure, generate next-generation careers, and ensure California doesn't just compete—but continues to lead in space and defense innovation.

Agricultural Technology & Farm Equipment

3. The Regents of the University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources: \$15,125,793

Project Type: Ecosystem Support

Project Name: Statewide California AgTech Network, Entrepreneurship & Workforce Programs (CA AgTech Network Alliance)

CA AgTech Network Alliance establishes the essential coordination and integration platform that unifies fragmented efforts across nine of California's agricultural regions. By building strategic, cohesive, and connected workforce development, entrepreneurial support systems, and technology adoption frameworks across eight CA AgTech programs, this project is a force multiplier to address industry-identified gaps, promote equitable access to quality high-paying jobs, enhance economic resilience, and position California as a global leader in sustainable Agricultural Technology (AgTech).

4. Chico State Enterprises: \$1,272,700

Project Type: Ecosystem Support

Project Name: North State-Redwood Coast Ag-Tech Activated Alliance

The North State-Redwood Ag-Tech Activated Alliance is an inter-regional collaborative partnership supporting innovative approaches aiming to improve and revitalize agricultural ecosystems through climate smart technology-driven farming and ranching practices, regenerative agriculture educational curriculum and training, workforce development programs, and agricultural business technical assistance. The alliance strengthens the rural network of stakeholders and service providers across the North State and Redwood Coast while aligning with statewide agricultural-technology objectives further ensuring the competitiveness of California

5. Community Foundation of Merced County: \$9,233,851.18

Project Type: Infrastructure

Project Name: Merced Ag-Tech Alliance

Merced AgTech Alliance, led by Community Foundation of Merced County with Merced College, UC Merced, and Reservoir Farms, will transform Central Valley agriculture through four integrated, shovel-ready agricultural technology facilities. Centered on workforce training, applied research, and

startup incubation, the project will serve 1,500 individuals, create 2,050 quality jobs, support 20 startups, and provide 250 internships by 2028. Prioritizing equity, climate resilience, and inclusive economic growth, the Alliance connects education and industry to advance automation, clean energy, and precision agriculture. This initiative ensures underserved communities benefit from modernized food systems aligned with the goals of California Jobs First program.

6. Foundation for California Community Colleges: \$3,000,000

Project Type: Workforce Development

Project Name: AgSTEP

The Foundation for California Community Colleges will serve as the project lead for expanding AgSTEP and agricultural technology education to career pathways. AgSTEP certification programs and agricultural technology educational pathways will prepare students for careers in modern agriculture, agricultural technology, and workforce development. The Foundation for California Community Colleges will work directly with community colleges to jumpstart AgSTEP programs, support the development of a community of practice, and scale successful programs through statewide convenings and resource sharing.

Bioeconomy

7. BEAM Circular: \$10,367,000

Project Type: Ecosystem Support

Project Name: Sector Advancement and Business Acceleration, Interregional Biomass Feedstock Platform, and CA Bioeconomy Innovation Campus

Develop the California Bioeconomy Innovation Campus to house their accelerator program and expand on the existing work including business support with an investment fund. BEAM's mission is to build a vibrant regional ecosystem for circular bioeconomy innovation in California's agricultural heartland. To achieve this, BEAM will develop the California Bioeconomy Innovation Campus, a dedicated hub that will house its accelerator program and expand on existing efforts to support emerging ventures.

Funding will be used to advance three strategic pillars:

- **Business Growth:** Launching programs that accelerate bioeconomy startups and enterprises while attracting new investments to the region. This includes expanded business support services and the creation of an investment fund to fuel innovation.
- **Workforce Development:** Building strong talent pipelines and creating meaningful career opportunities in the bioeconomy sector through training, education, and industry partnerships.
- **Technology Deployment:** Scaling sustainable technologies that reduce organic waste, enhance agricultural resilience, and contribute to climate solutions across the region.

Life Sciences

8. Bioscience Los Angeles County: \$920,000

Project Type: Ecosystem Support

Project Name: Building the Life Sciences Ecosystem: BioscienceLA Asset Map Platform & Activation Campaign

Los Angeles boasts world-class research, startups, and the nation's most diverse bioscience workforce—yet fragmentation and visibility gaps hinder its full potential. BioscienceLA's project will reverse this fragmentation and reveal strategic priorities. The Asset Map will inventory and connect the region's bioscience, economic, and community resources, setting a baseline to identify opportunities and gaps. This tool will guide targeted investments with multiplier impact, prioritize key stakeholders and communities, strengthen regional cohesion and visibility. Integrated with the Activation Campaign these efforts will unlock inclusive access and high-impact job growth across Los Angeles's life science ecosystem, in alignment with California Jobs First goals.

9. Larta Institute: \$3,300,000

Project Type: Ecosystem Support

Project Name: Fueling Sustainable Capital - Expansion of Heal.LA Platform

The Fueling Sustainable Capital project expands access to capital and commercialization support via Larta's successful Heal.LA platform; it will serve 30 early-stage bioscience and medtech companies across Los Angeles County. The project targets founders and innovations that represent or serve disinvested communities. Participants will receive technical assistance designed to maximize their appeal to investors. Larta will also deploy direct capital infusions designed to bridge critical funding gaps required for effective scaling. Our program accelerates job creation, strengthens the regional life sciences ecosystem, and anchors long-term economic growth by addressing barriers to inclusive innovation.

10. Los Angeles Department of Economic Opportunity: \$19,000,000

Project Type: Infrastructure

Project Name: Expand Life Sciences Infrastructure for Growth

This project addresses LA County's shortage of affordable graduation-stage1 lab/manufacturing space. We will deploy a \$10M Tenant Improvement Fund , and a \$15M Graduation & Manufacturing Space Fund . These evergreen resources will finance building improvements and new multi-tenant facilities, including the development of 100,000-120,000 square feet of new graduation-stage space.

11. Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation: \$700,000

Project Type: Ecosystem Support

Project Name: Attracting Large Employers

This project aims to augment and target Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation's international and domestic business attraction programming to attract 2-4 large life sciences companies to Los Angeles County, securing commitments for up to 1,000 high-quality jobs within 24 months. Building on foundations of Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation's Bioscience Industry Cluster Blueprint and the California Jobs First Regional Plans, the project will accelerate the local economy by anchoring large-scale investments in the life sciences sector through a three-phase model: prospecting, facilitation, launch support. With \$700,000 in funding, this project promotes LA as a global hub for life sciences and builds long-tail economic resilience.

State Economic Blueprint Consultant

Funding Awarded: \$4.6 million

Number of Awards: 1

The consultant, in collaboration with the Inter-Agency team and the California Jobs First Council, led the development of the California Jobs First State Economic Blueprint. The Blueprint is a 10-year vision, outlining the ways in which the State of California can assist the regional Jobs First Collaboratives in implementing their strategies and how the State can further conduct economic development. The Blueprint is being implemented by a variety of state agencies and community partners via a monthly sector specific working group, ongoing interagency collaboration, and executive level engagement via the quarterly California Jobs First Council meetings.

In 2026, the consultant will support the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development and the Council in further institutionalizing the interagency collaboration and furthering specified strategic initiatives as outlined in the Blueprint.

Fiscal Compliance

In accordance with Section 11019.1 of the Government Code, the Inter-Agency Team provided an Advance Payment option to community-based non-profit organizations in the Planning and Catalyst Phase grant programs. The Advance Payment option aims to reduce barriers in participating in the Regional Investment Initiative. Applicants may apply to receive up to 25 percent of their total grant award through an Advance Payment option. During calendar year 2025, the Inter-Agency Team approved \$15.6 million under the Catalyst and Economic Development Pilot for Advance Payment. The Department of Finance provides oversight for Regional Investment Initiative fiscal compliance. EDD regularly collaborates with the Department of Finance to ensure funds are managed, spent, and monitored appropriately.

Reporting and Invoicing

The fiscal agent prepares and submits financial reports on a monthly basis for reimbursements, or as requested, in formats prescribed by EDD. At a minimum, each entity is required to provide the total amount of funds available for each budget category, and monthly program deductions (e.g., payments to subcontractors, participant compensation). In addition to submitting monthly reports, the Inter-Agency Team meets with each Fiscal Agent on a monthly basis to discuss the program deliverables.

EDD closed-out Planning Phase grants in January 2025, disencumbered \$5,9578,917 in remaining funds, and repurposed them for the Implementation Phase. Three Economic Development Pilot programs will end on a rolling basis, starting June 2025. EDD will close-out these projects in December 2025.

Program Metrics

Metrics

The Interagency Council anticipates leveraging the evaluation framework developed by our collaborative learning partner, The Mark, to develop individual assessments of each of the funded pilot projects completed in 2025. These frameworks will also be published on a rolling basis for Pilot and Implementation projects as they are closed out.



STATE OF CALIFORNIA

LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT