FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ChicoSTART Awarded CalMoneySmart Grant to Expand Financial Empowerment Across the North State

CHICO, CA – November 5, 2026 – ChicoSTART is proud to announce that it has been awarded a **CalMoneySmart Grant** from the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation (DFPI). The funding will support expanded access to financial education and empowerment resources for individuals and families across 22 Northern California counties.

ChicoSTART was selected as one of just 12 nonprofit organizations statewide to receive funding through the competitive 2026–2028 CalMoneySmart Grant Program, which awarded more than $3.3 million to advance financial security and economic opportunity throughout California.

The CalMoneySmart program focuses on helping unbanked and underbanked Californians build financial knowledge, strengthen financial stability, and gain access to responsible financial products and services.

Through this funding, ChicoSTART will expand its efforts to reach rural and underserved communities, helping individuals develop practical financial skills, including budgeting, saving, understanding credit, managing debt, and making informed financial decisions through workshops taught by subject matter experts and including our banking partners.

"Financial empowerment is community empowerment," said Eva Shepherd-Nicoll, Executive Director of ChicoSTART. "Throughout Northern California, we see firsthand how limited access to financial education and resources can create barriers to opportunity. This grant allows us to help close those gaps, giving individuals and families the knowledge, tools, and confidence to build greater financial stability. At ChicoSTART, we believe that where you live should never determine your access to opportunity, and we are grateful to the State of California and DFPI for investing in the communities we serve."

As a designated Accelerate California Inclusive Innovation Hub, ChicoSTART has developed an extensive regional network of community partners dedicated to increasing access to resources, education, and economic opportunity. The CalMoneySmart initiative builds upon this established infrastructure, extending ChicoSTART's mission of empowering communities throughout the North State.

The grant will support financial empowerment efforts across Alpine, Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Yolo, and Yuba counties.

"Strong communities begin with financially empowered people," added Shepherd-Nicoll. "Whether someone is working toward financial independence, building savings, or simply trying to make more informed financial decisions, access to the right education and support can be life-changing. This is another important step toward lowering barriers and creating lasting opportunities across our region."

North State entrepreneurs and small businesses looking to access services, connections, and resources can learn more at ChicoSTART.com or email info@chicostart.com. How can we help?

For all press inquiries, please contact eva@chicostart.com.

About ChicoSTART: ChicoSTART's mission is to empower - entrepreneurs, startups and businesses with resources, training and community support needed to start, grow and thrive throughout Northern California. ChicoSTART is 1 of 13 designated iHubs awarded the statewide Accelerate CA Inclusive

Innovation Hub (iHUB2) grant from CalOSBA. Combined, ChicoSTART's iHUB2, TAP and SCALE designation covers over 20+ counties in Northern California, focusing on building the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem for equitable access to entrepreneurial resources with inclusive ecosystem expansion into our rural and diverse communities. Learn more at **www.chicostart.com**.

About CalMoneySmart:
Administered by the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation (DFPI), CalMoneySmart supports nonprofit organizations providing free financial education, coaching, and empowerment services to unbanked and underbanked Californians. The program aims to strengthen financial security, expand access to responsible financial services, and promote long-term economic well-being.
Learn more at **dfpi.ca.gov/CalMoneySmart**.
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