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Cybersecurity Joins the Chamber Agenda: IEGO Connects Inland Empire Chambers, Community Colleges, and Local Businesses in New Regional Initiative

Chino Valley Chamber of Commerce becomes the first to embed student-led cybersecurity segments in its meeting schedule, recognize two member businesses at the Mayors Cyber Cup, and spark an unplanned employment pipeline between Chaffey College and a Chino-based IT firm.

INLAND EMPIRE, CA. April 25, 2026. The Inland Economic Growth & Opportunity Collaborative (IEGO) today announced a regional initiative to make cybersecurity a standing agenda item at Chambers of Commerce across the Inland Empire. Funded by donations to the Inland Empire Cybersecurity Awareness Fund, the initiative connects each participating chamber to its local community college cybersecurity program, with students delivering monthly cyber hygiene segments at regular chamber meetings. The model is simple: small and mid-sized businesses get practical, recurring cybersecurity guidance from the next generation of professionals, and students get a live audience of regional employers.

The first chamber to step in is the **Chino Valley Chamber of Commerce**, representing roughly 450 businesses in and around Chino and Chino Hills. The chamber partnered with **Chaffey College** to host student-led cyber hygiene presentations, and on April 25th became the first chamber in the region to recognize its own member businesses on stage at the Mayors Cyber Cup awards ceremony.

Why Chambers

Speaking at the awards ceremony, Matt Mena, Senior Director of Economic Planning at IEGO, framed the work this way: small and medium-sized businesses across the Inland Empire are increasingly the target of cyberattacks, and many are still building the knowledge and tools they need to defend themselves. IEGO is pairing chambers with community colleges, including Chino Valley Chamber and Chaffey College, to deliver practical, community-based education and resources, building a stronger and more resilient regional economy in the process.

The Chino Valley Chamber's president and CEO underscored the case from the business side at the same event, noting that cybersecurity is no longer just an IT issue but a business issue, one that touches operations, finances, trust, and the long-term reputation of every organization in the digital economy.

"The Chino Valley Chamber really believes in collaboration. It was vital for us to partner with IEGO, not only to help our businesses, but to create a strong pipeline so students know about the great careers available in cybersecurity."

Renee Metha, Vice President and Director of Workforce Development, Chino Valley Chamber of Commerce

Two Chino Businesses Recognized at the Mayors Cyber Cup

At the Mayors Cyber Cup awards ceremony, the Chino Valley Chamber and IEGO recognized two of the chamber's member businesses for their leadership in cybersecurity:

- **Cyber Champion Award.** Presented by Renay Matha of the Chino Valley Chamber to **Vertical IT Solutions** (Chino), accepted by CEO Kody Bakos. The Cyber Champion Award honors an IT and cybersecurity provider that goes beyond client work to strengthen the chamber community itself, through workshops, sponsorships, city engagement, and consistent presence as a community champion.
- **Cyber Aware Company of the Year.** Presented by Zeb Welborn of the Chino Valley Chamber to **TechCatalyst**, accepted by founder Gabriel Sirlopu, a U.S. Air Force veteran, Chaffey College professor, and Chino Valley Chamber board member. The award recognizes a business that demonstrates leadership in cybersecurity awareness and advances cyber readiness within the Inland Empire business community.

"We are a cyber-first IT company here in Chino. We are honored to receive this recognition from the chamber, IEGO, and the Mayors Cup. It is heartwarming to see the push coming from local communities, and we cannot wait to see the future of the cyber field with these students involved."

Kody Bakos, CEO, Vertical IT Solutions

A Spontaneous Employment Pipeline

The most telling proof point of the model came unplanned. At a regular Chino Valley Chamber meeting earlier this year, **Chaffey College cybersecurity students** delivered one of the program's monthly cyber hygiene segments. **Vertical IT Solutions**, a chamber member in the room, recognized the talent on stage and connected with Chaffey's program directly. The result: an active employment pipeline between Chaffey College's cybersecurity students and a local cyber-first IT employer, established without a single grant proposal, RFP, or formal program launch.

It is exactly the outcome the model is designed to produce. Chambers convene the businesses. Community colleges supply the talent. Students deliver value at the meeting itself. Pipelines form on contact.

How to Bring This to Your Chamber

IEGO is now actively recruiting additional Chambers of Commerce across the Inland Empire to adopt the model. Participating chambers receive support to integrate cybersecurity into their regular meeting cadence, an introduction to the cybersecurity program at their nearest community college, and access to IEGO's curriculum and student-presenter network. There is no cost to participating chambers; the program is funded by donations to the **Inland Empire Cybersecurity Awareness Fund**, held at the Inland Empire Community Foundation.

Chambers, community colleges, and businesses interested in joining the next cohort, or in contributing to the fund that powers it, can contact IEGO at the address below.

About the Inland Empire Cybersecurity Awareness Fund

Launched in November 2025 by the Inland Economic Growth & Opportunity Collaborative (IEGO) in partnership with the Inland Empire Community Foundation (IECF), the Inland Empire Cybersecurity

Awareness Fund supports cybersecurity education, awareness, and workforce programs across the region. The fund underwrites initiatives such as the Mayors Cyber Cup, the Cyber Risk Awareness Initiative, and curriculum-aligned training resources for educators and students.

About IEGO

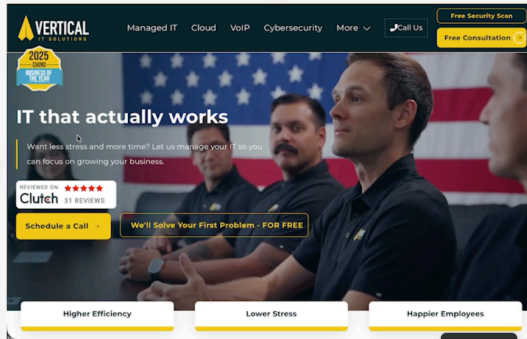
The Inland Economic Growth & Opportunity Collaborative (IEGO) is the regional workforce and economic development organization for the Inland Empire, working at the intersection of education, workforce, and industry to expand opportunity for all residents of the region.

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Cyber Champion

Vertical IT Solutions



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Renay Mehta