

South Bay Workforce Investment Board
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SOUTH BAY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD RECEIVES LABOR DEPARTMENT'S RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR 'CONNECTING AMERICA'S YOUTH TO THE WORKFORCE.'

NEW ORLEANS – The South Bay Workforce Investment Board receives the U.S. Department of Labor's Recognition of Excellence Award in the "connecting America's youth to the workforce" category at the national 2008 Workforce Innovations Conference held in New Orleans. At the conference, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training Brent R. Orrell presented the fifth annual Recognition or Excellence Awards, which honors workforce investment system programs from around the country that have achieved outstanding success.



Accepting the award for the South Bay Workforce Investment Board, Wayne Spencer, Board Chair of the SBWIB stated, "South Bay Workforce Investment Board's success is the result of working with multiple agencies to go beyond providing basic job training to youth. Its collaborative approach is helping prepare at-risk youth in the 46 square-mile area encompassing Inglewood, Hawthorne, Lawndale, Carson, Gardena and the unincorporated County area of West Athens and Lennox with support necessary to embark on productive lives."

The Bridge to Work (BtW) is the SBWIB's initiative to respond to county-wide youth gang epidemic. The program addresses the alarming rise in youth gang involvement and crimes by using a multi-sector collaborative approach to provide employment services, academic support, life skills training and mentorship to youth. The pilot BtW began in 2005, with focus on youth ages 18-24 years old. In March 2007, btW, expanded to serve 14-17 year olds, whose arrest rate and gang involvement had skyrocketed within the last decade.

The pilot BtW in 2005 yielded 60 youth served, which skyrocketed to 460 in 2007. In that year, 78% of participants completed the program and either entered the workforce or went on to further education and training, while the State Standard was 74%. Outcomes were even stronger among participants ages 19-21, with 82% entering the workforce, while the state standard was 79%.