

South Bay workforce agency ramping up programs in new year

The South Bay Workforce Investment Board focuses on finding people long-term career pathways, not temporary work placements.



The South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB) conducted a graduation ceremony on Dec. 12 for 28 Morningside High School seniors who have recently participated in the SBWIB's Bioscience Pre-Apprenticeship Program. (Courtesy of SBWIB)

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The South Bay Workforce Investment Board served more than 65,000 people in need of job training, placement, counseling and other services during the last fiscal year — and is already ramping up its services for the new calendar year.

The board has been part of the South Bay community for more than four decades, serving students and parents, adult job seekers, foster youth, veterans, those who are homeless, folks with disabilities and formerly incarcerated people across 11 cities, from Gardena and Carson to the beach cities. SBWIB offers various programming at four One-Stop Business & Career Services centers and two teen centers, as well as in schools and workplaces.

SBWIB offers around 30 programs aimed at breaking down the specific barriers to employment that each of these populations face. And across its programming, the board focuses on creating long-term career pathways suited to people's lifestyles, skills and dreams, rather than finding them immediate placements to meet a monetary need.

"We create a career pathway so that instead of just saying, 'You can do anything you want when you grow up,'" said Grant Smith, SBWIB youth program manager, "we can step back and say, 'If this is what you want to do, here's what you're going to need with your education, here's what kind of experience you're going to need, here's what kind of training you're going to need, here's the tools that you're going to need.'"

In 2022, SBWIB's programs generated impressive results:

- The dislocated worker program served 504 laid off workers and 77% were placed in permanent jobs.
- The adult employment program served 397 economically disadvantaged adults and 79% were placed in permanent jobs.
- The Youth@Work program provided 293 youth ages 14 to 21 with paid work experience and education support year-round, including during school breaks.
- The college work study program placed 90 single-parent families on work sites while attending community college, allowing them to graduate and earn an income at the same time.
- The prison-to-employment pipeline program, a countywide initiative led by SBWIB, served 1,697 individuals, 1,035 of whom transitioned into unsubsidized employment.

Now the board's vision is looking toward the future — and, in particular, on the future of work.

A key focus of the board's ongoing efforts is to make sure its training programs evolve alongside changes in various industries.

To that end, the SBWIB has made a significant investment in STEM — science, technology, engineering, math — aerospace and biotechnology training initiatives, which are growing industries both nationally and particularly in the South Bay. Its programs have led to permanent job placements at several local companies, including Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, The Airplane Factory and Sling Pilot Academy.

This focus on expanding industries also trickles into SBWIB's school programming.

SBWIB's [bio-flex pre-apprenticeship program](#) provided 28 Inglewood high school seniors with training last year for high-paying careers in the life sciences industry. The board's aero-flex pre-apprenticeship program does the same with college-age students for careers in the aerospace industry.

The board also focuses on preparing youth for civic work by partnering with several South Bay cities for paid internships through the county-funded Youth@Work program.

This program focuses on underserved youth, Smith said, including those in the foster system, youth involved in the justice system and on probation. Last fiscal year, the program provided 55 young people with paid work experience in planning, public works, communications, and parks and recreation.

“What’s inspiring for me is to see these young people who otherwise wouldn’t have an opportunity to go work in the government to work with construction companies on big job sites like the SoFi Stadium and the Intuit Dome that the Clippers are building,” Smith said about SBWIB's youth programs, “and seeing them see that the world is bigger and that they can reach these different things.”

Another focus for SBWIB's 2023 programming is work opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

On Jan. 5, SBWIB announced that it secured \$1.1 million from the state's Department of Rehabilitation to train up to 100 individuals with disabilities to qualify them for paid work experience assignments at Los Angeles International Airport. Upon graduation, program participants will be eligible to apply for a permanent position at the airport.

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