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South Bay workforce group's aerospace apprentice program has its first graduates

The program is designed to foster local aerospace engineers and technicians.



Edgar Ramirez and Lizbeth Rios became the first apprentices to complete the South Bay Workforce Investment Board's (SBWIB) Aero-Flex Apprenticeship program earlier this year as employees of Gardena-based Impresa Aerospace. (Photo courtesy SBWIB)

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An apprenticeship program from the [South Bay Workforce Investment Board](#), meant to prepare people for enhanced careers as aerospace engineers and technicians, has its first two graduates.

Carson resident Edgar Ramirez, 27, and Lizbeth Rios, 26, of El Monte recently graduated from the Aero-Flex Apprenticeship Program, which began in 2017 and includes an unpaid "pre-apprenticeship" program that's similar to interning and then a fulltime paid apprenticeship. Ramirez and Rios were each hired at Gardena's Impresa Aerospace in 2018, through the apprenticeship, and have now received Federal Department of Labor certification.

That certification will allow the pair to get jobs in the aerospace industry.

"It is hard work, it does take a lot of hours and dedication," Rios said. "Luckily, I had some good support and I do recommend it for anyone who wants to further their career in aerospace engineering."



Chris Cagle, the program manager for the investment board, said the idea, initiated by Northrop Grumman, was to help connect employers with qualified local workers through a training program.

“Our mission is to help people find jobs and businesses find workers,” Cagle said. “So we are trying to create structured career pathways that the public and employers can use to easily find each other.”

So far, more than 100 young people, from current students to recent college grads, have participated in the pre-apprenticeship program, though only Ramirez and Rios has completed the full certification. The program, which has 22 South Bay and Los Angeles-area companies and associations involved, takes 18 months to two years to complete. The Aero-Flex Apprenticeship Program, Cagle said, is slowly finding fulltime spots for more apprentices.

Aerospace remains one of the largest industries in the South Bay, led by Redondo Beach’s Northrop Grumman and Hawthorne’s SpaceX.

The Aero-Flex Apprenticeship Program helps workers get their foot in the door. And it helps employers tap into a local labor pool they might not already have access to, Cagle said.

“Another reason we’re doing this is to get these jobs in the hands of local residents,” Cagle said, “so companies don’t have to go out of state or out of the country to get the talent they need.”

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David Rosenfeld has worked as a professional journalist for more than 20 years at newspapers, magazines and websites. He’s covered murder trials, interviewed governors and presidential candidates and once did a loop in a biplane for a story assignment. Before joining The Daily Breeze in 2017, David worked as a journalist in Oregon writing about health care, election integrity and the environment. In his free time, David loves outdoor sports such as sailing, mountain biking and golfing. David has a bachelor's degree from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University.

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