

Creating Equitable “Earn-and-Learn” Opportunities for Youth and Adult Learners



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Apprenticeship is a time-tested, proven [work-based-learning \(WBL\)](#) approach where learners earn wages while acquiring crucial skills, experience, certifications, and professional connections. Simultaneously, it offers employers an effective means to build their talent pipeline by engaging in apprenticeship partnerships designed to develop a highly skilled workforce. With apprenticeships, there is a well-defined pathway into a career, supported by clear standards outlining apprentices' job expectations. This ensures apprentices understand what they need to learn, while employers can chart a course for success within their organizations. Additionally, apprenticeships, though different from traditional classroom-based postsecondary education, can serve as a college pathway. In California, strong ties between the [California Community College Chancellor's Office \(CCCCO\)](#) and the [State Division of Apprenticeship Standards](#) make it both a workforce and postsecondary education strategy.

Funded through state [Strong Workforce Program funding](#), as well as a generous grant from the [James Irvine Foundation](#), the [San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges Regional Consortium](#) team has grown to include a full-time Regional Director of Apprenticeship and an Apprenticeship Employer Relations Liaison. These positions support collaborations between community colleges, K-12 districts, and industry to build and expand equitable apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs in new and innovative sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and transportation, among others.

Current examples of how regional efforts are supporting colleges, K-12 programs, and employers are reflected in several new [California Opportunity Youth Apprenticeship \(COYA\) grants](#) recently awarded to [Miramar College](#), [San Diego College of Continuing Education](#), and the [San Diego County Office of Education](#). COYA grants, which are a new source of apprenticeship funding this year, are supporting development of new pre-apprenticeship programs in the fire and emergency technician trades as well as the information and communications technology (ICT) sector in San Diego County. Pre-apprenticeships provide an onramp for youth and adult learners to access and succeed in registered apprenticeships.

Key partners in this effort are community-based organizations (CBOs) which serve a critical role in sponsoring apprentices, placing them in on-the-job training, and providing mentorship and other related supportive services for historically underrepresented populations. Mike Roberts, CEO of the San Diego based, [Creating Coding Careers](#), has partnered with several local K-12 education agencies (LEAs) in the San Diego region to create new pre-apprenticeship programs in the ICT sector for BIPOC youth and adult learners. “Currently, these groups face significant barriers to entry. We believe everyone in America should have access to high-wage high-growth #newcollar careers.” Mr. Roberts is currently working with the regional consortium team to explore expanded partnerships with community college LEAs.