

Celebrating Collaboration: Region Hosts First Apprenticeship Mixer

November 2025

On Sept. 24, the San Diego & Imperial Counties Regional Consortium (SDI RC) hosted its first-ever apprenticeship mixer, bringing together more than 50 apprenticeship leaders, educators and workforce champions from the Southern California region. Held in partnership with the James Irvine Foundation, Southern California Apprenticeship Network, UNITE-LA and San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) at Stone Brewery in Liberty Station, the event marked an important milestone in the region's growing commitment to building and scaling apprenticeship opportunities.

The evening was filled with energy as participants networked, shared ideas and explored new partnership opportunities to strengthen the region's apprenticeship ecosystem. The program featured remarks from Danene Brown, SDI RC Chair; Rachel Bereza, CEO of the SDWP; Alex Davis, CEO of the Intermediary Development Corporation; and Joseph Stark, SDI RC Apprenticeship Director.

"It was truly inspiring to gather and break bread with such a diverse and dedicated group of apprenticeship innovators," said Stark. "We're making great strides in the San Diego and Imperial region to develop the partner ecosystem needed to create, support and scale apprenticeships in key sectors, such as behavioral health, advanced manufacturing and healthcare, among others. And community colleges are integral to a sustainable, equitable system."

Throughout the event, speakers and attendees underscored the power of partnership in expanding apprenticeship development and access, emphasizing the SDI RC's unique role in connecting education and employers. Conversations centered on strengthening talent pipelines, engaging underrepresented communities, and leveraging state and regional funding to support new innovative programs.

The inaugural mixer celebrated progress and set the stage for what's next: deeper collaboration, shared learning and a collective commitment to transforming the way learners prepare for high-quality, high-demand careers.

As Dr. Brown noted in closing, *"When we align education, workforce and industry, we create pathways that change lives – and that's exactly what apprenticeship is all about."*