Creating Stronger Pathways from Education to Employment

September 2026

San Diego's workforce needs are constantly evolving, making strong connections between education, employers and the workforce development system increasingly important.

That shared goal has brought the San Diego & Imperial Counties Regional Consortium (SDI RC) and San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) together through a growing number of initiatives designed to better connect education and training with the regional economy's needs.

SDWP and SDI RC work closely with all 10 of the region's community colleges across San Diego & Imperial Counties to develop and deliver programs, research, and resources for job seekers, educators, and students. Shared leadership across the region's workforce and community college systems strengthens that collaboration. Dr. Danene Brown, SDI RC Chair, serves on the SDWP's Workforce Development Board, while Dr. Tina King, president of the San Diego College of Continuing Education (SDCCE), represents community colleges on the board.

"Our community colleges are the most accessible doorway to economic mobility and higher education remains the single greatest investment in a person's future," said Rachel Bereza, SDWP's President & CEO. "As the region's workforce hub, our work relies on community colleges preparing students for in-demand careers and helping keep our economy competitive. Leaders like Dr. Brown and Dr. King inspire us to serve students in innovative ways, including apprenticeship pathways and all-women skilled trades cohorts."

Beyond those leadership connections, SDWP and community colleges across the region regularly work together to create opportunities that connect students and job seekers directly with employers. That work has included career fairs throughout the region, from the inaugural San Diego Tourism Career Fair, which brought together more than 50 tourism and hospitality employers at San Diego City College in March, to Grossmont College's annual Career Expo and Job Fair, which connected more than 500 students and job seekers with nearly 80 employers last fall and will return for its 48th year on Oct. 8.

That collaboration is continuing this fall through Talent Talks, a new series of apprenticeship development webinars developed by SDI RC, SDWP, and the LAUNCH Apprenticeship Network. These employer-focused webinars will teach students how to build, fund, and grow pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs — with practical strategies and resources to get started fast and scale with confidence. Sessions include expert speakers, Q&As, resources and office hours.

Upcoming Talent Talk sessions include:

A Timely Opportunity to Expand Apprenticeships (Sept. 24 · 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.) Hear insights about two new reports that break down how AI and retirement trends are reshaping San Diego's job market — and what it means for apprenticeship, skills and the region's talent pipeline. The San Diego & Imperial Center of Excellence (COE) will share new regional research on AI-resilient, high-opportunity apprenticeable occupations, while SDWP presents new findings on how AI is transforming jobs more than eliminating them.

Unlocking Apprenticeship Funding & Incentives for Employers (Oct. 22 · 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.) SDWP, GO-Biz and NextGen Policy share funding, incentives and resources available to employers to support apprenticeship and workforce training.

The research highlighted through the Talent Talks series is also part of a broader effort by SDI RC and SDWP to better understand where the region's workforce is headed — and turn those findings into action. Together, the organizations are examining shifts in the labor market, emerging occupations, and changing skill needs to help educators, employers, and workforce professionals make more informed decisions about the programs, training, and career pathways the region needs.

On Sept. 25, SDWP will bring its latest AI research to the K-16 Regional AI Convening at San Diego Mesa College, joining educators and workforce leaders to discuss how education and career pathways can keep pace with an increasingly AI-enabled economy.

From research and apprenticeships to career fairs and shared leadership, these efforts reflect a relationship built around a common goal: ensuring education and workforce systems are working in concert to prepare people for opportunity and help employers develop the talent they need. As technology reshapes jobs and skills, that coordination will become even more important to building a workforce prepared for where the regional economy is headed.

To hear more about the collaboration between SDI RC and SDWP, tune in to this Friday's Workforce Development Council (WDC) meeting, where SDWP will share more about its work and partnership with the region's community colleges.

Learn more here.