

WORKFORCE: Study pins down Inland's future job needs

Manufacturing, health care, transportation and logistics are likely to be in-demand vocations, a San Bernardino County study says



A San Bernardino County survey predicts growth in the manufacturing sector in the coming months.

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Manufacturing and health care are the two top sectors that will need more workers in the Inland area in the next few years, a San Bernardino County-sponsored study released Monday, Nov. 5 found.

Transportation and logistics, energy, utilities and construction round out the top five sectors that will be looking for workers to fill jobs in the short-term future, and this study will help the county put its resources, including the money it puts toward training programs, internships and other efforts, to the best use, officials said.

Sandy Harmsen, executive director of San Bernardino County's Workforce Investment Board, said the county usually has to rely on historical data to devise workforce training

programs. For example, the state and federal governments issue regular reports about who is working and in what job sectors, but none of those reports look ahead at likely workforce needs.

“That wasn’t complete enough,” Harmsen said. “We want to know whether these sectors are expecting more growth or not.”

The county spent \$25,000 to hire Eriss Corp., a San Marcos-based consulting firm that specializes in research for government and nonprofit agencies, to provide answers to these future needs. Researchers talked to 3,000 business owners in San Bernardino County, mostly during the first quarter of 2012, Harmsen said.

Both Inland Southern California counties, along with the city of San Bernardino, have workforce investment boards that supervise job training efforts and decide how federal and state grant monies are spent.

But Harmsen pointed out that these grants come with strings.

For example, there are performance standards that dictate if a county or city can take money for retraining; the person in the program has to be off unemployment or other forms of assistance and working in six months; and that person must be working well enough to keep her or his job.

“With those kinds of standards we want to know what’s going on right now,” she said.

Health care and logistics are two sectors that have grown steadily in the Inland job market, and many of the future growth San Bernardino is now anticipating is likely to turn up in many Riverside County communities as well.

Manufacturing, however, has been flat in the Inland area for most of this year. John Anderson, the director of aerospace and defense for California Manufacturing Technology Consulting, said factory owners have been cautious this year but that could change if sales and consumer confidence improve.

“There might be hiring, and some businesses are asking whether they should hire as opposed to the cost of paying overtime to people,” Anderson said.

San Bernardino training programs include on-the-job tutoring where employers are reimbursed trainees’ salaries while they learn, and community colleges in both Inland counties have numerous programs, including some that don’t include college credit.

Manufacturing courses are designed to teach new techniques, some of which didn't exist before the 2008 recession hit, said Matthew Isaac, executive director for economic development and corporate training at San Bernardino Community College District.

"Manufacturing is one area that will grow but people need a lot more skills," Isaac said.