

Riverside Community College District Inland Empire Technical Trade Center (IETTC)

ACTION

RCCD is seeking resources for the establishment of facilities and programming sufficient to serve the region's current and future workforce development needs. Given the need for additional local technical training capacity to support the region's residents, current and emerging employers, and the strong commitment of the Riverside Community College District (RCCD) to build and scale pathways that offer residents the ability to move from poverty to self-sufficiency, RCCD plans to establish the Inland Empire Technical Trade Center (IETTC).

ISSUE

While the Inland Empire (IE) has a rich variety of traditional postsecondary institutions offering certificate and degree programs, there are only a handful of technical training centers. These centers, while offering technical training in skilled trades, often lack the necessary infrastructure, support systems and complementary academic offerings that California Community Colleges can holistically provide to the region's most at-risk populations. According to Brookings (2019), "Providing education and workforce supports can improve workers' ability to obtain good or promising jobs." The IETTC is a response to the urgent need for good jobs for the region's residents, diversification of the regional economy, and for a locally available educated and skilled workforce for the region's current and future employers.

BACKGROUND

Government and private sector leaders across the IE agree that local availability of an educated and skilled workforce is critical for competitiveness in the global economy. The IE, while providing a variety of traditional educational options for students into and through the university level, suffers from low rates of degree attainment and high rates of multi-generational poverty in marginalized communities throughout the region. Approximately 54% of the region's current workforce, or just under 350,000 residents (pre-pandemic statistic) is neither formally trained nor skilled and earn insufficient pay and/or benefits in jobs with "no viable career pathway to a good job" (Brookings, 2019).

Economic development in the region will be driven by a need to "...increase the competitiveness and diversity of those sectors of its economy that concentrate good jobs" (Brookings, 2019), including industries that sell goods and services outside the IE region. These industries, including logistics, wholesale, and manufacturing, provide approximately 28% of the region's middle skill "good" jobs not requiring a bachelor's degree with the potential of earning a family-sustaining income within ten years. "Advancing the competitiveness of these industries can help ensure they continue to provide opportunities to local workers as the region diversifies into other tradable industries that can expand the number of good jobs and the promising jobs that provide pathways to them" (Brookings, 2019). However, opportunities in these industries are not limited to what currently exists. "Firms in these industries may require new local resources that enable them to develop innovative new products and services, in addition to implementing more efficient processes that reduce costs and improve product and service delivery. Creating centralized expertise and technology can provide a shared resource that increases the capacities of these firms, the capabilities of their workers, and the quality of their jobs." In fact, diversification of the region's economic base "...by developing new technological and industrial capabilities" that complement and diversify its reliance on logistics and manufacturing specializations is critical to its long-term success.

The IETTC at RCCD is broadly connected to the region's key partners and is well-positioned to provide the education, training, and related support services needed for the region's residents to obtain a good job now or in the future. RCCD's Strategic Plan addresses the need to ensure equity and access to opportunities for all communities, particularly communities of color, women, and other traditionally marginalized groups. By providing training for residents who have traditionally been excluded from engaging in the region's growing prosperity and economic opportunity, RCCD will support the region's continued economic development.

The IETTC will establish formalized partnership agreements with strategic collaborative partners, using workforce and economic development and labor data to identify current and future regional training needs. This iterative, data-driven process will result in the development of innovative and responsive, short- and mid-term training programs. A central component of the IETTC will be an integrated "earn and learn" model providing students with industry-based opportunities for application and development of technical skills through apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and other potential work-based learning opportunities. To ensure that the IETTC is both beneficial to and supportive of students, student and worker voice will be integrated into the planning and operation of the partnership. Students and workers will provide feedback on identification and inclusion of critical support services, including social and financial services offered through government, community, and nonprofit agencies and organizations throughout the planning and development process and into the operational phase of the center. These supports will help ensure student success in entering and completing a training program leading to a good or quality job in the IE.

The Inland Empire Technical Trade Center at Riverside Community College District will be an asset to and beyond the RCCD service region. Residents in Riverside County and beyond will have opportunities to move from economic marginalization to self-sufficiency and prosperity, resulting in a "rising tide" of the region's most at-risk populations into the future economic growth of the region. Without this important resource, the region's economic and educational gaps will persist, and the regional economy will continue to degrade due to the lack of a skilled and locally available workforce to meet the demands of a diversifying and technologically advancing economy.

