



NEWS RELEASE

Workforce Development Board

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Companies lean on WDB as the economic recovery takes hold

Metroll had a choice of places to set up shop when the building components manufacturer expanded in Southern California a decade ago. It chose San Bernardino County – in large part because of the support it received from the county’s Workforce Development Board (WDB).

Fast forward, and that support has played out once again – this time in helping Metroll and companies throughout the county navigate the worst economic downturn since perhaps the Great Depression.

“People used to say, if you can survive the recession of 2007/2008 you can survive anything. This has been much more difficult,” said Andy Patel, General Manager of Metroll Fontana. “It’s great to have an advocate in the county as opposed to fighting blindly.”

Although Metroll has largely remained open through the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a brief shutdown immediately after Gov. Gavin Newsom issued his original stay-at-home order. “We weren’t sure what we were supposed to do, so four hours after saying we were closed, we reopened,” Patel said.

With the support of WDB’s Business Services team, Metroll has been able to stay abreast of COVID-related developments and resources that might be available and assess its options moving forward. WDB offers a wide variety of business services, from labor market information and on-the-job training, to workshops, layoff aversion program and a rapid-response system in which Business Services professional conduct an onsite assessment of a company’s operations.

“In terms of running a small business, this has been an extraordinarily difficult time, but they’ve been very responsive about keeping us in the loop,” Patel said.

One of the major challenges moving forward for many companies during the pandemic and initial recovery period is hiring and retaining employees. Patel said Metroll has “a great group of core employees that have gotten us through this,” but, like many companies, has had difficulty filling vacant positions.



Phil Cothran, Chairman of the WDB, said programs such as WDB's on-the-job training (OJT) and the CalWORKS Subsidized Employment Program (CSEP) will help as the recovery evolves. OJT provides reimbursement for up to 50% of a new hire's wage while he or she is in training at an eligible company. CSEP is a welfare-to-work program that connects job seekers 25 and older with employment opportunities. In addition, WDB's three America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs) are resuming in-person services for job seekers, further rebuilding the pipeline of qualified, hireable workers.

"COVID-19 created challenges no one could have anticipated, but we're also extremely fortunate in San Bernardino County to have a growing population and a vibrant talent pool," Cothran said. "We're proud to partner with growing companies such as Metroll, and are confident that we're on the road to a strong recovery."

Cothran noted that COVID-related human resources issues are another challenge that companies have never faced before, particularly when it comes to social distancing, use of face coverings and extended time off for personal and family health needs. To help with that, WDB has held a series of virtual HR seminars for business owners.

In addition, WDB conducted a survey of businesses throughout the county to help better assess their needs during the recovery. Among the topline results:

- 44% said they expected fundamental changes in the way they do business, such as more employees working remotely, operating with fewer employees, or job sharing and flexible hours for workers.
- Difficulty meeting payroll, retaining lost customers and attracting new customers were identified as the biggest immediate challenges confronting businesses. Crisis management and incorporating social distancing also ranked high.

"We know the impact of the COVID downturn will be deep, but we also know that San Bernardino County is uniquely positioned to take a leadership role in the recovery. The fact that we're at the center of the supply chain, have a robust pipeline of workers and have the platforms in place to connect business and workforce needs will allow us to come out of this stronger than ever," said WDB Vice Chairman William Sterling. "Our focus is twofold: Dealing with the immediate challenges brought about because of COVID-19, while helping to lead us toward recovery."

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About the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board

The San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board (WDB) is comprised of private business representatives and public partners appointed by the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors. The WDB strives to strengthen the skills of the County's workforce through partnerships with business, education and community-based organizations. The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors is committed to providing county resources, which generate jobs and investment in line with the [Countywide Vision](#).

The Workforce Development Board, through the San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency and Workforce Development Department, offers a variety of programs designed to help youth and adults identify career pathways and get the appropriate training and skills. Programs funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provide eligible youth, ages 16 to 24, access to a variety of career and educational services designed to help enhance job skills, develop leadership qualities, explore career options, participate in adult and peer mentoring opportunities, and take advantage of work experiences. In addition, the WDB operates San Bernardino County's three America's Job Centers of California (AJCC). The AJCCs provide individuals with job training, placement and the tools to strengthen their skills to achieve a higher quality of life. The AJCCs also support and provide services to the County's businesses, including employee recruitment and business retention programs.

Employers and job seekers who are interested in the Workforce Development Board programs may call: (800) 451-JOBS or visit www.sbcounty.gov/workforce. Also follow us on: Facebook www.facebook.com/SBCountyWDB; Twitter [@InlandEmpireJob](https://twitter.com/InlandEmpireJob); LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/sanbernardinocountywdb>; and YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/SBCountyWIB>.