

Imperial County Workforce Development Board and
San Diego Workforce Partnership

Southern Border Regional Plan

2025-2028

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southern Border Regional Plan (2025) outlines a unified vision and strategic roadmap for advancing equity, economic mobility, and climate resilience across San Diego and Imperial Counties. Developed jointly by the San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) and the Imperial County Workforce Development Board (ICWDB), this plan reflects the priorities, partnerships, and shared commitment of the Southern Border Regional Planning Unit (SBRPU) to build a high-performing, inclusive workforce system.

Rooted in the California Workforce Development Board's High Road principles and fully aligned with the California Jobs First Economic Blueprint and the Master Plan for Career Education, the plan serves as both a compliance document and a call to action. It synthesizes extensive labor market analysis, regional performance data, community engagement insights, and cross-system planning efforts into a seven-part framework required by state guidance (WSD24-09).

Key Regional Priorities and Strategies

1. **Analytical Overview of the Region:** The plan profiles the diverse demographic, economic, and workforce characteristics of San Diego and Imperial Counties. Despite shared geographic and economic ties, the two counties face distinct challenges— from concentrated poverty and youth disconnection in rural Imperial, to housing affordability and career mobility barriers in urban San Diego. The region is home to over 29,000 disconnected youth and features wide disparities in educational attainment, wage levels, and labor force participation.
2. **Regional Indicators:** Two core indicators guide this plan: (1) Job Quality Improvements, defined by placement into family- sustaining, high-road jobs; and (2) Equity in Access and Outcomes, measured through disaggregated credential attainment, earnings, and skill gains. Baseline WIOA data shows youth and underserved populations face disproportionately low outcomes across nearly all metrics, underscoring the urgency of targeted strategies.
3. **Fostering Demand-Driven Skills Attainment:** The SBRPU has adopted the ten California Jobs First priority sectors, including clean economy, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and logistics. Sector profiles and labor market data guide investments in employer- aligned training, apprenticeship development, and regional career pathways. Special attention is given to lithium recovery in Imperial County and green infrastructure efforts in San Diego, both of which offer high- impact, growth-oriented employment opportunities.
4. **Enabling Upward Mobility for All Californians:** The region is expanding integrated navigation, stackable credential pathways, and wraparound services to ensure job seekers—particularly those with multiple barriers—can enter and progress through high- opportunity careers. Career navigation tools like Partner Portal and MyNextMove are widely used, while training models are increasingly linked to formal advancement ladders co-designed with employers.
5. **Climate and Environmental Sustainability:** Climate workforce strategies are embedded throughout the plan, including solar and energy efficiency pre- apprenticeships, clean construction, and the buildout of lithium workforce infrastructure. The region also emphasizes environmental literacy, equity in clean energy hiring, and regional coordination with infrastructure and economic development entities to align climate investments with training capacity.
6. **Equity and Economic Justice:** Equity is treated not as a standalone priority but as a cross-cutting imperative. The region is addressing disparities through targeted investments, culturally responsive service models, community voice integration, and expanded access to high-road pathways for Opportunity Youth, English learners, justice-involved individuals, and residents in historically disinvested communities.

7. **Aligning, Coordinating, and Integrating Programs and Services:** A regionally coordinated approach is central to this plan. SDWP and ICWDB jointly manage sector councils, share staff and data systems, and align procurement strategies to ensure consistency, accountability, and equity across the region. Partnerships span all WIOA titles, public agencies, community-based organizations, and education systems, with integrated infrastructure to support co-enrollment, joint case management, and continuous improvement.

The 2025 Southern Border Regional Plan reflects the region's readiness to lead on workforce innovation, equity, and climate resilience. Grounded in data, shaped by community input, and aligned with California's broader economic transformation goals, the plan provides a roadmap for collective impact. Through strategic coordination, shared accountability, and inclusive service delivery, the Southern Border RPU is building a workforce system that expands opportunity and strengthens economic mobility for all.

ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

The Southern Border Region, comprising San Diego and Imperial Counties, represents one of California's most diverse, economically complex, and opportunity-rich areas. As neighboring counties along the U.S. – Mexico border, these two jurisdictions are bound by shared economic corridors and regional labor market dynamics, while also facing markedly different local challenges and demographic realities. This section first presents a detailed overview of San Diego County, followed by a corresponding analysis of Imperial County – examining each county's economic base, population trends, workforce composition, and emerging opportunities and risks. Together, these profiles lay the foundation for targeted, regionally responsive workforce development strategies.

San Diego County

San Diego County, the second-most populous in California, is home to more than 3.2 million residents and accounts for over 8% of the state's population. Its economy is characterized by:

- A thriving innovation sector
- World-class research institutions
- A large military presence
- A fast-growing health and life sciences ecosystem

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the racial and ethnic composition of San Diego County, offering insight into the broad racial and cultural diversity of the region. The data show the substantial share of Latino and multiracial residents alongside significant Asian, Black, and Pacific Islander populations. This demographic richness informs how workforce services must be culturally competent, multilingual, and tailored to local contexts.

Table 1: Race & Ethnicity – San Diego County

Race	Total	%
White	1,531,946	47%
Black / African Amer	149,172	5%
American Indian alone	25,478	1%
Alaska Native alone	115	0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	11,249	0%
Asian alone	414,699	13%

Nat Haw / Pac Isl	11,711	0%
Some other race alone	423,448	13%
2+ Races	700,984	21%
Total Race	3,268,802	100%

Ethnicity	Count	%
Hisp/Lat	1,141,063	35%
Non-Hisp/Lat	2,127,739	65%
Total Ethnicity	3,268,802	100%

Age Range	Count	%
0 to 9	361,401	11%
10 to 19	404,936	12%
20 to 29	472,854	14%
30 to 39	519,066	16%
40 to 49	418,354	13%
50 to 59	380,780	12%
60 to 69	358,307	11%
70 to 79	233,972	7%
80+	120,303	4%
Total	3,269,973	100%

By contrast, Imperial County – with a population of approximately 180,000 – is predominantly rural and agricultural. It faces persistently high unemployment and structural economic barriers, yet it also sits at the epicenter of California's clean energy transformation due to its lithium reserves and solar potential. This urban- rural dichotomy presents both challenges and synergies in regional workforce planning.

Demographically, the region is young, multilingual, and racially and ethnically diverse:

- In San Diego County, Latinos make up more than one-third of the population, with large communities of Asian, Black, and Pacific Islander residents.
- Imperial County has one of the highest proportions of Latino residents in the state – over 85% – and a median age nearly five years younger than the state average.
- Across both counties, a growing immigrant population and significant shares of residents speaking languages other than English at home call for culturally responsive service delivery models.

Table 2 illustrates poverty rates in San Diego County by race and ethnicity, underscoring deep disparities in economic stability across different groups. White and multiracial residents account for a majority of those living in poverty, but Black, Latino, and Native residents experience poverty at disproportionately high rates relative to their share of the population. This highlights the urgency of investing in historically under-resourced neighborhoods and population groups.

Table 2: Poverty Rates by Race & Ethnicity – San Diego County (ACS, 2023)

Race	Poverty Count	Poverty %
White	132,544	40.5%
2+ Races	72,264	22.1%
Some Other Race	52,150	15.9%
Asian	38,397	11.7%
Black	26,374	8.1%
Amer Ind/Alaska Nat	4,835	1.5%
Native Haw/Pac Islander	755	0.2%
Total	327,319	100.0%
Non-Hisp/Lat	202,154	61.8%
Hisp/Lat	125,165	38.2%
Total	327,319	100.0%

San Diego's economy continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic with notable strength in:

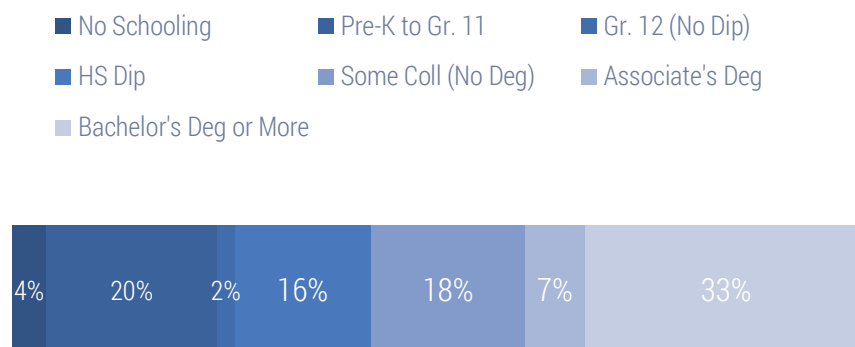
- Healthcare
- Life Sciences
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)
- Professional and Technical Services
- Transportation and Warehousing

Meanwhile, lower-wage service sectors – such as Retail and Accommodation – remain large employers, particularly for entry-level and transitional workers. The county's median household income is approximately \$97,000, but housing affordability and the overall cost of living rank among the highest in the nation, placing significant pressure on low- and middle-income households.

While overall economic indicators are strong, disparities persist in household income and poverty by race and geography. Certain ZIP codes – particularly in Central and Southeast San Diego, Lemon Grove, and El Centro – experience disproportionately high poverty rates and limited access to quality employment. These patterns reflect structural inequities and highlight the importance of equity-focused investments.

Figure 1 illustrates the educational attainment distribution in San Diego County, underscoring both opportunity and challenge. In San Diego, over 40% of adults age 25+ hold at least a bachelor's degree, while just under 20% have only a high school diploma or less. In Imperial, more than half of working-age adults have a high school diploma or less, and fewer than 15% hold a bachelor's degree. These disparities have direct implications for access to quality employment. Moreover, English learners, opportunity youth, and individuals with disabilities across both counties face particular challenges accessing education and training opportunities.

Figure 1: Educational Attainment – San Diego County

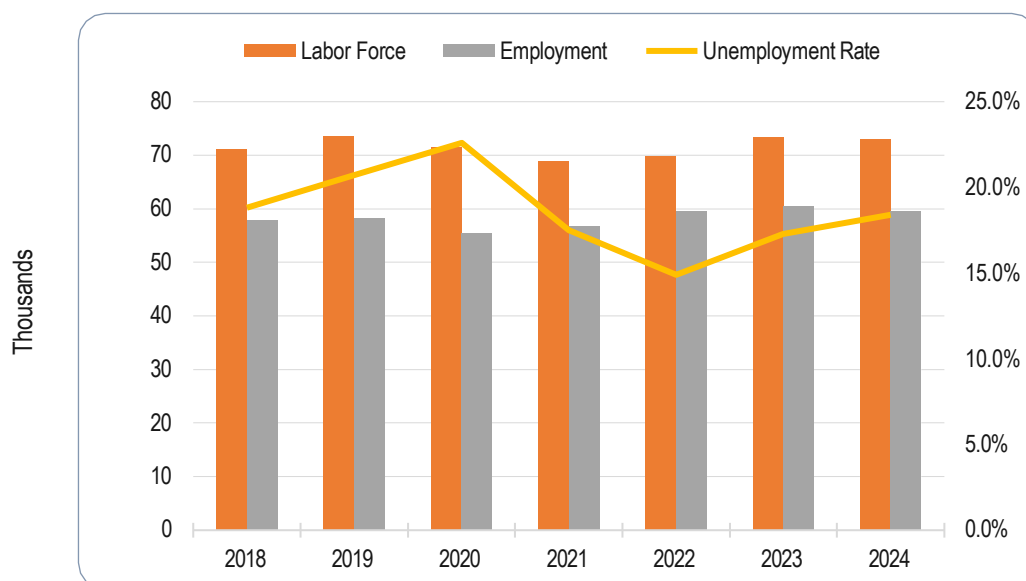


At the regional level, workforce participation patterns are shifting:

- San Diego's labor force participation rate rose from 61.2% in 2019 to 63.4% in 2024, despite a net population decline.
- Employment among women, older adults, and residents of color remains below pre-pandemic levels.
- Imperial's labor market remains segmented by seasonality, limited job diversity, and infrastructure gaps.

Figure 2 presents recent labor force and employment trends in San Diego County from 2018 to 2024. The data show a sharp employment drop during the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by a steady recovery in labor force participation and job levels. However, the region has not fully recovered pre-pandemic employment for all population segments, particularly for women and communities of color. The chart emphasizes the continued need for targeted workforce interventions.

Figure 2. Labor Force and Employment Trends – San Diego County, 2018-24



Looking ahead, projected occupational demand through 2030 highlights both opportunity and equity gaps:

- The greatest job growth is expected in Healthcare, Construction, and ICT.
- Only 1% of projected jobs that pay above \$53/hour (enough to support a single parent with one child) are accessible without a bachelor's degree.
- Yet, 34.5% of projected jobs paying at least \$29/hour (supporting two adults working with one child) do not require a bachelor's degree.

Table 3 summarizes the projected alignment between job growth and wage thresholds in San Diego County. It shows that while a substantial number of jobs projected through 2030 offer wages above \$29/hour, relatively few of these are accessible without a bachelor's degree. This reinforces the need to scale high-quality, non-degree training pathways to ensure broader access to family-sustaining employment across the region.

Table 3. Wage Threshold Summary Table (San Diego County)

Wage Threshold	Projected Jobs (2030)	% of Jobs Requiring < Bach Deg
≥ \$53.53/hr (1 adult + 1 child)	129,820	1.0%
≥ \$49.13/hr (2 adults, 1 working + child)	229,970	6.0%
≥ \$29.06/hr (2 adults working + child)	528,630	34.5%

San Diego County: Opportunity Youth and Disconnection Trends

San Diego County is home to an estimated 28,817 Opportunity Youth – young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor working. These youth represent 7.3% of the total 16–24 population in the county, with especially high rates of disconnection in communities such as Lemon Grove, El Cajon, Mid-City San Diego, and South Bay. These patterns of disconnection are deeply tied to place-based disparities in income, education, access to transportation, and exposure to trauma.

Table 4 presents Opportunity Youth counts and rates by Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA), highlighting geographic clusters where youth disconnection is most severe. These localized insights underscore the importance of neighborhood-embedded programming and culturally responsive reengagement strategies.

Table 4: Counts & Rates of Opportunity Youth by San Diego PUMA (ACS 2023)

PUMA	OY	Total	% OY	Share of OY
Oceanside & Camp Pendleton	3,242	42,365	7.7%	11.3%
San Diego (Central/Mid-City)	2,706	31,899	8.5%	9.4%
El Cajon & Santee	2,594	19,969	13.0%	9.0%
San Diego (Central/Centre City & Balboa Park)	2,214	17,114	12.9%	7.7%
Lemon Grove, La Presa & Spring Valley	2,183	14,158	15.4%	7.6%
Chula Vista (W) & National City	1,943	17,814	10.9%	6.7%
San Diego (S/Otay Mesa & South Bay)	1,669	14,915	11.2%	5.8%
San Diego (SE/Encanto & Skyline)	1,427	17,895	8.0%	5.0%
Escondido	1,394	14,825	9.4%	4.8%
San Marcos & Escondido (W)	1,294	17,975	7.2%	4.5%
Vista	1,204	12,087	10.0%	4.2%
San Diego (SW/Central Coastal)	962	19,894	4.8%	3.3%
San Diego (NW/Del Mar Mesa)	916	10,660	8.6%	3.2%
San Diego (NE/Rancho Bernardo) & Poway	914	9,710	9.4%	3.2%
Sweetwater Region-Chula Vista (E)	896	19,831	4.5%	3.1%
San Diego (E Central/Navajo) & La Mesa	810	14,241	5.7%	2.8%
Fallbrook, Alpine & Valley Center	666	8,081	8.2%	2.3%
San Diego (Central/Clairemont & Kearny Mesa)	619	17,411	3.6%	2.1%
Lakeside, Winter Gardens & Ramona	327	12,036	2.7%	1.1%
San Diego (Central/Mira Mesa & University Heights)	327	33,955	1.0%	1.1%
San Diego (NW/San Dieguito) & Encinitas	316	15,271	2.1%	1.1%
Carlsbad	194	11,395	1.7%	0.7%
Total	28,817	393,501	7.3%	100.0%

Demographic patterns reveal stark disparities. Latino youth represent 43.6% of all disconnected youth in the county, while Black youth are overrepresented relative to their share of the general population. Nearly 30% of disconnected youth live in households below 150% of the poverty line, and over half are male. These indicators point to the need for targeted interventions that address both economic precarity and identity-based marginalization.

Table 5 summarizes the demographic characteristics of San Diego County's disconnected youth population, reinforcing the call for trauma-informed, equity-centered approaches to youth reengagement.

Table 5: Demographic Characteristics of Disconnected Youth (San Diego County; ACS 2023)

Age Group	Count	< 150% Pov	Male	Hisp. / Lat	White	Black	Asian	2+ Races	Other
16-18	3,607	1,076	2,829	1,468	2,132	17	49	976	234
19-24	25,210	7,510	13,115	12,848	10,424	1,260	1,247	6,822	5,203
All OY	28,817	8,586	15,944	14,316	12,556	1,277	1,296	7,798	5,437
% of All OY		29.79%	55.33%	49.7%	43.6%	4.4%	4.5%	27.1%	18.9%

Workforce boards across the region are committed to designing strategies that address the unique needs of Opportunity Youth through:

- Integrated education and workforce programming that accommodates young people's life circumstances
- Paid work experiences, subsidized employment, and sector-based internships in high-opportunity industries
- Peer navigation and mentorship models that reflect the lived experiences of participants
- Mental health, housing, and transportation supports to increase program retention.

These approaches are grounded in youth development best practices and are co-designed with young adults, community-based organizations, and front-line practitioners. Addressing youth disconnection in San Diego County remains a critical priority for regional equity and long-term labor market vitality.

Imperial County

Imperial County, home to approximately 180,000 residents, represents one of California's most rural, binational, and agriculturally driven economies. Over 88% of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino, making it one of the most demographically concentrated counties in the state. The population is also significantly younger than the statewide average, with nearly one-third under the age of 20. This youthful, predominantly Latino population represents both an opportunity and a challenge for workforce development: opportunity in the form of untapped talent and demographic growth, and challenge due to entrenched structural barriers in education, transportation, and job access.

Table 6 provides an overview of the county's racial, ethnic, and age distribution. The data reinforce the importance of bilingual service delivery, culturally responsive workforce strategies, and investments in youth-focused career pathways.

Table 6: Population by Race, Ethnicity, and Age – Imperial County

Race	Total	%
Some Other Race	15,717	54.5%
2+ Races	7,295	25.3%
White	4,003	13.9%
Amer Ind/Alaska Nat	899	3.1%
Asian	550	1.9%
Black	375	1.3%
Total	28,839	100.0%

Ethnicity	Total	%
Hisp/Lat	25,548	88.6%
Non-Hisp/Lat	3,291	11.4%
Total	28,839	100.0%

Age Range	Total	%
0 to 9	25,536	14.3%
10 to 19	29,881	16.7%
20 to 29	25,613	14.3%
30 to 39	23,142	12.9%
40 to 49	22,990	12.8%
50 to 59	18,479	10.3%
60 to 69	16,548	9.2%
70 to 79	11,119	6.2%
80+	5,749	3.2%
Total	179,057	100%

Poverty and Economic Barriers

Imperial County has one of the highest poverty rates in California, with more than 25% of residents living below the federal poverty line. These economic disparities intersect with limited transportation infrastructure, housing instability, and digital exclusion – creating barriers to workforce participation that are unique in scale and scope compared to urban counties.

Localized solutions must address both immediate service needs and broader infrastructure investments. Cross-agency partnerships – spanning workforce, education, housing, and social services – will be essential to mitigating these structural challenges.

Table 7: Poverty Rates by Race & Ethnicity – Imperial County (ACS, 2023)

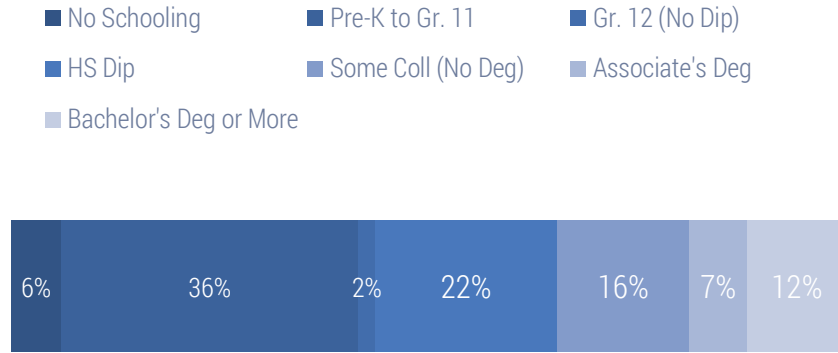
Race	Poverty Count	Poverty %	Race	Poverty Count	Poverty %
Some Other Race	15,717	54.5%	Non-Hisp/Lat	25,548	88.6%
2+ Races	7,295	25.3%	Hisp/Lat	3,291	11.4%
White	4,003	13.9%	Total	28,839	100.0%
Amer Ind/Alaska Nat	899	3.1%			
Asian	550	1.9%			
Black	375	1.3%			
Total	28,839	100.0%			

Educational Attainment

Imperial County faces a pronounced gap in educational attainment compared to the state average. More than half of working-age adults possess a high school diploma or less, and fewer than 15% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. This dynamic directly limits access to higher-wage, high-growth sectors – particularly those requiring postsecondary credentials or technical certifications.

Strategic investment in adult education, noncredit-to-credit bridge programs, and short-term credential pathways will be critical. Figure 3 displays the educational attainment distribution in Imperial County and highlights the opportunity to expand training options accessible to learners without a four-year degree.

Figure 3. Educational Attainment Distribution – Imperial County (ACS, 2023)

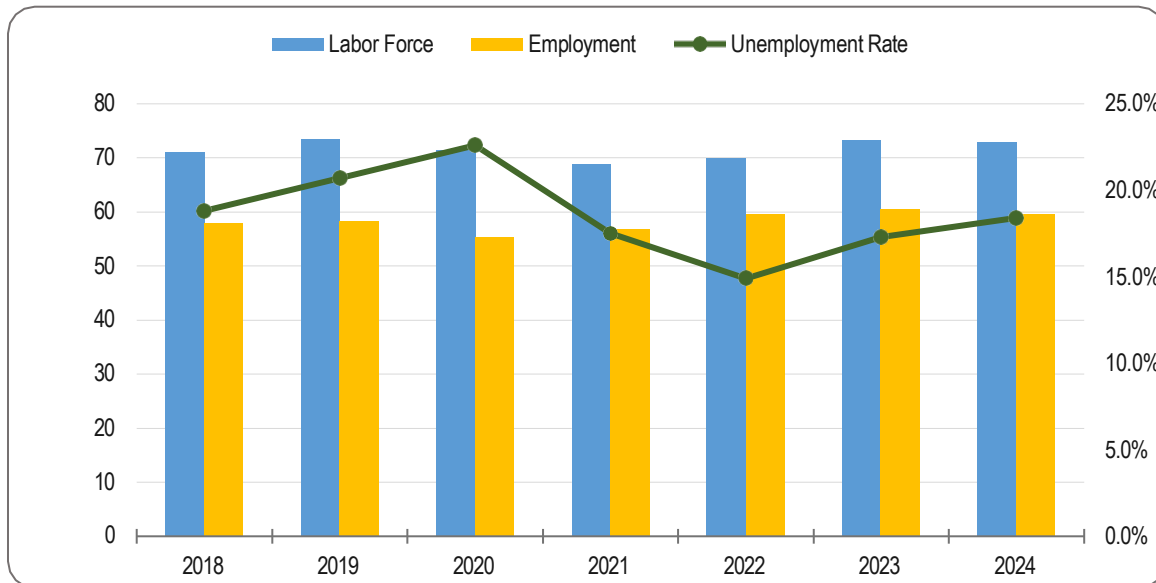


Labor Force and Employment Trends

Imperial County's labor force is shaped by seasonality, geographic isolation, and a relatively narrow employment base. Agricultural employment dominates the regional economy, and unemployment rates remain consistently among the highest in the state. Persistent underemployment – particularly among youth and low-income adults – demands targeted interventions in workforce infrastructure and sector diversification.

Figure 4 illustrates employment trends in the county from 2018 to 2024, including seasonal volatility and COVID- 19-related disruptions. Despite a partial recovery in recent years, job growth remains uneven, and long-term employment stability remains a concern – particularly for young adults, rural residents, and residents without postsecondary credentials.

Figure 4. Labor Force and Employment Trends – Imperial County, 2018-2024



Occupational Demand and Wage Thresholds

Imperial County is projected to support roughly 140,000 jobs by 2030. However, a significant share of these occupations fall below self-sufficiency wage thresholds. Using the MIT Living Wage Calculator, three tiers were analyzed:

- \$38.69/hr for one adult supporting one child
- \$38.27/hr for two adults (one working) with one child

→ \$21.93/hr for two adults (both working) with one child

Table 8 summarizes the distribution of projected 2030 jobs by wage tier and the educational requirements for access. Notably, 67% of occupations meeting the lowest wage threshold are accessible without a bachelor's degree – creating an important opportunity for middle-skill training strategies.

Table 8. Wage Threshold Summary Table (Imperial County)

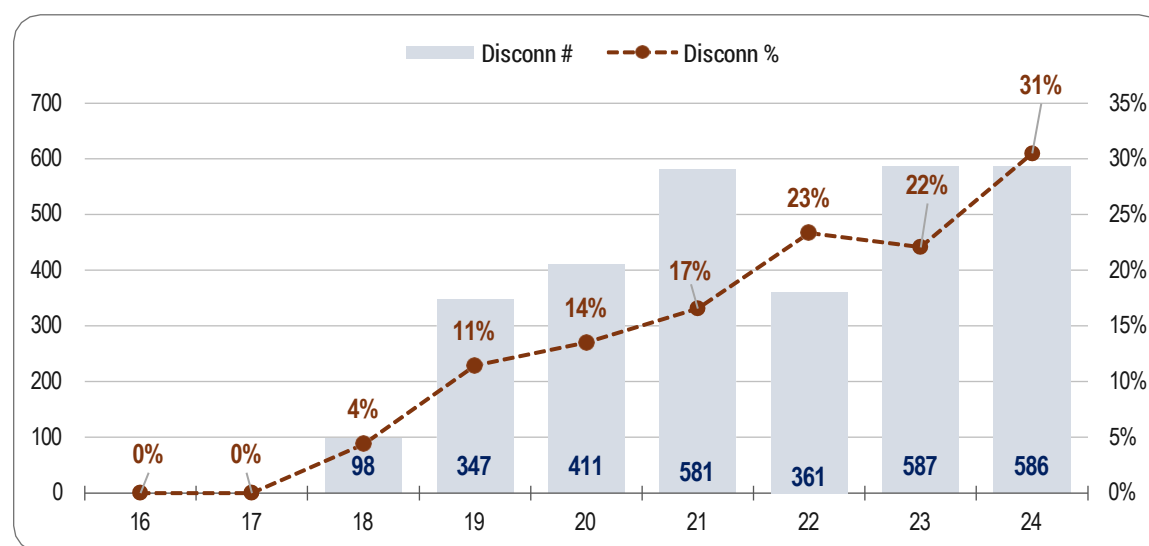
Wage Threshold	Projected Jobs (2030)	% of Jobs Requiring < Bach Deg
≥ \$38.69/hr (1 adult + 1 child)	7,640	41.0%
≥ \$38.27/hr (2 adults, 1 working + child)	7,920	39.5%
≥ \$29.06/hr (2 adults working + child)	22,750	66.6%

Targeting these occupations – particularly in transportation, utilities, public safety, and clean energy – should remain a top priority for regional investments.

Opportunity Youth and Disconnection Trends

Youth disconnection remains a pressing concern in Imperial County, particularly among residents aged 19-24. Nearly one-third of 24-year-olds are disconnected from both school and work. This trend is especially severe among American Indian/Alaska Native youth (ages 19-24), who face a disconnection rate exceeding 70%, though their overall population size is small.

Figure 5. Disconnection Counts and Rates by Age (ACS 2023)



Disconnection is closely associated with poverty, Medicaid enrollment, and parenting responsibilities, underscoring the need for trauma-informed, flexible service models. Community-informed programming must also address the unique needs of Latino and rural youth, who comprise the majority of the disconnected population in the region.

Table 9: Demographic Profile of Opportunity Youth – Imperial County

Characteristic	Estimated Share or Rate	Notes
Age 16-18	Low	Lower disconnection rates among teens
Age 24	31% OY	Highest disconnection rate of any single age group in the county
Latino/a	Majority of youth population	Latinos represent the dominant demographic group in the county
Amer Ind/Al Nat (16-24)	41% disconnected (71% for ages 19-24)	Highest disconnection rate among subgroups, but small N (~588)
Living in Poverty	37% of OY (vs. 30% of connected)	Indicates economic vulnerability and need for supportive services
Receiving Medicaid	High	Common among disconnected youth; indicator of low income
Parenting (raising children)	Notable share	May impact availability for training or work
Some college, no degree	Higher employment rate	Represents postsecondary non-completion
Associate's degree	Lower employment rate	Surprisingly weak labor market outcomes despite credential

Together, San Diego and Imperial Counties possess the assets, talent, and political will to build a more inclusive and resilient workforce. Realizing this potential requires a dual strategy that supports innovation- and growth- oriented sectors through aligned training pathways, while also expanding access to high-road jobs for historically underserved populations. Place-based investments must address geographic disparities – particularly in communities facing concentrated poverty and high youth disconnection – and cross-county coordination will be essential to ensure inclusive participation in the clean economy and other emerging sectors. By leveraging shared strengths and addressing long-standing inequities, the Southern Border Region can serve as a statewide model for demand-driven, equity-centered workforce transformation.

REGIONAL INDICATORS

The Southern Border Regional Planning Unit (SBRPU) has strategically selected two indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the Southern Border Regional Plan, aligning directly with state policy priorities, regional goals on equity, job quality, and responsive employer engagement. Each indicator has defined baseline metrics, clear targets, and robust evaluation strategies, thereby ensuring accountability and transparent tracking of progress.

Selected Indicator 1: Job Quality Improvements

Improving job quality across key sectors – particularly in terms of wages, benefits, career advancement opportunities, and working conditions – is a central priority for the SBRPU. To effectively track regional efforts, the selected indicator focuses explicitly on the number and percentage of job placements meeting the High Road framework criteria. Jobs categorized under this standard must pay a living wage, offer comprehensive benefits, and have demonstrated pathways for upward career mobility.

The SBRPU will establish baseline metrics for the percentage of job placements meeting self-sufficiency wage thresholds, disaggregated by county. These baselines will serve as the foundation for setting improvement targets and measuring

progress over time. The region will work with partners to define and adopt a common self-sufficiency wage methodology, such as the MIT Living Wage Calculator or a similar locally validated benchmark.

By 2028, the region aims to substantially raise the proportion of quality job placements across the economy, with specific targets to be determined based on the established baseline metrics and methodology.

To accomplish this target, the SBRPU will leverage several strategies:

- Embedding equity-weighted performance incentives into service provider contracts to ensure quality placements.
- Strengthening partnerships with employers to co-design training programs that align directly with high-demand, high-quality employment opportunities.
- Focusing training resources and job placement support on identified priority sectors with proven upward mobility potential, including clean energy, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing.
- Increasing employer engagement through sector councils and collaborative planning to enhance job quality standards and ensure industry alignment.
- Promoting apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs specifically designed to prepare participants for quality employment opportunities.

Progress will be tracked rigorously through CalJOBS wage records, internal placement tracking systems, and verified wage calculations using the MIT Living Wage Calculator. A regional performance dashboard will consolidate these data sources into actionable insights and help stakeholders monitor changes over time.

Selected Indicator 2: Equity in Access and Outcomes

Ensuring equity in access and outcomes is foundational to the regional strategy. While credential attainment among WIOA Youth is lower than among adults in both counties, this partially reflects longer timelines to completion and the inclusion of in-school youth who are still progressing toward diplomas or other secondary credentials. Nonetheless, these outcomes highlight the importance of tailored supports and extended follow-up for youth participants. The SBRPU has identified persistent gaps in employment and training outcomes, notably for Black, Indigenous, and Latino/a workers, residents of rural communities, and Opportunity Youth. The following table summarizes disaggregated WIOA performance data from 2023 and highlights baseline disparities in credential attainment and job placements.

In Program Year 2023-24, WIOA performance data revealed consistent equity gaps across key indicators. In Imperial County, the credential attainment rate for youth (57.1%) lagged behind adults (65.9%), while San Diego showed a similar disparity (60.2% for youth vs. 74.7% for adults). Measurable Skill Gains were particularly uneven: just 44.7% of youth in San Diego achieved skill gains compared to 75.5% of adults. Median earnings for youth remained under \$4,700 in both counties – less than half the earnings of adults – reinforcing the need for career aligned training and wraparound supports that promote upward mobility.

Recognizing the urgency of addressing these inequities, the regional target is to narrow or completely eliminate outcome disparities by at least 25% by 2028, with annual public reporting to ensure accountability and responsiveness to the community. Achieving this goal requires targeted, culturally responsive interventions:

- Disaggregating all enrollment and outcome data by key demographic variables to precisely monitor progress and adjust strategies.
- Enhancing outreach and engagement strategies through trusted community-based organizations deeply rooted within marginalized communities.

- Providing targeted technical assistance to workforce providers to improve culturally responsive programming and equitable service delivery practices.
- Integrating robust career navigation supports that specifically address barriers faced by underserved populations, such as language proficiency, transportation, and childcare.
- Expanding mobile and digital service delivery models to reach geographically isolated and underserved communities effectively.

Progress toward equity outcomes will be monitored quarterly using regional dashboards and partner-submitted performance data. Regular forums will be held with community stakeholders to ensure accountability and transparency, and insights from these forums will inform iterative strategy adjustments.

Tracking and Evaluation Strategy

Both indicators will be systematically tracked through quarterly regional dashboards, which compile comprehensive partner-submitted performance data. The evaluation approach includes quantitative analysis combined with qualitative assessments – such as employer feedback, stakeholder interviews, and participant surveys – to provide a nuanced understanding of both progress and remaining challenges.

Lessons from the Previous Planning Cycle

In the previous planning cycle, the Southern Border Region identified critical lessons regarding the importance of consistently tracking quality-of-placement metrics and disaggregating outcomes by population subgroups. Earlier planning efforts lacked sufficient granularity in tracking data, leading to challenges in clearly demonstrating impact and accountability to underserved populations.

In response, the SBRPU has established shared dashboards and robust equity frameworks designed explicitly to ensure ongoing plans are grounded in real-time, actionable data. This shift toward SMART indicators – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound – enables more precise measurement of the region's strategic progress and ensures ongoing accountability to the communities served. Additional lessons include the necessity of clearly defined stakeholder roles and the continuous engagement of community partners to achieve long-term systemic improvements.

By rigorously applying this improved approach, the Southern Border Regional Planning Unit strengthens its ability to drive meaningful change in job quality and equity, setting clear benchmarks that ensure the regional workforce development system remains responsive, transparent, and accountable to all residents.

FOSTERING DEMAND-DRIVEN SKILLS ATTAINMENT

The Southern Border Regional Planning Unit (RPU) has adopted the ten strategic sectors identified in the California Jobs First Economic Blueprint as the foundation for regional workforce development planning. These sectors were selected by the state through an extensive process involving labor market data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and coordination with regional economic development entities. As such, the RPU did not conduct a separate sector selection process but rather affirms the Jobs First priorities as central to the region's workforce development strategy.

These ten sectors provide a framework for organizing investments in career pathway development, employer engagement, training infrastructure, and equity-centered service delivery. They align with both regional economic trends and the need to ensure all communities benefit from California's evolving economy. The Southern Border RPU's approach focuses on using this shared statewide framework while tailoring strategies to reflect the distinct dynamics of San Diego and Imperial Counties.

Priority Sectors for the Southern Border Region

California Jobs First, the state's regional economic strategy, identifies ten priority sectors as essential drivers of inclusive, climate-resilient, and future-ready economies. These sectors are intended to guide investment and coordination across workforce, education, and economic development systems throughout California's 13 economic regions. Rather than developing an independent sector framework, the Southern Border RPU has adopted these ten sectors in full, recognizing their strategic relevance to both San Diego and Imperial Counties.

Each sector was selected at the state level based on rigorous labor market analysis, projected job growth, quality job potential, and stakeholder consultation. The Southern Border RPU's adoption of these sectors ensures that its workforce planning aligns with broader statewide economic transformation efforts while allowing for localized strategy based on the region's unique industrial mix, geography, and populations.

The sectors outlined below serve as a roadmap for targeted training, career pathway development, employer engagement, and regional investment. They represent a shared framework for addressing current workforce gaps and preparing for emerging industry demand:

Figure 6. California Jobs First Priority Sectors in the Southern Border Region



These sectors reflect not only the existing employment base in the region but also areas of projected job growth, state and federal investment alignment (e.g., CHIPS, IRA, infrastructure), and opportunities for developing inclusive, high-quality jobs. The emphasis is on fostering workforce systems that promote upward mobility and shared prosperity across the diverse economic landscapes of both counties.

County Sector Profiles

While the Southern Border Regional Planning Unit affirms all ten of the California Jobs First priority sectors, this section focuses on the five sectors in each county that currently exhibit the highest employment demand, strategic alignment, training infrastructure, and regional significance. These sectors were selected based on regional labor market data, program

availability, employer engagement, and equity relevance. The profile format below presents key details in a consistent table structure to help identify where the region is positioned for success – and where gaps persist.

San Diego County's five priority sectors reflect the county's diversified economy and robust infrastructure for education and training. With strong industry presence in healthcare, clean economy, logistics, advanced manufacturing, and the creative economy, the region benefits from a mix of high employment demand and established workforce pipelines. However, challenges remain – particularly around career-ladder clarity, underrepresentation in certain fields, and the need for stronger employer-aligned curricula. These dynamics shape ongoing efforts to strengthen access, equity, and progression across training pathways.

Table 10: San Diego County Sector Profile

Sector	Estimated Jobs	Key Occupations (SOC)	Training Availability	Workforce Needs & Gaps
Healthcare	47,555	Registered Nurses (29-1141), Medical Assistants (31-9092), Behavioral Health Counselors (21-1018)	Strong: adult schools, SDWP SUD Apprenticeship, college programs	Severe shortages in behavioral and bilingual care; underrepresentation of men and nontraditional learners
Clean Economy	22,084	Solar Installers (47-2231), HVAC Techs (49-9021), Energy Auditors (13-1199)	Growing: SD City, Southwestern College	Career ladder clarity lacking; limited bridge programs for ELLs
Transport & Logistics	41,224	Truck Drivers (53-3032), Freight Clerks (43-5071), Warehouse Associates (53-7062)	AJCC training, CDL prep programs	Employer-aligned curriculum still limited; few apprenticeships and unclear advancement pathways
Advanced Manufacturing	1,658	CNC Operators (51-9161), Electromechanical Techs (17-3024)	SkillCraft, college mechatronics programs	Employer partnerships limited in public training system; upskilling underdeveloped
Creative Economy	3,062	Multimedia Artists (27-1014), Graphic Designers (27-1024), Web Developers (15-1254)	Pilots via youth-serving CBOs and K–14 pipeline	Informal sector pathways dominate; employer recognition varies

Imperial County's five priority sectors reflect the region's evolving position in California's clean energy transition, agriculture economy, and logistics infrastructure. While the county faces challenges such as limited training infrastructure and rural access gaps, it also benefits from unique geographic assets and emerging growth opportunities – particularly in solar energy, lithium extraction, and food production. The following table outlines the most critical workforce and training needs tied to Imperial's leading sectors.

Table 11: Imperial County Sector Profile

Sector	Estimated Jobs	Key Occupations (SOC)	Training Availability	Workforce Needs & Gaps
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Working Lands & Water	4,798	Farmworkers (45-2092), Food Batchmakers (51-3092), Ag Equipment Operators (45-2091)	IVC, noncredit offerings	Aging workforce; few credentialed training pathways beyond entry level
Transport & Logistics	2,384	Truck Drivers (53-3032), Freight Clerks (43-5071), Warehouse Workers (53-7062)	AJCC, IVC CDL programs	No formal pipeline coordination; cross-border skills alignment needed
Healthcare	1,679	Medical Assistants (31-9092), LVNs (29-2061), Home Health Aides (31-1121)	Limited: IVC, IVROP; emerging CHW training	Bilingual and rural access gaps; retention and wage competitiveness challenges
Clean Economy	771	Solar Installers (47-2231), Power Plant Operators (51-8013), Environmental Techs (19-4091)	Limited but growing: IVC, IVROP	Lack of formal apprenticeships; rapid growth exceeds system readiness
Tourism & Public Services	129	Recreation Attendants (39-3091), Local Government Clerks (43-4031)	On-the-job; limited formal training	Opportunity for earn-and-learn pilots; underserved by sector councils

In both counties, sector strategies reflect local labor markets while aligning with the broader framework of California Jobs First. San Diego offers sector depth, scale, and training infrastructure, while Imperial represents critical land-based and energy-sector assets that are essential to statewide climate and workforce goals.

Imperial County plays a unique and essential role in California's green energy, agriculture, and border economy. The clean economy – particularly lithium recovery from the Salton Sea and utility-scale solar deployment – is one of the most transformative regional opportunities in the state. Imperial is poised to become a global hub for lithium production, and associated workforce strategies are being developed with urgency.

The county's agricultural production and logistics systems remain a major source of employment, deeply tied to both national food security and binational supply chains. This sector links directly to the "Working Lands and Water" category, which also includes blue economy strategies now emerging through regional coordination with water infrastructure and environmental resilience projects.

Tourism and public-sector employment are also significant, and healthcare workforce needs are growing as the region faces shortages of bilingual and culturally responsive providers. The county's role as a logistics corridor – with high-volume border crossings and goods movement – makes Transport and Logistics a particularly high-impact sector. While manufacturing is more limited compared to San Diego, growth in food processing and agtech technologies are opening new possibilities.

Table 12: Regional Economic Integration

Integration Theme	Description	Cross-County Relevance
Clean Economy Workforce	Lithium extraction in Imperial aligns with green infrastructure and solar/EV grid upgrades in San Diego	Shared pipeline needs for energy techs, solar installers, and environmental scientists
Healthcare Workforce	Behavioral health, bilingual care, and provider shortages exist in both counties	Joint need for SUD apprenticeships, CHW training, and regional placement coordination
Logistics & Border Trade	I-8 corridor and port-of-entry activity connect goods movement systems across counties	Shared demand for CDL licensing, logistics tech, and safety training standards
Cross-System Planning	SDWP and ICWDB align on sector strategy and training priorities through joint planning and shared sector council input	Unified narrative for CA Jobs First investment and performance tracking
Employer Engagement	Regional employers and associations (e.g., chambers, IVEDC, EDCSD) engage on workforce issues spanning both counties	Opportunity to expand multi-county sector convenings and pre-apprenticeship pilots

Training and Employment Program Alignment

Each of the ten Jobs First sectors is either currently supported or targeted for expanded support through local and regional workforce programs. Examples include:

- Clean Economy: Pre-apprenticeship programs in solar and energy efficiency (Imperial); green construction partnerships in San Diego; emerging lithium workforce planning.
- Life Sciences and Manufacturing: SkillCraft programs in biotechnology and mechatronics; partnerships with biotech employers for career pathway co-design.
- Healthcare: Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Apprenticeship program; CHW training pilots; expansions in CNA, LVN, and behavioral health technician tracks.
- Transport and Logistics: Truck driver training and warehousing programs delivered through AJCCs and college partners; efforts to improve CDL licensing access.
- Creative Economy: Digital media and graphic design training pilots supported by youth-focused CBOs and schools.

Several additional efforts are underway to strengthen cross-sector linkages and ensure stackable pathways between entry-level and advanced credentials. These include dual enrollment programs in clean energy and healthcare, sector-specific bridge programs for English learners, and expansion of employer-based earn-and-learn strategies.

Current Gaps and Strategic Opportunities

While the alignment with Jobs First is strong, several gaps persist:

Training availability in Imperial County lags behind sector growth potential, especially in clean energy and healthcare.

Advanced Manufacturing and High-Tech sectors need stronger publicly funded training pipelines and more equitable access.

Sector councils and employer advisory structures are uneven across the two counties, limiting coordinated sector leadership. Earn-and-learn models are underrepresented in several sectors (e.g., creative economy, logistics) despite being suitable for youth and transitional workers.

To address these issues, the RPU will:

- Strengthen sector council coordination with a focus on employer engagement and workforce equity.
- Build sector-specific crosswalks to guide curriculum development, career navigation, and participant advancement.
- Invest in training infrastructure for Imperial County and explore co-funding with state and federal climate investments.
- Expand intermediary partnerships to scale work-based learning and apprenticeship across priority sectors.

This sector prioritization strategy reflects the Southern Border RPU's commitment to data-informed investment, equity in access, and alignment with statewide economic and environmental transformation. The region is well positioned to lead in both traditional and emerging industries – provided that training systems, employer partnerships, and population-specific supports continue to evolve in tandem with labor market demands.

ENABLING UPWARD MOBILITY FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS

The Southern Border Regional Planning Unit (SBRPU) is committed to enabling upward mobility for all Californians by ensuring that all individuals – especially those with barriers to employment – can access meaningful, family-sustaining careers. This commitment is rooted in a comprehensive approach that integrates navigation, wraparound supports, aligned training systems, and employer partnerships to help residents move from disconnected or underemployed to economically self-sufficient.

Integrated Navigation and Career Services

Career navigation is a critical pillar of upward mobility. Across the region, AJCCs, community-based organizations, and WIOA partners provide personalized career guidance, job matching, and connection to training. The SBRPU supports the use of dedicated navigators who help participants identify career goals, understand labor market information, enroll in training, and persist through employment transitions.

Digital navigation tools like Partner Portal and MyNextMove have strengthened this ecosystem by offering real-time access to opportunities, allowing job seekers to track progress, communicate with staff, and explore career ladders. These systems promote transparency, empower users, and help staff prioritize outreach to those needing more intensive support.

Wraparound Services and Co-Enrollment

Many participants face significant personal and structural barriers. To ensure no one is left behind, the region integrates wraparound services into the workforce experience, including:

- Subsidized childcare and dependent care
- Transportation assistance and transit passes
- Mental health and trauma recovery support
- Housing assistance and access to public benefits
- Digital literacy and device access

Wraparound supports are coordinated through **co-enrollment models** and **braided funding**, including partnerships with CalWORKs, Title II adult education providers, and community health networks. These models ensure that job seekers with multiple needs receive services without duplication and with clear accountability.

Employer-Aligned Pathways and Advancement

The SBRPU is working with employers and sector councils to formalize and communicate advancement opportunities within regional growth sectors. Efforts focus on developing stackable credential pathways, linking training progression to wage and role advancement. For example:

- Clean Economy: Entry-level solar installation linked to energy auditing and HVAC licensing
- Healthcare: CNA to LVN to behavioral health technician tracks, with SUD and CHW apprenticeship pathways
- Logistics: Warehouse roles to freight tech and CDL-based transport operations

Many of these pathways are supported by community colleges, pre-apprenticeship programs, and earn-and-learn models, which combine wages and work experience with structured skill development.

Focus on Job Quality and Retention

Upward mobility is not only about getting a job – it is about keeping a good one. The SBRPU emphasizes job quality in both placement strategies and follow-up services. Job quality indicators include:

- Living wages based on family needs
- Benefits access (healthcare, leave, retirement)
- Predictable scheduling
- Worker voice and advancement potential

Retention is supported through ongoing coaching, reengagement after layoff, and collaboration with employers to adjust roles or identify upskilling needs. The region's tracking systems allow staff to monitor participant outcomes after exit and offer support as needed to maintain progress.

Serving Priority Populations

Specialized interventions help ensure upward mobility reaches all communities. Examples include:

- Peer mentor programs for Opportunity Youth and young parents
- Gender-responsive training and reentry support for justice-involved individuals
- Embedded bilingual navigation in communities with high concentrations of English learners
- Inclusive service design for individuals with disabilities, including assistive technology and accessibility audits

These programs are often co-designed with community partners and include trauma-informed and culturally competent practices.

Coordination and Accountability

The SBRPU works to ensure that the full system – across counties and providers – shares responsibility for upward mobility. This includes:

- Coordinated planning among SDWP, ICWDB, and regional partners
- Shared outcome dashboards and learning collaboratives
- Contractual requirements for equitable outcomes and career advancement metrics
- Alignment with high road principles and California's Master Plan for Career Education

Together, these strategies reflect a unified, system-level commitment to upward mobility – not as an aspirational slogan, but as a measurable, actionable priority. As workforce systems evolve to meet new economic realities, the Southern Border Region is positioning itself to ensure that residents do not just access jobs – but build lifelong careers that provide dignity, stability, and opportunity.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Southern Border Regional Planning Unit (SBRPU) recognizes that climate and environmental sustainability are not only urgent global imperatives but also significant economic and workforce opportunities. The region is home to several of California's most climate-vulnerable populations, and also to some of the state's most promising clean energy assets – including Imperial County's emerging lithium economy, the solar-rich deserts of the southeast, and the energy transition infrastructure developing across San Diego County.

Addressing climate change requires a coordinated response that not only reduces emissions and supports sustainability but also ensures that workers and communities can equitably benefit from the green economy. For the Southern Border Region, this means strengthening both the supply side (training pipelines, sector infrastructure) and the demand side (quality jobs, inclusive hiring) of the clean economy labor market.

A Regional Clean Economy Strategy

The SBRPU is advancing a coordinated strategy to prepare the regional workforce for the transition to a low-carbon economy. The region has adopted the California Jobs First framework, which emphasizes clean energy generation, grid modernization, energy efficiency, sustainable construction, and related infrastructure investment. These sectors are expected to drive substantial job growth over the next decade.

Imperial County is uniquely positioned to support California's clean energy future. Lithium recovery from the Salton Sea – often referred to as "Lithium Valley" – is poised to become a globally significant source of battery-grade lithium for electric vehicles and grid storage. Investments in this sector are projected to expand sharply, generating new demand for electrical technicians, plant operators, environmental scientists, and geotechnical engineers. However, this growth will require a corresponding buildout of workforce training capacity, especially in Imperial's rural and underserved communities.

San Diego County, by contrast, offers depth in clean tech, energy storage, building decarbonization, and sustainable construction. Programs supporting HVAC upgrades, solar installation, and energy efficiency retrofits already exist, but scaling these programs to meet demand will require deeper employer alignment, updated curricula, and expanded apprenticeship infrastructure.

To guide this expansion, the SBRPU is investing in regional sector strategies, engaging employers and education partners in co-designing training models, and aligning clean economy career pathways with equity and inclusion goals. This includes connecting K–12 and community college students to pre-apprenticeship opportunities, integrating sustainability into existing CTE and workforce training programs, and working with regional planning and economic development agencies to ensure investments align with workforce capacity.

Workforce System Contributions to Climate Resilience

In addition to preparing workers for clean energy jobs, the region's workforce system contributes to climate resilience in several ways:

- Promoting green skills in traditional occupations (e.g., water conservation in construction, sustainable agriculture techniques)
- Partnering with K–12 and higher education to promote environmental literacy
- Coordinating with local governments on climate action planning and infrastructure funding
- Designing inclusive pathways for frontline and historically marginalized communities to access green careers
- Supporting reskilling and transition supports for workers impacted by industry shifts, including displaced fossil fuel workers

The SBRPU also recognizes that climate resilience is a matter of equity. Low-income and rural communities in both San Diego and Imperial Counties are more likely to be affected by extreme heat, water scarcity, and natural disasters. Climate investments must be distributed equitably and include strong local and targeted hire provisions. Regional efforts must ensure that residents facing historical and structural disadvantage are prioritized in workforce development and hiring pipelines.

Strategic Investments and Program Examples

Current and planned initiatives contributing to regional climate and workforce goals include:

- Solar and energy efficiency pre-apprenticeship programs in Imperial County (in partnership with IVROP and IVC)
- Green construction initiatives and decarbonization projects led by San Diego's community colleges and workforce intermediaries
- Lithium workforce planning convenings supported by Imperial Valley economic development organizations
- Sector council coordination with clean energy employers to define competencies, establish career ladders, and build cross-training models
- Cross-agency coordination with housing and transportation authorities to align workforce planning with climate-resilient infrastructure investments

The Southern Border Region is also pursuing expanded use of High Road Training Partnerships (HRTPs) and Climate Forward workforce models in line with CWDB priorities. These efforts embed labor standards, equity benchmarks, and community voice into climate workforce planning, ensuring that clean energy investments produce not just jobs – but quality, sustainable careers accessible to all.

These efforts reflect the region's growing role in meeting state and national sustainability goals. The Southern Border RPU is committed to integrating climate-aligned strategies into all aspects of workforce development – from training and employer engagement to supportive services and regional planning. As California accelerates toward a climate-resilient economy, the region will continue to lead in preparing an inclusive workforce capable of powering the transition. (SBRPU) recognizes that climate and environmental sustainability are not only urgent global imperatives but also significant economic and workforce opportunities. The region is home to several of California's most climate-vulnerable populations, and also to some of the state's most promising clean energy assets – including Imperial County's emerging lithium economy, the solar-rich deserts of the southeast, and the energy transition infrastructure developing across San Diego County.

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EQUITY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The Southern Border Regional Planning Unit (SBRPU) is committed to advancing equity and economic justice by designing and delivering workforce development strategies that prioritize historically marginalized populations. This commitment is embedded throughout the regional plan – from indicator design and stakeholder engagement to sector strategies and service delivery models – and is informed by the realities of systemic exclusion that many San Diego and Imperial County residents continue to face.

Disaggregated Data and Equity Analysis

The region actively tracks disparities in outcomes by race, ethnicity, age, geography, gender, and other demographic variables. As documented in Section II, youth, rural residents, Latino/a and Black workers, and Opportunity Youth continue to experience lower credential attainment, lower measurable skill gains, and lower median earnings compared to their peers. These disparities are not coincidental; they reflect structural inequities in access to education, digital tools, employer networks, and social services.

To confront these inequities, the SBRPU applies an equity lens to all performance metrics and planning strategies. Key practices include:

- Regular disaggregation of performance data by population group
- Community-led validation of equity goals and benchmarks
- Prioritization of investment in high-need, low-opportunity areas
- Alignment with equity commitments in the California State Plan and Jobs First framework

Equity in Program and Service Design

Workforce programs across the region are explicitly designed to meet the needs of communities that have historically been underserved or excluded. Examples include:

- Culturally responsive training curricula developed with trusted community-based organizations Trauma-informed navigation and coaching models
- Co-enrollment partnerships with agencies focused on housing, food security, behavioral health, and disability services
- Multilingual outreach, navigation, and instructional services to increase engagement and persistence among English learners

Equity-centered program design also means lifting up participant voice. The region regularly engages job seekers through surveys, focus groups, and community forums – especially young adults, parents, individuals with disabilities, and justice-involved residents – to ensure services are relevant and responsive.

Inclusive Access to Sector Strategies

The region's sector strategies explicitly focus on expanding access to high-road jobs for populations with systemic barriers. This includes building bridge programs for individuals with low literacy or basic skills, expanding pre-apprenticeship pipelines that include supportive services, and recruiting from high-disconnection neighborhoods and rural census tracts.

Sectors prioritized for inclusive access include:

- Healthcare, where CHW and SUD tracks provide onramps to underrepresented groups
- Clean Economy, which is expanding training access through IVROP, community colleges, and local energy firms
- Logistics and Transportation, where AJCCs are embedding equity practices in CDL and warehousing pathways

Community Engagement and Equity Governance

Equity is not only a service design principle but a governance commitment. The region integrates community voice into strategic planning and implementation through:

- Community advisory councils
- Regional forums and listening sessions
- Youth and peer mentor leadership opportunities
- Transparent reporting of disaggregated outcomes to stakeholders

These mechanisms ensure that equity is embedded in both the goals and the processes of the regional workforce system.

Alignment with Statewide Priorities

The SBRPU's equity approach is fully aligned with the California Workforce Development Board's High Road vision, Jobs First framework, and the Master Plan for Career Education. These frameworks emphasize:

- Centering equity in planning and evaluation
- Investing in underserved regions and communities
- Promoting inclusive and worker-centered training design
- Measuring success through equity-adjusted outcomes

The Southern Border Region's equity strategy reflects a commitment to not only reducing disparities but also transforming the systems that produce them. Through targeted investments, inclusive governance, and systemic accountability, the region is advancing economic justice as a central outcome of workforce development.

ALIGNING, COORDINATING, AND INTEGRATING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Southern Border Regional Planning Unit (SBRPU), consisting of the San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) and the Imperial County Workforce Development Board (ICWDB), operates with a unified vision for a high-impact, coordinated, and equity-centered workforce system. This vision is implemented through formal regional agreements, shared data systems, integrated service delivery, and strong collaboration across WIOA titles and partner programs.

Regional Governance and Alignment

The SBRPU maintains a governance structure that includes regular joint planning sessions, data sharing agreements, and coordination across procurement cycles. The SDWP and ICWDB collaborate on the development of sector strategies, performance dashboards, equity goals, and alignment with state policy priorities including the California Jobs First framework, the Master Plan for Career Education, and the CWDB's High Road vision.

Joint staffing arrangements for regional planning functions – such as research, employer engagement, and training development – have streamlined coordination and allowed the two boards to function as a unified system in areas of regional significance.

Coordination Across WIOA Titles and Core Programs

Workforce services are delivered in coordination with Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth), Title II (Adult Education and Literacy), Title III (Employment Services), and Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation) programs. The SBRPU collaborates with these programs to provide cross-referrals, co-enrollment, and integrated case management.

Partners coordinate on:

- Intake and eligibility processes
- Co-enrollment to align funding and support
- Shared use of CalJOBS and other regional databases
- Jointly hosted job fairs, workshops, and events

Each board has MOUs and Infrastructure Funding Agreements in place with core partners. These agreements are reviewed annually to ensure relevance and to adjust based on funding levels, policy shifts, and participant needs.

Shared Service Delivery and Data Infrastructure

The SBRPU has adopted common digital tools (e.g., Partner Portal, MyNextMove, regional dashboards) that streamline service coordination and ensure shared visibility into participant progress. This infrastructure allows for:

- Tracking of referrals and service utilization
- Outcome alignment across agencies
- Real-time performance monitoring by region, site, or population

In addition, both workforce boards are aligning procurement and contract oversight strategies to ensure consistency in service quality, equity benchmarks, and outcome targets.

Program Integration with Public and Community Partners

Beyond the core WIOA titles, the SBRPU has built strong relationships with other systems impacting economic mobility. These include:

- CalWORKs and SNAP E&T
- County health and behavioral health departments
- Continuums of Care (housing and homelessness)
- Community colleges and adult schools
- Community-based organizations focused on justice-involved individuals, immigrants, and disconnected youth

These relationships support a "no wrong door" service model in which participants can enter the system through any partner and be connected to the full menu of workforce supports available in the region.

Continuous Improvement and Shared Learning

To maintain high-quality and adaptive service delivery, the SBRPU invests in ongoing training and technical assistance for frontline staff and partner organizations. This includes:

- Joint training academies for case managers and navigators
- Regional convenings on topics such as trauma-informed care, equity, and sector strategies
- Shared evaluation strategies, including mystery shopping, participant satisfaction surveys, and performance audits

Both SDWP and ICWDB use performance data to drive decision-making and provide technical assistance to underperforming sites. Regional learning collaboratives are used to identify promising practices and scale innovations.

Commitment to a Unified, Participant-Centered System

Aligning, coordinating, and integrating programs and services is not simply about efficiency – it is about creating a seamless and empowering experience for job seekers. The SBRPU is committed to reducing fragmentation, eliminating unnecessary duplication, and ensuring that all residents – regardless of where they enter the system – receive the guidance, training, and support they need to achieve lasting economic security.

This shared commitment is foundational to the region's ability to implement its vision for equity, sustainability, upward mobility, and demand-driven workforce development.



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