

**A Thriving Public/Private Partnership:
Bay Area's Workforce Funders Collaborative**

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The National Fund for Workforce Solutions has been shaped by the successes of five pilot projects underway around the country. Each has brought together a diverse group of supporters and participants who have crafted a workforce partnership that is supporting the local needs of workers, employers and the community.

In the San Francisco area, the San Francisco Foundation and a dozen other foundations have teamed with the California Employment Development Department to create the Bay Area Workforce Funders Collaborative. This innovative partnership has raised more than \$3.3 million from foundations and private employers, and attracted more than \$2 million in state and federal workforce development funds.

The collaborative was formed to assess the workforce needs of the region, develop new opportunities for low-income residents, immigrants, dislocated workers and others to secure family-supporting jobs and stimulate greater cooperation and planning among various stakeholders, including employers, government agencies, community colleges and labor unions.

Several of the foundations involved in the collaborative had previously stopped supporting workforce development efforts over concerns about their effectiveness and a lack of measures to ensure that the efforts were moving workers into family-sustaining jobs. The collaborative has attracted renewed support because it works closely with employers to meet needs in carefully selected employment sectors.

To date, the collaborative has helped fund an array of workforce programs in the health care and life sciences areas, ranging from a "bridge" community college training program to assist disadvantaged workers in San Mateo County to a program geared to prepare foreign-trained nurses move into jobs in the Bay Area.

"Employers are participating because their needs are being met," says Barbara Harrelson, regional vice president of the Hospital Council of Northern and Central California. "The work funded by the collaborative is reinventing training programs to meet employer needs by streamlining processes and expanding the capacity of community colleges and workforce systems."

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions will help the Bay Area collaborative and other initiatives expand their reach, and it will encourage the creation of new initiatives that build on the lessons in San Francisco and

elsewhere. The National Fund for Workforce Solutions' goal is not simply creating new programs, but changing lives and building stronger regional economies by helping employers meet their workforce needs.

Genentech, a leading biotechnology company, has been an enthusiastic supporter of one of the initiatives funded by the Bay Area funders collaborative – a biotechnology certificate program. Currently available through two local community colleges (Skyline College and Ohlone College), the program was developed to Genentech's specifications by Skyline College, and is overseen by the San Mateo County Workforce Investment Board. Participants receive 12 to 16 weeks of education in basic biology and chemistry.

As of late 2006, approximately 75 program graduates are employed with Genentech – in jobs that pay an average of \$14 per hour. The program has given Genentech a much-needed, steady supply of qualified, trained employees to work in drug manufacturing, as well as pre- and post-production processes.

"It's absolutely filling a vital need for Genentech," says Paige Lloyd, a senior staffing consultant with the company. "This program has been extremely valuable to us. One reason it's so effective is that we are a partner and talk to the program leaders all the time. When things aren't working right, we change them. It's a very fluid process that has been very responsive to our needs."

A second program funded by the Bay Area funding collaborative trains incumbent medical assistants for hard-to-fill radiology technician positions at the Santa Cruz Medical Foundation. Participants keep their salaries during the program and attend classes part-time and work part-time.

The program has helped the hospital develop trained technicians and is creating new career opportunities for workers, among them Erika Chong-Vargas. As a working mother of three, the Watsonville resident would have been hard-pressed to return to school to get training needed to advance beyond her position as a medical assistant. After completing the year-long training, she now works in the radiology department and her hourly pay climbed by 25 percent. "I am so thankful to have done this program," she says. "It's been a wonderful change for me and it's really motivated me to keep going in my career."