

TO: Chief Executive Officers
Chief Instructional Officers
Chief Business Officers
Career Technical Education Deans
Regional Consortia Chairs

FROM: Anthony Cordova, Vice Chancellor of Workforce and Economic Development

RE: AB-323 Strong Workforce Program: Work-based Learning Opportunities

This memorandum serves to announce the recent passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 323 which expands the Strong Workforce Program (SWP) to allow the use of program funds for paid work-based learning (WBL) opportunities that directly support students, employers, and/or both. The purpose of this guidance is to assist colleges and regional consortia in implementing AB 323 effectively and in compliance with statutory requirements.

Under AB 323, colleges may use SWP funds to provide direct financial support for paid WBL experiences, including apprenticeships, internships, externships, and student-run enterprises. These opportunities are intended to improve employability and employment outcomes for students enrolled in SWP. Colleges are encouraged to design programs that align with regional labor market needs and to prioritize equitable access for traditionally underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students.

Allowable uses of SWP funds include compensating students for participation in WBL, offsetting employer costs associated with hosting students in paid roles, and supporting program infrastructure necessary to facilitate WBL, such as coordination and compliance monitoring. All expenditures must comply with SWP fiscal guidelines and relevant Education Code provisions. Colleges must also ensure adherence to applicable labor laws, wage and hour regulations, and institutional risk management policies.

To implement these changes, colleges should engage employers and industry partners to identify high-demand sectors for WBL placements and develop agreements that clearly define roles, responsibilities, and wage arrangements. Local board policies and administrative procedures related to student employment, employer partnerships, and liability coverage should be reviewed and updated as needed. Colleges must also maintain detailed fiscal documentation of WBL expenditures and track student participation, demographic data, and employment outcomes.

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AB 323 represents a significant step forward in strengthening California's workforce development efforts by expanding SWP to include paid WBL opportunities. Paid work-based learning experiences funded through SWP will strengthen student employability while addressing regional workforce demands and fostering local industry growth. Successful implementation requires strategic planning, robust employer engagement, and clear adherence to fiscal and statutory requirements. Colleges are advised to prioritize equitable opportunity, maintain applicable documentation, and continuously evaluate outcomes to ensure these investments deliver meaningful benefits for students and employers alike. Effective implementation will ensure these opportunities yield in long-term success for students and communities.

Contacts

For questions regarding the allocations, please send an email to the Strong Workforce Program Helpdesk at StrongWorkforceHelpDesk@CCCCO.edu.

cc: Cheri Fortin, Dean of Workforce and Economic Development Division