

Chaffey College and consortium receive \$15 million grant for manufacturing training

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By [Neil Nisperos](#), Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

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[Chaffey College](#) and a consortium of nearby colleges have been awarded nearly \$15 million toward an advanced manufacturing training program to prepare thousands of workers for the types of jobs experts say are needed in the Inland Empire.

Chaffey and the Inland Empire Regional Training Consortium will use the money to create the STEM Education Business Incubator (SEPI) Center to focus on advanced manufacturing applications. The education center will be located at [California Steel Industries](#) in Fontana in a former administration building.

The new center will serve qualified residents in the areas of Rancho Cucamonga, Norco, Barstow, Palm Desert, San Jacinto, Victorville, San Bernardino, Yucaipa and Riverside.

“I think that because we have an industry partner actually offering us a facility, and because the manufacturer’s council of the Inland Empire is going to drive the curriculum and training of the center, I think it’s highly likely we will be able to train unemployed, underemployed and (already employed) incumbent workers in the skills necessary to meet industry demand,” said Kathy Dutton, director of employment development and community education at Chaffey.

Dutton said the training center will prepare about 3,000 students over the four-year course of the grant in the high-tech skills necessary for manufacturing and logistics work in the 21st century. Organizers, Dutton said, are also seeking additional funding from public and private sources to continue the program beyond four years. The Workforce Investment Boards of [Riverside](#) and [San Bernardino](#) counties will also help find participants.

“Some of the training, which is the beauty of this type of training, offer transferable skills, with some electrical and mechanical skills for manufacturing, will also work for the logistics industry with conveyor belts and the need for electrical technicians,” Dutton said.

John Husing, chief economist for the Inland Empire Economic Partnership business advocacy group, has been calling for more educational opportunities to bolster economic advancement for the region’s populace.

“The problem has been getting the educational establishment to work closely with the business sector to define programs according to industry standards, and who will train people for jobs,” Husing said. “The industries need the ability to get business and education at the table together.

It has not been easy. Now with Chaffey College and California Steel, you have business and education together in this particular case. We consider this grant a huge victory, particularly because it's been the only one awarded in California.”

Paul Granillo, CEO of the [Inland Empire Economic Partnership](#), said the trained workforce resulting from the grant will be of great benefit to the local economy.

“I think we need the best trained workforce for the Inland Empire that we can provide and I think this is going to allow us to focus on workforce training programs that will help us put people to work,” Granillo said. “We need to get to where we can align our workforce with jobs that would be in manufacturing, healthcare, goods movement and logistics.”

In the Inland Empire, 46.3 percent of adults 25 and over have a high school education or less, Husing said.

“Because that percentage is so high, that we have a population that has not gone beyond high school, or they didn’t get any increased technical training or college level reading or math, it puts them at a disadvantage when we have technology advancing,” Dutton said. “Requiring additional critical thinking skills are so important because we’re a global economy now, so education and training beyond high school is critical to the success of the individual and the regional economy.”

Brett Guge, executive vice president of finance and administration at California Steel Industries, said there has been a shortage of craft, technical, mechanical, and machinists for many years in the entire country.

“We think if we have a facility such as this and keep it busy and able to turn out a lot more of those trained and technically competent individuals, it will be very good not only for CSI, but other people in the community and others considering relocating to the Inland Empire,” Guge said.

The grant comes from the [Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training](#) competitive grant program, overseen by the Department of Labor and Department of Education.