



Workforce Boards - What You Need To Know

The following document gives workforce advocates and community organizations an overview of the workforce development system, with a primary focus on local workforce development boards ("local boards). We hope that this information will help workforce advocates and community organizations understand their local board's role in the workforce development system, know their rights and opportunities to engage with the local board, and help strengthen efforts to support the economic and social inclusion of immigrants and refugees in their communities.

What is workforce development and why is it important?

Workforce development refers to efforts that connect unemployed or underemployed persons with job opportunities, through career planning services, workplace education, and skills training. Workforce development also includes adult education programs and services that provide adults with skills needed to prepare for the workforce, such as English Language Learning (ELL) courses and vocational skills. Workforce development and adult education are distinct but related ways to advance workers' economic mobility: adult education is funded and implemented through school districts via the state Department of Education, whereas workforce development is implemented through local boards via California's Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA). This document focuses primarily on the workforce development system managed and implemented by local boards.

As the primary systems designated for addressing workforce training, education, and job placement, workforce development and adult education have the potential to have a broad impact on successful immigrant and refugee equity. Workforce development is important because it is the principle way that programs related to job access are funded and implemented. By design, local boards have significant discretion in determining how resources are allocated, which programs and services get funded, and how community members will ultimately be served.

What is my local workforce development board?

Every city or county has a local workforce development board. To find yours, go to https://cwdb.ca.gov/local_boards/local_workforce_investment_associations/. Local boards are responsible for serving two populations: workers and employers. First, they are responsible for ensuring individuals have the skills to qualify for existing job opportunities and second, they are responsible for ensuring employers have access to qualified candidates.

Local boards are primarily meant to be a strategic entity, in charge of strategic planning, convening stakeholders, and aligning systems to meet worker and employer needs. However,



they also exert control over the workforce development system because they manage the budget, select service providers, and set goals and priorities for programs and services.

What are local boards required to do?

Local boards have several responsibilities, which include:

- Analyze local labor market data to understand jobs and skills in demand, as well as local workforce needs
- Engage with employers to understand and develop strategies to meet their needs
- Work with education providers to align employment, training, education, and supportive services that are needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers to employment
- Negotiate with the Mayor and the Governor to determine local performance outcomes and accountability measures
- Work with the Mayor to ensure the appropriate use of funds to maximize performance outcomes
- Identify and select training and career service providers
- Convene stakeholders to develop a 4-year strategic plan that outlines how it will provide services and programs to meet the needs of workers and businesses
- Develop a budget to carry out the local plan

What about providing services?

Normally, local boards do not provide services themselves. Rather, they issue competitive grants or contract with organizations to provide services. Under certain circumstances, however, a local board can also be a service or training provider themselves, with approval from the local elected official and the Governor.

Are immigrants and refugees eligible for training and career services funded by the local workforce board?

It depends. Federal law requires that some workforce development services are only available to immigrants who have valid work authorization, while others are available to all workers, regardless of their immigration status. Basic services, such as initial career counseling, mentoring, and classroom training do not require work authorization, although sometimes staff may ask for it due to lack of training or confusion about the law. The State Employment Development Department (EDD) is currently in the process of issuing guidance to local boards to clarify the rules.

Adult education services, which are provided by local adult schools, community colleges, and CBOs, do not require work authorization and are open to everyone, regardless of immigration status. These services are funded through school districts via the state Department of Education, but local boards are responsible for reviewing funding applications from adult



education providers and making recommendations about how to align adult education services with their own goals and objectives.

How are local boards structured?

All local boards are required to have:

- Over 50% business and employer representation
- 20% representation of the local workforce, including at least one member representing labor organizations.
- At least one member representing higher education institutions
- At least one member representing the local adult education system
- At least one member representing economic development

Local boards are also able to (but not required to) have representatives of community based organizations with experience addressing needs of individuals with barriers to employment, representatives of philanthropic organizations, or other members that the Mayor approves.

How are board members selected?

Board members are appointed by their local elected officials, such as the Mayor or Board of Supervisors. However, local board members are able to recruit and recommend candidates for membership. Local boards may also hire a director and other staff to help carry-out the boards' functions. Aside from the director and staff, board membership is voluntary - it is not a professional or paid position.

Where do local boards receive their funding?

Local boards receive funding from the State, through California's Labor and Workforce Development Agency (CLWDA), which is administered by the state Employment Development Department (EDD). The State receives funding from the federal government, through the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

- 15% of the WIOA funds that California receives is discretionary, and can be used to expand access to employment, training, education, and support services for adults and youth facing barriers to employment. In 2017-2018, \$59 million were discretionary.

In addition to the base funding that the local board receives, local boards are also able to apply for competitive grants through the State discretionary funds, as well as other grants and donations from other sources (e.g. grants through the City or from philanthropy).

When are local board meetings held?

Local boards generally meet quarterly, although can meet more or less frequently. The meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes are supposed to be posted on their website.



Is the public able to participate in meetings?

Yes! Anyone is able to attend meetings of the local board. Local boards are subject to the open meeting requirements of the Ralph M. Brown Act. The intent of the law is to ensure that meetings are properly noticed, agendas are made available and that the public has an opportunity to provide comment on local policy and operations.

Section 54954.3 of the Brown Act states, "Every agenda for regular meetings shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to directly address the legislative body on any item of interest to the public, before or during the legislative body's consideration of the item." That means that the public has a right to provide comment on items that are being considered by the board. Time must also be set aside for the public to comment on any other matters under the local board's jurisdiction.

Federal WIOA requirements also include a "Sunshine Provision" (WIOA 679.390) that requires local boards to conduct business in an open manner and make information publicly available and accessible, including on-line. That includes:

- Information about the local plan or modifications to the plan
- A list and affiliation of local board members
- A list of One-Stop operators
- Awards of grants or contracts for training providers and workforce investment activities
- Minutes from board meetings
- Bylaws

What can I do now to advocate with my local board, to make sure that the needs of immigrants and other low-income communities of color are being addressed?

Great question! You have rights and opportunities to influence your local board's policies and priorities:

1. **Attend meetings.** Local board meetings are supposed to be open and accessible to the public as specified under the Brown Act. Attend meetings to learn more about how your workforce development system operates, and give public comment about issues that are important to you.
2. **Give your input.** Local boards are required to engage with community stakeholders to get input on its local plan, which is supposed to include strategies for serving immigrants and other populations with barriers to employment. Local boards are required to engage their communities to gather input on their plans, and have a 30 day public comment period before submitting their plan to the Governor. Local plans are due to the State Board by March 15th.
 - a. Local plans are due every four years, and the last plan was developed for 2017-2020. However, after two years (in this case, 2019), the local board must review the plan and make any necessary modifications.



3. **Inform the State.** The State EDD occasionally issues guidance to local boards about issues such as the local planning process, work authorization requirements, etc. These directives are also open for public comment, so you can give input into how the EDD should be directing the local boards to operate.
4. **Educate others.** Document what is working and what is not working in your community with respect to workforce, so that your elected officials, members of your local board, and others can understand the issues that they may not see on a day to day basis.
5. **Get on the board or a committee.** While local boards are not required to have CBO representation, they are certainly allowed to do so. Additionally, some local boards have other committees or task forces that advise on workforce strategies and priorities, which can include community stakeholders in addition to board members.

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