



Workforce Development Department Administration Division

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Director

Overview

The Workforce Development COVID-19 Assistance program was developed to assist residents impacted by COVID by providing resources to assist in economic recovery.

Challenge

San Bernardino County was experiencing one of the lowest unemployment rates in our history in February at 3.8%. When the pandemic hit, the unemployment rate skyrocketed more than 10% in just three short months to 14.1% in May. Even residents who didn't lose their jobs often had hours reduced or were asked to telecommute for the first time. This created a need unlike other recessions because it came on so quickly and every industry sector was impacted in some way.

Solution

The Workforce Development Department (WDD) quickly sprang into action and wrote several grant applications to gain funding to better serve San Bernardino County residents to aid in the economic recovery. Through the COVID-19 Dislocated Worker supportive services grant, WDD was able to fund expenses that they had never been able to before including housing costs including rent and mortgage assistance, utilities, vehicle repairs or childcare. Additionally, for those residents who suddenly found themselves working from home for the first time, WDD was able to purchase equipment needed to telecommute such as computers or printers.

WDD also secured an Employment recovery grant that is being utilized to provide retraining for employees laid off who need an upgrade in skills and for employers through On-The-Job Training funds that allow them to be reimbursed for a portion of employee wages for the first 90 days as they are learning new skills. Residents coming in to obtain supportive services were given information about this program to offer support for them as they started searching for a new job.

The Workforce Development COVID Assistance Program was communicated to residents by leveraging existing sources of info used by residents. The program was promoted using existing county social media platforms. WDD partnered with the County Administrative Office and the Board of Supervisors to create a video to highlight the services that could be shown before Board of Supervisor meetings and be shared by the Board of Supervisors to their social media pages, which were a main source of COVID information for residents.

WDD staff also started calling customers and employers to let them know these programs were available. WDD staff worked with co-located Employment Development Department staff to try to reach the

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thousands of residents applying for unemployment insurance, many who were going through that process for the first time. America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs) stayed open by appointment to be able to serve residents when they needed help the most. The AJCCs will now be known as a job resource that residents will need as the economy begins to open. We are also hosting weekly live Rapid Response webinars for residents who are more comfortable not coming into the AJCC with multiple expert speakers explaining and answering question on programs such as EDD Unemployment Benefits, Affordable Care Act, Financial Assistance and CalFresh, as well as financial budgeting help and an overview of other services offered through the AJCCs.

Innovation

COVID-19 caused a great need to find a new way to share information with residents. Unfortunately, there are many County programs that people do not know about so they do not access them when they need them. By providing new resources to residents who are unemployed through the AJCCs, residents also learned about the job centers that provide resources at no charge. This was a great way to leverage existing infrastructure to provide a new service to the target population for the job centers.

Results

To date, more than 300 residents have been served through the program, well on the way to surpassing the initial goal of 500 residents receiving much needed supportive services. Results will continue to be seen during the economic recovery as we contact those residents who received supportive services to assist in their job search or training needs as the economy begins to reopen.

Replicability

This program could be replicated by other counties who may have received similar grant funding by leveraging their existing social media accounts to share this information to help inform residents. By utilizing existing job center locations, residents learn about resources that will be helpful even once the pandemic is over.

Project or Program Contact

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Optional Submission

To view the video used to promote the services to the residents, please use the following link:
<https://youtu.be/vQnNdPppX2w>