Overview

In 2017, San Luis Obispo County Office of Education was awarded 1.5 million dollars in grants by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office to develop new and innovative pre-apprentice and apprenticeship programs in the tech industry for a minimum of 50 apprentices over two years. SLO Partners is a regional consortium of business, industry, education, and community leaders committed to working together for collective impact in workforce and economic development by aligning education systems and programs with economic opportunities.

Regional Challenge

In 7 years, the major private employer that contributes nearly a billion dollars to the county’s economy, the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, will be closing. We must start today to create a more skilled workforce to enable economic growth in higher paying jobs in San Luis Obispo County. Based on data from the EVC Economic Dashboard, the Diablo closure will negatively impact the Energy cluster which has the highest annual average wages. The ripple effect on all clusters and the regional economy as a whole will suffer from this loss. While unemployment rates average under 4%, underemployment can be seen throughout all other industry clusters as evidenced by the range in annual wages and number of employees. For example the Uniquely SLO Cluster, which includes agriculture and tourism, has the largest number of employees and the lowest average annual wage.

Our regional challenges are:

How we will grow our economy and wages to match the high cost of living in SLO?

How we will grow our own skilled workforce to encourage growth and meet the demand of local business and industry?

One identified strategy to address this regional challenge is to upskill and train the workforce for head of household jobs in technology related fields.

Stewardship Approach to Engagement

The SLO Partners consortium convened stakeholders to explore apprenticeship as a strategy for workforce and economic development to align education programs with economic opportunities. The SLO Partners consortium provides a regional forum for stakeholders to educate and collaborate on opportunities of policy, finance, and other supportive resources aimed to assist businesses and education in their goal to find sustainable solutions to the county’s workforce needs. As an advocate, SLO Partners carries the message that a skilled workforce is a critical need of the business community and supports policy and development that meets those needs, locally and on a state and federal level. As an implementer, SLO Partners supports carrying out initiatives that develop talent pipelines and upskill workers for head of household careers.

Driven by business, industry, education, and community leaders the following organizations have partnered to look for solutions to skilled workforce challenges:
Partners & Key Collaborations

- **SLO County Office of Education**
  Dr. James Brescia, San Luis Obispo County Superintendent of Schools, envisions this as a countywide collaborative, “Engaging both business and education in developing pathways to opportunity and a skilled local talent pipeline is a top priority for the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education, Cuesta College and all of our school districts.”

- **CA State Assembly Member Jordan Cunningham**
  Assembly Member Jordan Cunningham fully supports apprenticeships, “Apprenticeship opens doors for employment and builds a bridge between education and the workforce.”

- **US State Senator Salud Carbajal**

- **SLO Workforce Development Board** - braided funding and referrals through WIOA

- **California Department of Rehabilitation** - braided funding and referrals through WIOA

- **Cuesta Community College District** - referrals and alignment with course work and advanced transfer degrees

- **All SLO County Public High School Districts**, referrals and alignment with course work and advanced transfer degrees

- **Central Valley Region Consultant for the Division of Apprenticeship Standards** - approval of new CA registered Apprenticeship Program for SLO and surrounding counties

- **Cal Poly Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship** - facilities and business referrals

- **SLO Chamber of Commerce** - community and business outreach

- **SLO County Economic Vitality Corp** - community and business outreach

- **Softec** - Central Coast’s premier software and technology association - community and business outreach

- **CompTIA, CompTIA Foundation, and IT Futures**
  “The tech industry needs more workers that are versed in both hard tech skills and softer employability skills like communication and conflict resolution. Our IT-Ready program provides just that,” said Charles Eaton, CEO, Creating IT Futures. “We’ve brought our IT-Ready program to 10 other cities in the U.S., all with long-lasting success for both our graduates and their employers. We’re excited to enlarge the program in San Luis Obispo and create a new group of skilled tech workers for local area businesses.”

- **Over 21 Businesses** have signed on to accept at least 1 of 30 apprentices, with some desiring more. We are continuing business engagement as we have identified over 150 potential employers who need skills identified in the SLO Partners Apprenticeship Standards.

Russ Levanway, CEO of San Luis Obispo-based managed IT services provider TekTegrity, says “The IT-Ready model is very well thought out. The intense eight-week training, combined with taking and passing relevant CompTIA certification tests, will provide students with strong baseline knowledge. This will set the students up for success as apprentices mentored by journeymen in the companies they work for during the on-the-job training phase. This program will bring quality people who need new opportunities into the IT workforce.”

**Solution**

The purpose of the SLO Partners apprenticeship program is to create a career path and not just a job. We pay you to give tech a try and we screen for attitude and then train you for the aptitude. SLO Partners worked with local business, industry, education, and community leaders to develop and implement pre-apprentice and apprenticeship programs in high need areas outside of traditional trades: Computer Support Specialist—Help Desk/Networking, Computer Support Specialist—Cyber Security, and Software Testing.
Key Strategies

- Targeted professional marketing to attract a diverse talent pool that were willing to give tech a try and could be screened for attitude and trained for aptitude.
- Targeted marketing channels included targeted Facebook ads, job boards, TV & Newspaper interviews, One-off email blasts from local industry groups, flyers at local hotspots and gathering places in county. Direct linked newspaper coverage from SLO Tribune’s Facebook feed made story and outreach go viral - over 950 applicants for 50 spots allowed us to screen for attitude, and also confirmed public’s desire for path from underemployment to head of household career.
- Used LinkedIn analysis to find all the local companies hiring the type of skills identified in apprenticeship training. SLO Partners Business Liaison uses credibility as Entrepreneur in Residence from Cal Poly’s New Business Incubator title to get face to face meetings with the CTO, Director level people for 1:1 conversation. NO SURVEYS! Just dialog on what the leaders WISHED they could find in the local job market - pain points.

Results

Milestones reached for SLO Partners apprenticeship grants:

- As of September 2017, forty-five people graduated from the pre-apprentice program and earned A+ Certification. 17 will go onto IT Apprenticeship. 15 will go onto Software Testing Apprenticeship, and 13 will be employed as IT help desk, PC repair and customer service. Our primary focus is students with a great attitude and openness to learn tech skills. We don’t require existing tech skills. Targeted students range from recent high school graduates, Community College students, Cal Poly graduates wanting to stay in SLO but needing a different career path to land a job here to mom’s wanting to re-enter the workforce to veterans. Because we screened for attitude and trained for aptitude the first cohort of apprentices had a higher representation of diversity in age, gender, and ethnicity than normally found in the IT industry and higher education programs.
- 45 students will graduate from the Pre-apprentice training on 9/1. 17 will go onto IT Apprenticeship. 15 will go onto Software Testing Apprenticeship, and 15 will be employed as IT help desk, PC repair and customer service.
- Apprentice Standards signed and Approved on 8/25 - SLO and surrounding counties now have a New CA Registered Apprenticeship Program
- 21 Businesses have signed on to accept at least 1 of 32 apprentices, with some desiring more. All apprentices will be placed in one year of on the job training. We are continuing business engagement as we have identified over 150 potential employers who need skills identified in the SLO Partners Apprenticeship Standards.

Role of Stewards

SLO Partners consortium takes inclusive action to mobilize its stakeholders, programs, and initiatives related to workforce and economic development in the region. Apprenticeship and On the Job Training (OJT) brings partners together to focus on a robust local workforce, and the employment opportunities available to it, with the skills needed for today and for tomorrow. OJT is part of an integrated workforce development system to ensure the County’s economic vitality and quality of life. Employers are valued as the pivotal link in the workforce development system; training and job readiness programs meet their ever-changing needs.
YOUR TICKET INTO TECH
FREE ONE-YEAR TECH APPRENTICESHIPS WITH TOP-NOTCH LOCAL EMPLOYERS

APPLY TODAY AT SLOPARTNERS.ORG

Pre-Apprenticeship
July 10th - Sept 1st (8 weeks)
CompTIA A+ Bootcamp
“Screen for attitude, training for aptitude”
25 people at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Center
20 people at Cuesta North County Campus
Summer 2017
Free class with a $70/day training stipend from grant
Class limited to 50 people total

Start of Apprenticeship
Sept 11th - Oct 20th (6 weeks of classes)
IT Path
CompTIA Network+, Security + Certificates
Software Testing Path
Foundation Software Test Certificate
Agile Mobile App Test Certificate
Early Fall 2017
Free class with a $70/day training stipend from grant
15 for IT Path, 15 for Software Testing Path
Select 30 people total for apprenticeship
16 for IT Path, 15 for Software Testing Path

1 Year On-The-Job Training
Oct 22nd 2017 - Nov 2018 (12 months)
Mid Fall 2017 to Mid Fall 2018
$15/hr start, $18/hr after 6 months, $22/hr at the end of 1 year