



PREBYS
FOUNDATION

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\$6M in Local Grants Awarded to Address Youth Unemployment Crisis

New initiatives step up as federal funding cuts leave youth employment programs in limbo

SAN DIEGO, CA – Seventeen local organizations are banding together to build a brighter future for the next generation of San Diego’s workforce, as youth continue to face soaring unemployment rates. Federal funding cuts have put workforce development programs like JobCorps in jeopardy, leaving young people with significant barriers to employment without critical support. The national unemployment rate for new college graduates has [risen to the highest level in a decade](#) at 6.6%, while California ranks [among the top five states](#) for teen unemployment at 21.2%.

Through Prebys Foundation’s Youth Workforce: Career Pathways initiative, 17 San Diego non-profits are receiving grants totaling \$6M over the course of two years for programs that provide paid internships, apprenticeships, and boost earning potential. The initiative creates career paths for San Diego County youth ages 18-26, with an emphasis on youth facing significant barriers to employment.

“San Diego’s young people bring energy, innovation, and resilience to our community,” said Grant Oliphant, CEO of Prebys Foundation. “Yet youth unemployment remains persistently high, leaving many young adults without access to meaningful job opportunities and financial stability. The ‘Youth Workforce’ initiative invests in pathways to steady, livable wages, empowering young adults to build wealth, contribute their talents, and thrive right here in San Diego County.”

The funded programs provide education, training, and support to help youth achieve professional and financial success, within in-demand industries like healthcare, medical research, environmental sciences, the creative economy and skilled trades.

The David’s Harp Foundation provides youth impacted by incarceration, foster care, homelessness, and economic hardships with paid creative training, mentorship, and a structured pathway into San Diego’s growing creative economy.

“For young people who have faced significant challenges, securing stable employment is often an uphill battle due to a lack of training, limited opportunities, and the stigma they encounter,” said Brandon Steppe, Founder and Executive Director of The David’s Harp Foundation. “With targeted job training, comprehensive support, and real pathways into creative industries, we’re



helping young people stay out of the justice system and empowering them to build a future rooted in creativity, lived experience, and purpose.”

Kyle, a participant in The David’s Harp Foundation’s BizPod program, just launched Braveheart Attire, the first youth business launched from inside a juvenile facility. With guidance from artist mentors, Kyle built a business and a brand, and learned marketing strategies, order fulfillment systems, and how to manage an e-commerce platform. Kyle’s story is one example of how access to meaningful skill-building, mentorship, and opportunity can create a more equitable path forward for youth with barriers to traditional career pathways.

“I’m working on building a better future today so that when I get out, I’ll be prepared,” Kyle says. “Building Braveheart Attire gave me purpose. Being brave means owning your story, including the hard parts, and using it to do good. I want this business to help others like me.”

The organizations were selected for their innovative approaches to supporting youth and their dedication to fostering sustainable career paths. Each program emphasizes the crucial role of wraparound services, providing not just financial support but also essential resources and stability to enable young individuals to achieve their full potential, contributing to a more prosperous and equitable community.

The awarded organizations include:

Organization Name	Total
Balboa Art Conservation Center	\$450,000
Boz Life Science Research and Teaching Institute, The EcoLogik Institute, and UC San Diego, Division of Extended Studies	\$350,000
Children’s Initiative	\$350,000
Computers 2 Kids	\$400,000
GRID Alternatives San Diego	\$400,000
International Rescue Committee Inc.	\$400,000
Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee on Anti-Poverty of San Diego County, Inc. (MAAC)	\$300,000
National Foundation for Autism Research (NFAR)	\$300,000
National Marine Mammal Foundation (NMMF)	\$450,000
Open Biopharma Research and Training Institute	\$430,000



Partnership for a Better San Diego	\$170,000
Library Foundation SD	\$450,000
The David's Harp Foundation, Inc.	\$400,000
Urban Street Angels	100,000
Vehicles for Change-San Diego	\$400,000
Workshops For Warriors Inc	\$300,000
Youth Empowerment's Finest Inc.	\$350,000

About Prebys Foundation:

Prebys Foundation is the largest independent private foundation in San Diego County, a unique tri-national area encompassing communities from San Diego, Tijuana, and the Kumeyaay Nation. The foundation works to create an inclusive, equitable, and dynamic future for all San Diegans. Prebys advances excellence and shared opportunity through investments in groundbreaking institutions, ideas, and people to ensure more people in the region are financially secure, healthy, empowered, and connected. For more information about the Prebys Foundation, visit prebysfdn.org.

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