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County putting government money toward youth jobs

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About 1,600 young residents of San Bernardino County, ages 14 to 24, will have paid jobs this summer through an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act program that launches today.

The money is part of \$15 million accepted Tuesday by the county Board of Supervisors, of which \$7 million will be used for youth employment and training and the balance used for adult training, all to be administered by the county Workforce Investment Board.

A total of \$6.3 million of the \$7 million will be used exclusively for wages and the rest will be paid to the service providers listed above for administrative purposes, said Sandy Harmsen, executive director of the Workforce Investment Board. Most of the employment will be May to September. All of the money must be spent by September and the workers must be free to return to school, although there may be some exceptions.

The service providers will assign the job seekers to roughly 500 employers throughout the county engaged in government, community-based organizations and private business, Harmsen said.

Private businesses that have expressed interest in the program include retailers and restaurants, as sales clerks or food servers.

The goal of the program is "creating opportunities for youth job skills training," according to a Workforce Investment Board news release.

Potential workers will be assessed for skills and interests, receive readiness training in soft skills.

"This age is a critical time for youth to learn basic job skills such as proper dress and etiquette, showing up on time, providing customer service and other job skills," the news release said.

Pay for the jobs will be at least minimum wage but it could be more if the standard in the industry is greater.

"With unemployment at its highest level in decades, these expanded programs will help us lay the foundation for a sustained recovery by getting young people started in the work force," First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt, whose High Desert district has been especially hard hit by the economic downturn, says in a statement.

"This will help our local businesses by providing workers and reducing their

costs, and will stimulate the local economy by putting money in the pockets of these young workers," the supervisor added.

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Providing jobs

The Workforce Investment Board's Youth Service providers:

- Apple Valley Unified School District - areas served include Apple Valley, Hesperia, Victorville, Adelanto
- Career Institute - areas served include Rancho Cucamonga, Ontario, Chino, Alta Loma, Barstow, Victorville, Adelanto, Apple Valley, Big Bear and Crestline Communities
- Chino Valley Unified School District - serving Chino, Chino Hills and Ontario
- CRYROP (Colton-Rialto-Yucaipa Regional Occupational Program) - serving Bloomington, Colton, East Highland, Fontana, Grand Terrace, Loma Linda, Redlands, Yucaipa, Mentone and East Valley

- Goodwill Industries - serving High Desert, East Valley and West Valley

- Hesperia Unified School District - Hesperia, Apple Valley, Victorville

- Mountain Communities Boys & Girls Club - serving Crestline, Lake Arrowhead, Running Springs and unincorporated areas of mountain communities

- NCNW - serving Rialto, Fontana, Colton and Bloomington

- PAL Center - serving Muscoy, Rialto, Bloomington, Colton, Highland, Fontana, East/Central Valley unincorporated

- Morongo Unified School District - serving Morongo Basin areas

- Needles - serving Needles

- Lucerne Valley Career Academy - serving Lucerne Valley, Adelanto, Victorville, Hesperia, Apple Valley and Barstow.

Youth can apply for the program by calling (800)451-JOBS or (800)451-5627 or by directly contacting one of the youth providers listed above.