

SFGate.com

Print This Article

Back

[to Article](#)

SFGate.com

State, feds offer more help for the jobless

Kathleen Pender

Thursday, April 9, 2009



Good news for the jobless: Gov. Arnold

Schwarzenegger has signed a bill that will provide up to 20 additional weeks of federal unemployment benefits through the end of this year, bringing the maximum in California to 79 weeks.

And the federal government will nearly double the money it provides to states for worker training this fiscal year. The money can be used to pay for individual or group training and to create summer jobs for people ages 14 to 24.

Here's a closer look at the two programs:

Worker training: Under the Workforce Investment Act, states get federal money each year to retrain dislocated workers with obsolete skills in declining industries. Some of the money can help youth and people re-entering the workforce.

The federal stimulus act provides a second shot of training money. Starting this week, California will get \$415 million, on top of its \$427 million in regular funding.

The California Employment Development Department distributes this money to 49 Workforce Investment Boards, which in turn distribute it through about 250 One-Stop Career Centers. Each board can decide, within limits, how to use the money.

Each board works with employers, community colleges, adult schools and others to design programs for the local workforce. They can pay for tuition, on-the-job training or apprenticeship programs for individuals or groups.

When Mervyns closed, "We decided their employees needed computer skills, so we did customized training," says Dorothy Chen, director of the Alameda County Workforce Investment Board.

When Kaiser Permanente went paperless, the board helped retrain its file clerks to become customer service representatives. Kaiser paid their salaries and provided classrooms while the

board paid for instructors and materials, Chen says.

Some dislocated or laid-off workers can get an individual training account to pay tuition or fees at an approved college or other institution. They usually must prove that their skills are obsolete and that the training will lead to a new job.

Chen's board has paid for people to get trained in solar installation, biotech manufacturing and a wide range of health care jobs. "We have even sent people to culinary school," she says.

Most boards limit individual training accounts to several thousand dollars per person. In San Francisco, the limit is \$5,000 to \$6,000. Most local boards run out of money for individual accounts before the fiscal year ends.

Boards can use their stimulus funds for a wide range of services including individual accounts. Some of the new funds are earmarked for sending rapid-response teams to employers doing mass layoffs. The stimulus money must be spent within three years, but most boards plan to disburse it as quickly as possible.

A large chunk of the money - 40 percent statewide - is allocated to youth services, including summer jobs for 14- to 24-year-olds.

Because federal funding for summer jobs has dried up over the past eight years, many boards are scrambling to expand or create programs before June.

The Contra Costa County board is working with public- and private-sector employers to create about 1,000 summer jobs. "We are targeting low-income youth," says Robert Lanter, the board's executive director. The stimulus money will pay their wages - \$8.25 to \$10 per hour. "We are going to try to place 40 kids at John Muir Hospital," Lanter says.

The Alameda board plans to create 600 jobs paying \$8 per hour.

In San Francisco, stimulus money will be used to expand the Mayor's Youth Employment and Education Program, says Rhonda Simmons, who manages the board.

To learn more about training programs or summer jobs, visit a One-Stop Career Center. To find one, go to www.servicelocator.org and enter your ZIP code. You do not have to use the nearest one.

Fed Ed: At the end of March, Schwarzenegger signed ABX3 23, which will provide up to 20 additional weeks of unemployment benefits in California, bringing the maximum to 79 weeks. This third round of federal extended benefits is known as Fed Ed. To qualify, you must exhaust your second round of federal extended benefits on or after Feb. 22.

Benefits can be paid retroactive to Feb. 22. But no Fed Ed will be paid after Dec. 31, unless

Congress re-ups them.

To get Fed Ed, you must meet additional requirements. You must document your job search for each week you receive the assistance and be willing to accept low-paid work in certain circumstances.

For more information, go to links.sfgate.com/ZGRM.

More training money

The federal government will send California an extra \$415 million in job-training money this year. About \$388 million has been allocated to the state's 49 Workforce Investment Boards. Here's what's coming to the Bay Area.

Workforce area	New funds*
Alameda County	\$7.1
Contra Costa County	6.7
Marin County	1.5
Napa	0.8
Oakland	6.3
Richmond	1.7
San Francisco	6.6
San Jose/Silicon Valley	11.9
San Mateo County	4.4
Solano County	4.1
Sonoma County	3.8


*In millions

Source: California Employment Development Department

Net Worth runs Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. E-mail Kathleen Pender at kpender@sfchronicle.com.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/04/09/BUOL16V7OU.DTL>

This article appeared on page **C - 1** of the San Francisco Chronicle

San Francisco Chronicle Sections 

[© 2009 Hearst Communications Inc.](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Feedback](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Site Index](#) | [Contact](#)