

KERNTAX MAKING A DIFFERENCE: KERN COUNTY WORKFORCE TASK FORCE

THE SITUATION

The Outlets at Tejon faced the challenge of hiring and training 2,000 new retail employees only a few months prior to its grand opening. Several job training agencies met with The Outlets at Tejon Ranch to address the need. The agencies utilized the same 40-hour retail sales training program. Over the next few months, 800 trainees completed the program and were hired and ready to work when the Outlets opened.

KERNTAX'S RESPONSE

This situation highlighted the broader question regarding the overall quality of Kern County's workforce. KernTax hosted a working dinner attended by 34 employers and government leaders, including three supervisors and four Bakersfield City Council members. KernTax, with Chair Leticia Perez, and Vice Mayor Ken Weir, who agreed to co-chair the effort to improve Kern County's Workforce, held meetings to identify interested parties, which included Bakersfield Association of Realtors; Bakersfield College; the City of Bakersfield; County of Kern; California State University, Bakersfield; Kern Economic Development Corporation; Kern High School District; Kern County Superintendent of Schools; Taft College and KernTax. After the initial meeting, a sub-group has traveled to other cities and counties in order to learn more about workforce development.



THE RESULTS

In October 2014, just months after the initial meeting regarding the Kern County workforce, the Workforce Task Force held the first Kern County Workforce Summit to bring together businesses, educators, non-profits, and government to discuss strategies to better align workforce training and education programs with the ever-changing needs of business. The initial Workforce Summit resulted in the completion of a Workforce Regional Economic Sector and Skills Gap Study that identified high growth industries and occupations and provided an overview of the skills and abilities of the local labor market. Results of the study were presented at the October 19, 2016 Workforce Summit. The Workforce Regional Economic Sector and Skills Gap Study was used as the basis for a four-year local plan to address workforce development needs in Kern, Inyo, and Mono counties. The plan has four overarching goals to improve the local workforce:

- **Improve access to education and training opportunities for all residents**
- **Foster partnerships with non-traditional partners to leverage resources and expand workforce services**
- **Support the development of career pathways to prepare workers for in demand occupations in high growth industries**
- **Use existing training and/or develop customized training if necessary to meet the demands of business.**