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## **San Diego Mayor Announces Citywide Effort to Bring Innovation & Tech Jobs to Underserved Communities**

*FAULCONER'S OPPORTUNITYWORKS TASKFORCE OUTLINES EIGHT  
RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE SD WORKFORCE*

SAN DIEGO – San Diego Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer today introduced a workforce development plan from a taskforce comprised of the city's brightest minds in innovation, technology, education and business. The recommendations developed by Mayor Faulconer's *OpportunityWORKS* taskforce will help close the skills gap, improve access to affordable education and connect residents to opportunities in the city's growing innovation economy and broader job market.

**Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer said**, "There is a growing chasm between good paying, middle-class job openings and workers with the skills to fill them. Today, we are taking action to help our residents gain the education they need to begin a successful career and bring economic opportunity to our underserved communities. I will not only work to implement these recommendations, but I want them to serve as a nationwide catalyst for breaking barriers for minority and low-income by providing new opportunities to become the engineers, healthcare providers and scientists of tomorrow."

**San Diego Community College District Chancellor Constance Carroll, Ph.D. said**, "As the largest workforce trainer in San Diego County, the San Diego Community College District works with many partners in industry to ensure that our students are given state-of-the-art job preparation. Since the majority of jobs, especially in new fields, require some level of college education, usually a year or two, the San Diego community colleges have seen significant growth in our career-technical courses and programs. The Mayor's proposal to include local government in this equation is most welcome and will ensure the

effective coordination of all participants in workforce training. We are eager to support this effort.”

**UC San Diego Associate Vice Chancellor of Public Programs Mary Walshok, Ph.D. said,** “San Diego is uniquely positioned to respond to employers’ ever-changing needs for specialized skills in the workplace because of the synergies and complementarities between its community colleges and research university Extension programs.”

**San Diego Regional EDC President and CEO Mark Cafferty said,** “I could not be prouder to live and work in a region where the business community and elected officials are proactively creating opportunities and putting people to work. Economic development begins and ends with workforce development – and in this instance, this saying is especially true. This is how we create a better future for San Diego.”

Like many cities across America, San Diego has a job-skills gap problem. There are many opportunities for high-skilled, high-wage jobs in San Diego, but employers have difficulty in identifying qualified high-skilled local workers. According to research conducted by the San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) and San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation (San Diego Regional EDC) since 2004, attainment of high school and higher education diplomas in San Diego has remained flat, but today’s employers expect more education and technical expertise of their employees.

Last year, Mayor Faulconer brought together a group of San Diego’s top civic, business and education leaders—the OpportunityWORKS taskforce—to identify solutions to close this skills gap, increase opportunities for children in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields and connect residents to successful careers that command a higher wage. The committee was led by San Diego Regional EDC President and CEO Mark Cafferty, San Diego Community College District Chancellor Constance Carroll, Ph.D., and UC San Diego Associate Vice Chancellor of Public Programs Mary Walshok, Ph.D. The committee’s membership also included several of the city’s preeminent civic organizations and businesses including the San Diego Unified School District, San Diego State University, San Diego Workforce Partnership, San Diego Gas and Electric, Qualcomm Incorporated, Northrop Grumman, SHARP Healthcare, the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood innovation, United Way of San Diego County and more.

Mayor Faulconer’s OpportunityWORKS taskforce met monthly throughout the city at different locations to gather input from the community, hear presentations from various community partners and stakeholders, debated the merits of existing local programs and best practices from other regions and developed the following eight recommendations:

1. Create a region-wide effort that focuses public and private workforce dollars on five high-wage, high-demand and high-growth priority sectors including Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Tech/Energy, Healthcare, Information Technology (IT) and Life Sciences/Biotech.

2. Develop a local strategy for allocating the region's workforce resources to ensure funding priorities align with the region's employment needs and priority sectors.
3. Work with major companies to increase the exposure to STEM education and careers, by replicating and scaling five regional labs inspired by the *Qualcomm® Thinkabit Lab™*
4. Create tailored "bridge programs" for graduating high school seniors in each of the five priority sectors with San Diego Unified School District and the local San Diego Community Colleges.
5. Create economic incentives for priority sector businesses to open and expand in low-to-moderate income neighborhoods like City Heights and Southeastern San Diego.
6. Create a "Workforce Cabinet" to bring together preeminent leaders in education, business, philanthropy and workforce development to advise the mayor on building a stronger San Diego workforce.
7. Enlist businesses in creating meaningful partnerships with schools, community colleges and the Workforce Partnership around summer jobs, internships and work-based learning activities.
8. Set a summer jobs or youth employment goal.

Mayor Faulconer has already begun implementing some of the recommendations, such as replicating labs inspired by the Qualcomm Thinkabit Lab, part engineering studio and part art studio, to provide middle school students from all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds with access to hands-on STEM learning. Qualcomm found that introducing a child to just one day of interactive STEM experiences coupled with exposure to the world of work can positively impact their interest and desire to pursue STEM careers. Many students enter the lab not knowing what an engineer does; they often leave reporting increase level of persistence in school work and requesting more engineering classes. Under the OpportunityWORKS recommendations, Qualcomm, San Diego's largest public company, will open up the lab so other San Diego employers can replicate it.

**San Diego Unified School District Superintendent Cindy Marten said,** "We know the jobs of tomorrow are being created today by San Diego's innovation economy. Our challenge, as a school system, is to prepare our students for the workforce they will enter upon graduation. STEM education and early interventions are critical components of this work. We are so fortunate to have great partners in this effort, including the City of San

Diego, Mayor Kevin Faulconer, Chancellor Constance Carroll, Qualcomm, SeaWorld and Raytheon.”

**Qualcomm Thinkabit Lab leader, Ed Hidalgo said,** “Innovating and creating ecosystems is something that Qualcomm has done for more than 30 years in the mobile industry, and we are very proud that now we are inspiring an ecosystem of makerspaces where students can explore STEM-related projects, and gain exposure to jobs they never knew existed. It is a great honor to be considered a model to advance Mayor Faulconer’s mission.

Another recommendation recently implemented by Mayor Faulconer, the [One San Diego 100](#), a campaign to encourage one hundred local businesses to offer paid jobs and internships to local high school and college students with a focus on low-income neighborhoods. In partnership with CONNECT2Careers, a summer employment program that addresses San Diego’s ongoing skills gap, One San Diego 100 will work with employers to fill job and internship openings with pre-screened candidates.

For more information on Mayor Faulconer’s OpportunityWORKS taskforce and their recommendations, please see full report at [www.OneSanDiego100.com](http://www.OneSanDiego100.com)

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