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Economic report to aid San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board



Christine Chmura, chief economist and president of Chmura Economics & Analytics, gives a presentation on the Inland Empire economy at the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board office in San Bernardino on Wednesday. Photo by Neil Nisperos

By [Neil Nisperos](#), *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*

The San Bernardino County agency responsible for helping the unemployed get training and find work has received key data indicating where it should focus its efforts.

An [economic analysis](#) of the Inland Empire was presented at the [San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board](#) on Wednesday in San Bernardino by Christine Chmura, president and chief economist for the Richmond, Va.-based Chmura Economics & Analytics.

Chmura indicated that the most in-demand job sectors in the region are health care, transportation, warehousing and construction. These job sectors are expected to create most of the new jobs in the area over the next three years.

“Some of the big areas of growth is in health care,” Chmura said. “Health care continued to grow throughout the recession we were in a couple of years ago, and we expect that to continue. Some other key jobs would be in (Information Technology). The manufacturing sector is starting to grow again. That’s good news.”

The data from Chmura’s presentation corresponds with reports from local economists, such as Redlands-based John Husing, who focuses on the Inland Empire.

Last month, the region saw the net creation of about 46,800 jobs in 2013, a return to normalcy after the economic downturn of the past few years, said Husing, based on a report from California Economic Development Department. Some of the more aggressive growth has been in social services and construction sectors, he said.

“Construction has been negative for the last several years,” Husing said. “That is a definite turnaround for that sector since we’re finally seeing construction taking back its traditional role as a strength for our economy.”

In an economic report keynote earlier this year, Husing said the sectors of logistics and health care are major driving forces of the regional economy.

Chmura indicated in her presentation that in the long term, utilities, professional services, health care and construction represent about one-fifth of the total employment in the region and are likely to expand faster than the overall pace of job growth in the state.

Chmura also reported that over the next 10 years, job growth in the Inland Empire is expected to reach 2 percent annual expansion across job sectors.

Chmura said the Inland Empire economy is recovering with housing prices increasing, and that employment gains will be steady this year and beyond. Home building is expected to increase in the near future, according to the report. The Inland Empire population over the past 10 years grew at 2.2 percent, compared with 1 percent statewide and nationally, according to the report.

“The housing market has turned and housing prices are going up significantly,” Chmura said. “Part of that is due to the low inventory. Some houses are still underwater and those people don’t want to try to sell a house at a value less than what they paid for it.”

Chmura also recommended the county should incentivise more post-secondary education, and the report projects that a significant portion of in-demand jobs here will require a degree related to science, technology, engineering, and math, or specific health care-related training.

The Workforce Investment Board will use the research data to better channel resources to help the unemployed find jobs in the Inland Empire.

“Workforce dollars (from the federal Department of Labor) are limited and so we want to be sure that when our job-seeking client is coming into our centers, we’re pointing them in the right direction,” said Sandy Harmsen, executive director of the Workforce Investment Board.

Tony Myrell, chair of the Workforce Investment Board, said the report will help the agency understand where the jobs are and substantiate whether the efforts it’s focusing on make sense.

“We’ve got advanced manufacturing, health care, utilities, transportation and logistics,” Myrell said. “Those are the top sectors we’ve been focusing on.”

The San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board operates three job placement and training centers in the region.

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