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Supervisors approve \$4 million for Pathways to Employment program

A \$4 million program to assist unemployed residents get work training and mentoring received unanimous support from the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday. Riverside County's Pathways to Employment program will provide adult participants paid stipends and other supportive services to ensure success.

The county's Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Workforce Solutions (HHPWS) director will oversee the program and work closely with the Community Action Partnership, a national network designated to battle poverty.

"We initially had public safety in mind for this program, including additional support for the Riverside County Fire Department's reserve program," said First District Supervisor Kevin Jeffries. "Then we were able to expand the program to several other areas including nonprofits and government agencies. The important thing is people will get valuable work experience that we hope will encourage new careers."

Almost 15 percent of Riverside County's workforce of more than 1 million remains unemployed and there are few options for returning to work soon, said HHPWS Director Heidi Marshall.

"Many residents are experiencing devastating financial losses as a result of furloughs and layoffs," Marshall said. "Low-income residents and those with little to no financial cushion were heavily affected and forced to rely on social service providers for basic necessities, such as food and housing."

The Board of Supervisors approved using CARES Act federal funding for the Pathways to Employment program. The CARES Act provided local governments critical funding as a result of the coronavirus pandemic's impact on economies and employment.

Pathways to Employment will recruit 500 adults who have been impacted by COVID-19 and participants will receive the following: a living wage stipend of \$20 per hour; training and mentoring from nonprofit and government partners; supportive services, including transportation, clothing, counseling and technological assistance.

The program will launch in September and will be administered by the Community Action Partnership. For more information, please call the Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Workforce Solutions department at (951) 955-1161.

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