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# Understanding & Addressing the Equity Gap in Long Beach's Tech Workforce

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## Issue

In recent years, Long Beach has experienced a reemergence of its aerospace industry and an influx of young technology companies. Economic development in these sectors has led to a concentration of intellectual and financial capital, as well as a substantial increase in job opportunities. Such changes have the potential to greatly benefit both current and future Long Beach residents, but the question remains: who does this growth benefit and how can the city of Long Beach ensure reinvestment into the local community?

Current programs run by city agencies, technology companies, and local organizations seek to prioritize equitable and resident-centered solutions that remove barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the technology workforce of Long Beach. Even so, without a solid understanding of the composition of this workforce, as well as the equity-related hiring challenges faced by local companies, partnerships between stakeholders may lack focus or overlook areas of necessary improvement. In response, this study uses both qualitative and quantitative research components to inform policies, programs, and partnerships among stakeholders and Long Beach to ensure that future growth in the technology sector will benefit a diversity of local residents.

## Study Approach

**Quantitative Methodology**

Disparities in employee wages and representation across demographic variables – specifically gender, race, and ethnicity – are examined using data from the U.S. Census Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and compiled by Chmura Economics and Analytics, LLC, a national labor market database and research software tool (JobsEQ).

A "technology occupation" for the purposes of this study is selected based on an occupation's ability to meet at least one of the following three criteria:[1]

1.  Produces technology
2.  Facilitates the use of technology by others; and/or
3.  Would cease to exist without the presence of technology

**Qualitative Methodology**

Technology and aerospace companies, as well as ecosystem stakeholders such as nonprofits, community-based organizations, and city departments, provided critical insight for the qualitative portion of this study. Participants responded to a short list of questions by email or through virtual meetings. Questions were focused on topics such as hiring experiences, organization-led equity efforts, and perceived barriers to equity.

Participating stakeholders included Long Beach City College, Pacific Gateway Workforce Innovation Network, Long Beach Technology and Innovation, STEM Advantage, Long Beach Economic, Odys Aviation, Boeing and Relativity Space.

## Research Findings

**Two significant barriers to achieving a more equitable and diverse technology workforce, as identified by local corporate and environmental stakeholders, were:**

*   A lack of diversity in candidate pools, especially within certain occupations and salary ranges
*   Inadequate internal corporate education, such as training on conducting interviews to promote more inclusive hiring practices

**A quantitative analysis of racial, gender, and ethnic disparities in the representation and earnings of the technology workforce in Long Beach revealed that:**

- Representation, rather than wages, is the biggest contributor to gaps in gross earnings across demographic groups
- Women are the most underrepresented in the Long Beach resident technology workforce
- Aerospace and health care are uniquely represented industries in Long Beach

## Recommendations

Combined qualitative and quantitative findings informed the following recommendations for each stakeholder:

**Corporate Stakeholders**
- Develop shared frameworks and definitions for equity
- Thoroughly train staff members and hiring managers on how to reach defined goals
- Track and publish metrics and regular progress reports to increase accountability
- Focus on the hiring and retention of underrepresented groups, especially in high-ranking and high-salaried roles

**Public Sector**
- Use the traction gained by aerospace publicity to broaden the focus of existing programs and support a more diverse set of technology industries
- Distribute funding based on collected representation and wage data

**Ecosystem Partners**
- Focus on foundational youth education early in a student's academic career to successfully support the transition from the classroom to the workforce

**All Stakeholders**
- Develop meaningful connections and long-term relationships with community members to drive larger equity efforts

## For More Information

Mishky, A. (2023). Understanding the Tech Equity Gap in Long Beach (Master's capstone, UCLA). Retrieved from: https://escholarship.org/uc/item/60z383s7

## References

[1] HR&A Advisors, Inc. (2014). The New York City Tech Ecosystem: Generating Economic Opportunities for all New Yorkers. HR&A Advisors, Inc.