



# The Examiner.

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## Editorial

### Bringing biotech within reach

San Francisco is poised for what could be a major increase in biotechnology businesses, and not just in the new Mission Bay neighborhood where the state's stem cell institute is headquartered: Firms also are eyeing locations in other parts of The City's southeast quadrant. As with other development in their part of town, many residents of southeast neighborhoods are worried that the new businesses won't bring them much benefit and that jobs will go to people from outside the area, with little opportunity for neighborhood residents. But this afternoon a group of San Franciscans will graduate from a program that breaks that mold, one designed to train low-income adults for good jobs in the local biotech industry.

The On-Ramp training program is a project of SFWorks, a work-force-development affiliate of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce that is funded by an array of local and national corporations and foundations. On-Ramp trains San Francisco residents for biotechnology jobs, leading toward selecting appli-

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cants from the Mission District, the Bayview, Visitacion Valley and Bernal Heights. In doing so, it puts the lie to two pervasive myths: one, that an advanced degree is necessary for employment in the biotech field, and two, that business doesn't do anything to help low-income San Franciscans find decent jobs in the companies that operate here.

The reality is that behind every doctoral-level research scientist at a biotech company is a crew of technicians and support staff. Many of these jobs pay well and provide benefits, making them a good option for working-class San Franciscans who have families to support. And many businesses have a strong interest in developing a skilled local work force.

This afternoon the latest class of On-Ramp students will attend a graduation ceremony at the Mission Bay campus of the J.

David Gladstone Institutes, the UCSF-affiliated research organization. They will join 44 San Franciscans who have already completed the program, of whom three out of four have gone on to find jobs in biotechnology. That number represents only a tiny fraction of the need in The City's southeast neighborhoods, but it's an important step in the right direction.

Programs such as On-Ramp enable adults who don't have the skills or education they need to move beyond dead-end jobs. On-Ramp helps people help themselves, and it's a great example of how both employers and low-income workers can achieve mutual benefits. We wish today's graduates good luck in their future careers and we hope biotechnology companies will find success with these highly motivated local workers.