Marine Group Boat Works Awarded $633,005 Navy Grant to Certify Welders in Shipbuilding



San Diego Shipyard Creates Grant-funded Welding Scholarship that Pays Workers to Learn How to Weld, Secures a Job Following Completion of Their Certification

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SAN DIEGO (January 22, 2026) – Marine Group Boat Works (MGBW), a full-service shipyard based in San Diego, has been awarded a Navy Grant to establish a maritime welding program designed to expand the skilled labor workforce supporting the U.S. Navy's growing shipbuilding and repair demands. Marine Group was awarded this grant to address workforce constraints by increasing the number of highly skilled welders certified to NAVSEA standards, thereby enhancing production resources for Navy surface ships and critical maritime assets. The Navy Grant covers 75 percent of the total program costs with Marine Group matching the remaining 25 percent.

"For years, the maritime industry has struggled with figuring out who will replace the existing generation of Navy boatbuilders," said Todd Roberts, CEO of Marine Group. "This Navy grant has allowed us to take matters into our own hands

by coming up with a viable solution to the workforce problem."

Marine Group partnered with the Maritime Institute in San Diego to develop and deliver a highly customized curriculum, combining accredited technical instruction with the rigorous quality and safety standards required for Navy shipbuilding and repair projects. The shipyard then offers a scholarship that pays new and existing eligible employees to learn how to weld while covering the costs of course materials and instruction throughout the entire NAVSEA welding certification process. Upon successful certification, graduates transition into full-time welding positions at Marine Group which comes with competitive pay, medical and 401K benefits.

"Maintaining skilled workers has not been the issue for us because of the amazing benefits a career in maritime provides," said Roberts. "It's finding ones who are open to a job outside the status quo of going to a four-year college and giving them the resources and training they need to get started."

The primary objective of the program is to certify as many welders as possible to NAVSEA standards, ensuring graduates are immediately qualified to weld on Navy vessels. The program has already demonstrated exceptional results, with the first class of participants achieving a 100 percent passing rate, and all students fully certified and currently assigned to one of Marine Group's boatbuilding projects—two Jordan patrol boats for the Navy's Foreign Military Sales and a Range Support Vessel for the Navy's Program Executive Office. Coupled with Marine Group's average retention rate of 92%, which is about 35 percent higher than the maritime industrial base's average (cited as low as 57% for skilled workers according to the Navy's Talent Pipeline Program), the investment in its production team will increase shipyard efficiency while simultaneously adding to the industry's

workforce. Certifications give employees greater confidence in their ability to successfully handle more complex welding tasks and transferable skills that will benefit them throughout their career in manufacturing wherever they go.

“At the core, the program brings awareness to the benefits of working on the waterfront and that you can easily make great money and support a family just by working with your hands,” said Roberts. “The success of the inaugural class and the increase in applicants interested in the program validates our approach and underscores the importance of industry partnerships in meeting the Navy’s future workforce needs.”

Marine Group remains committed to advancing workforce development initiatives that support national defense, strengthen domestic shipbuilding capabilities, and provide long-term career opportunities within the maritime industry. For information on the welding program and how to apply, check the following information page: https://www.marinegroupbw.com/welding/