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From the Desk of Jack Healy

## WCTF Projects Help Build the Career Ladder in Manufacturing Sector

Four projects, funded by the state's Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF), are helping to educate and train both incumbent workers and the unemployed in various key aspects of the manufacturing industry. The WCTF, administered by the Commonwealth Corporation, is a three-year initiative focused on several critical industry sectors. It is designed to enable a broad range of residents – including older workers, low-wage workers, low-income individuals, disabled citizens, vulnerable youth, incumbent workers, and the unemployed – to gain access to employment, education, and the skills necessary to move forward along a career path leading to economic self-sufficiency.

The Fund is intended to support industry-sector projects targeting a particular industry of importance to each region, such as healthcare, travel, tourism, and manufacturing. Critical industries are defined as those that employ large numbers of people within a given region, have high job vacancy rates, and have shown growth and/or have a high number of employers.

Here are updates from the four manufacturing related projects which have all made notable progress throughout their respective initial phases:

### **Regional Employment Board of Hampden County**

The primary goal of the Precision Manufacturing Training Project (PMTTP) is to provide training in **machine tool technology** to 40 unemployed/underemployed individuals. The project also aims to establish 40 training slots per year to provide skills enhancement to 60 incumbent workers. This will increase the industry's capacity to penetrate specific market demands in highly specialized and complementary markets.

In the first cycle of incumbent worker training, 21 out of 22 participants from 16 different companies completed specific courses (according to employer needs) and received a "local employer-specific certificate." The second cycle of incumbent worker courses began in late January, with 26 people from 15 different companies participating. Additionally, as of January 28, 23 unemployed/underemployed participants have enrolled in machine and manufacturing training courses at three separate institutions. Eleven people will participate in training at Asnuntuck Community College, with 8 other participants training at the Massachusetts Career Development Institute (MCDI) and 4 more training at Springfield Technical Community College. Enrollment

for the latest round of training has already exceeded the original year one goal of 20 participants.

### **Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board**

The goal of the Northeastern Massachusetts Customized Manufacturing Partnership (NMCMP) is to work with the region's manufacturers and education providers to develop a career pathway that will meet the stated needs of industry partners and workers.

Currently 6 Raytheon employees are receiving Pro/Engineering training at Visible Edge in Nashua. According to Anthony Sebastyn, the Visible Edge training coordinator, "They are now into the manufacturing portion of the training. There is a lot of material so our instructor is spending as much time with each person to make sure they all have a full grasp of it. Each student also has a web account with lessons so they can practice at home. The biggest thing for training like this is they get immersed in it during their work week. We're hoping they're all able to go back to work and use it as much as possible to keep up their knowledge level."

Additionally, LARE/American Training will provide training in soldering, electromechanical assembly, and lean manufacturing to 30 new hires. Sheryl Scannell, LARE's Vice President and Director, enthusiastically describes the training as progressing "very, very well."

Arrangements with North Shore Community College and North Essex Community College are in the works to provide classroom instruction, including shop math, blueprint reading, and measurements, for 20-50 GE workers. Other employers taking advantage of the training programs include Merrimack Tool Co., Boston Centerless, Arwood, Middleton Aerospace, and Bomco. Different training modules are scheduled for February, March, and April. Overall, the partnership efforts of the program are reportedly working together smoothly.

### **Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board**

The Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, Inc. was awarded a \$499,923 Work Force Competitive Trust Fund grant through Commonwealth Corporation that will be combined with over \$230,000 in matching funds from employers and other partners, to implement the Greater New Bedford Advanced Manufacturing Initiative (AMI). AMI will train area workers to meet the changing need of the high tech manufacturing industry.

The AMI has an enrollment of 302 participants completing training. Control chart, total preventative maintenance (TPM), green belt, introduction to lean manufacturing, value stream mapping, and work readiness training courses are offered. Employers are excited about the program's impact, requesting smaller and longer classes in order to offer more intense training.

Work readiness training took place the week of January 14, with 15 of the 19 enrolled completing training. This training better prepares individuals to re-enter the workforce with tools that they

did not previously possess. The 25 hours of class work consist of résumé preparation, how to fill out employer applications, interviewing skills and modules on "What It Takes To Succeed," "Getting The Information You Need," "Defusing Emotionally Charged Situations," and "Managing Life Outside Work."

### **Skyline Technical Fund, Inc.**

The goal of this project is to integrate the Regional Employment Board with the training resource of the technical high schools to redefine vocational education to include workforce training. The Central Mass Institute for Workforce Development is designed to reduce barriers to connect the dots between potential and incumbent employees, employers, and technical education and training providers, using the resources of Worcester Technical High School. The program implements successful models such as M.O.S.T. (Machine Operator Skills Training) and builds on existing relationships and strengths to deliver basic workforce education and manufacturing training.

In the first six months of the project, the Institute offered 12 courses, at both foundational and intermediate levels. The program has demonstrated outstanding retention rates, and with total enrollment at 158, the program is significantly surpassing earlier projections. Furthermore, 12 unemployed participants recently completed the M.O.S.T. course, with 8 of the participants receiving manufacturing jobs upon completion.

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