



Employer Convening Strengthen the Advanced Manufacturing Pipeline

Summary

Outreach and Participation

The Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) Manufacturing Technology Center of Excellence convening of manufacturing employers was held at the Corporate College East location on November 30, 2016. The half-day event was organized in conjunction with Achieving the Dream's Career Pathways initiative funded by the Arconic Foundation.

Tri-C brought together manufacturing employers, regional governmental agencies, education and training organizations, and civic stakeholders to discuss specific strategies aimed at improving the manufacturing talent pipeline and easing the skills gap in Northeast Ohio. As with the two other convening's facilitated by Achieving the Dream as part of this initiative (in Muskegon MI and Westmoreland County PA), the goal of the structured conversation was to identify areas of need and to craft an action plan for addressing gaps in the region's pipeline for qualified manufacturing workers.

Invitations were extended to manufacturing employers and their associations and to key education and economic leaders in the private and public sectors. Of the more than seventy participants, about a third were manufacturing employers. Others represented stakeholders from economic development, workforce development organizations, non-profit service providers, higher education, funding organizations, and city, state and county government. Tri-C was represented by staff from the Manufacturing Technology Center of Excellence, Corporate College, and the Advanced Technology Training Center.

Challenges and Opportunities

The convening opened with a presentation from Cuyahoga County Chief Economic Development Officer, Theodore Carter. Carter emphasized how his office has made workforce development a top priority in response to employer concerns and needs. He described the workforce development services in the county and noted that the county will collaborate to map the various workforce-related services and supports available to employers. Carter's office is working on a three-part program to achieve its economic development mission, under the banner of *Propel Cuyahoga Workforce Innovation*:

- 1) A strong vision of an integrated service delivery system for the county that aligns workforce and economic development efforts;
- 2) Alignment of human service supports with workforce development services, so that underprepared individuals receive the full-range of services they need to be productive in the labor market; and
- 3) Reorientation of the workforce system to be better able to provide “just-in-time” talent to employers who need a more robust pipeline for qualified hires.

Go to www.tri-c.edu/manufacturing for the full *Propel Cuyahoga Workforce Innovation* presentation.

Carter believes several innovative workforce efforts to support business growth and profitability will help regional manufacturers.

- A “learn and earn” incentive to reimburse employers for training costs and in-training wages (with a goal of upskilling 900 people in 2017). Another is a
- Commitment to extend coaching and career planning services to 1500 youth in the county.
- Alignment of support services that address barriers to employment like childcare and transportation.
- The Greater Cleveland Partnership’s decision to focus on strengthening the pipeline for five high-demand occupations in the region:
 - Truck Driver
 - Computer Numeric Control (CNC) machinist
 - Software Developer
 - Registered Nurse
 - Customer Service Representative

Participants raised several issues they want the county leaders to be aware of, such as:

- The high percentage of potential hires who fail drug tests
- The high number of former steelworkers workers who lack adequate Statistical Process Control experience or skills
- Employers’ preference to hire from temporary staffing firms vs. direct hires or starting internship/apprenticeship programs
- The difficulty to develop strong partnerships between workforce providers and employers for training alignment

During the small group table discussion that followed, important needs and gaps were examined:

- Close the industry gaps:
 - Technical Skills
 - Underrepresentation of women
 - Soft skills (professional etiquette, work ethics, conflict management, and communication)
- Diversify manufacturing industry
- Management of Industry partnerships, engagement and leadership
- Marketing and recruitment for manufacturing opportunities and non-competitive wages
- The importance and value of industry-recognized credentials
- Increase community college training alignments with employer needs

Existing opportunities to strengthen the pipeline that can be built upon were highlighted:

- Registered apprenticeship programs
- Early college and magnet schools focused on manufacturing
- In-house employer training programs
- Co-op rotations in degree and credit programs
- Utilizing manufacturing targeted organization
 - The Alliance for Working Together Foundation
 - National Association of Manufacturers' *Dream it, Do it* initiative

Participants identified additional employer needs and challenges, including:

- Applicant obstacles created by online application processes and non-competitive wages
- Need for a clearer roadmap of existing training, related programs and associated certifications
- Coordination of information on where to post jobs to reach displaced or entry-level workers
- Need for greater outreach and awareness among youth, parents, and K-12 teachers of careers in manufacturing and opportunities in high-demand (perhaps through externships)
- Need for better marketing and outreach to regional community
- Transparency of career pathways that are available in manufacturing beyond entry-level to create a "career culture" and value of employer business processes
- Need for extensive employee soft skills, work ethic, teamwork, and safety training
- More experiential learning opportunities to create direct pipeline streams

Priorities for Community College/Industry Collaboration

The second segment of the convening focused on opportunities for greater collaboration—building on existing efforts—between the community college and the region's advanced manufacturing employers. The group elevated six high-leverage priorities for industry/college partnerships. Partnerships should:

- **Pathway transparency:** Define and align manufacturing career pathways programs and make the pathways transparent and easy to understand to educators, training organizations, students
- **Information access:** Increase access on training and support resources available to employers from the county, industry associations, community colleges and other training providers to get a better understanding of barriers
- **Proactive outreach:** Remove recruitment obstacles for manufacturing employers through proactive outreach to K-12 schools and workforce organizations
- **Promotion of advancement opportunities:** Flesh out strategies to specify and market talent advancement opportunities, to initiate future and current manufacturing employees to consider the potential of long-term careers
- **Responsiveness to employer demand:** Strengthen the ability of college/industry partnerships to provide employers with applicants with the "right skills at the right time," through ongoing communication, and responsiveness to specific needs
- **Experiential and work-based learning:** Increase access of youth and adults to internships apprenticeships, and other work-based learning experiences so that firms get a better understanding of the potential of traditional and non-traditional populations

Participants offered innovative ideas for strengthening local partnerships and broadening the pipeline for talent. These included:

- Internships that rotate across multiple companies that reducing the burden on each employer and enriching trainees' experience
- Virtual job fairs, centralized job search portals and other technological solutions to speed accurate communication
- Increased communication and collaboration across regional institutions of training and higher education, for purposes of efficiency and coherence
- Creation or expansion of manufacturing foundation courses for incumbent workers who might be able to advance up the job ladder and for students who want to explore new manufacturing careers

Progress and Next Steps

As you can see, the work has begun but there is more left to do. We are seeking your assistance to move this important work forward. We will follow up with you soon to begin engaging a work group. **Please review and respond to the two questions below.**

1. Which two areas are you most interested in engaging in future discussions?

- A. Progression of internship programs
- B. Apprenticeship development
- C. Marketing and community outreach
- D. Recruitment, hiring, pipeline strategies

2. We would like to create a sector based approach to collaboratively address the talent pipeline needs. Please list the top 3 challenges you believe are effecting the advanced manufacturing sector in the region?

A number of positive developments were initiated in response to issues raised at the convening:

- Dominion Gas has partnered with Tri-C to assist with recruitment and preliminary assessments for Northeast Ohio applicants, which included resume, interviewing and soft skills training.
- Pentair has created a community-based focus group with Towards Employment, Ohio Means Jobs, MAGNET and Tri-C to discuss their workforce
- WIRE-Net and Tri-C continue to assess potential expansion of new sustainable apprenticeship programs in Northeast Ohio
- Tri-C presented manufacturing pathways to the College Now high school and adult advisors to increase the flow of information to (8-12) students and regional community-based organizations. Which sparked interest in our newly designed [Mobile Training Unit](#) and the [Ideation Station](#).
- Participants asked that Tri-C take the lead and organize a follow-up meeting of manufacturers in the first half of 2017

Tri-C is committed to taking the input from employers and others at the convening and turning it into a workplan for the Achieving the Dream and Arconic Foundation initiative. The work plan will pinpoint two or three priority next steps for addressing the participants' desire for more interaction among stakeholders. In addition to Tri-C creating an action plan to respond to employer needs and the talent pipeline gaps. This workplan will be submitted to Achieving the Dream by March 31, 2017, and will specify activities for the college and regional manufacturers to undertake collaboratively throughout 2017.

About the Tri-C Center Manufacturing Technology Center for Excellence

Cuyahoga Community College's Manufacturing Technology Center of Excellence offers a range of in-demand training programs for regional employers; but its primary goal is to serve as a catalyst for connecting industry partners, the college, and the community to solve pipeline challenges. Highlights of the Center's program and plans include: stackable certificates that build skills for entry-level jobs and for career advancement, while providing credit toward an associate degree; new high-demand programs in the areas of Operations Management Technology, CCNA Industrial, logistics, and mechatronics; programs that lattice academic and workforce skills and integrate real-world work experience; and fast-track training options designed to shorten the time to completion

Expanding upon the recently launched 3D/ Additive Manufacturing program, the Center is establishing a Fab Lab within its new space, which will provide students, employers, and the community-at-large with access to the latest design and fabrication technology on-site. The Center has recently purchased a new mobile classroom trailer that offers a 26-foot classroom area and 26-foot hands-on lab to deliver just-in-time training throughout the community.

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