

PROMISING PRACTICES IN YOUNG ADULT EMPLOYMENT

LESSONS LEARNED FROM MANUFACTURING AND AUTOMOTIVE CAREER PATHWAY PROGRAMS

Supported by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions | By Stacey Wagner

As the numbers of young adults disconnected from the workforce continue to rise, the National Fund for Workforce Solution's Young Adult Initiatives aim to test and implement new strategies for targeting America's young adults.

Starting in 2013 with the Youth/Industry Partnership Initiative (YIPI), the National Fund has funded the development and evaluation of innovative methods aimed at targeting and engaging America's young adults.

The Young Adult Initiatives are:

- › Identifying effective methods in connecting young adults to industry partnerships;
- › Describing the characteristics of effective partnerships between employers and education and training providers; and
- › Cultivating a network of top employers experienced in recruiting young adults and sharing with them the National Fund's best practices for young adult recruitment.

The National Fund's Young Adult Initiatives ultimately seek to develop a deep understanding of how industry partnerships and employers most effectively engage young adults, and share this information so that employers and workforce development collaboratives across the country can access the potential of and invest in the millions of young adults across the nation.

A number of National Fund collaboratives have begun creating and implementing young adult workforce strategies and some are already seeing results. The practices presented here represent some of those burgeoning successes. It is expected that these successes (and other projects similar to these) will benefit from the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Program, which requires that, by 2016, 75 percent of workforce board youth funding be spent on out-of-school youth. Additionally, 20 percent of youth formula funds must support paid and unpaid work such as internships. This public funding in support of out-of-school youth, paired with the support of the philanthropic community, such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, will catalyze improvements in public/private initiatives for these youth, and in the communities where they live.

THE MODEL

The independent collaboratives featured in this brief shared several similarities. First, multiple stakeholders have “come together” as a community or region to improve the opportunities of their residents for productive careers and they interpret their work as both workforce development, and economic development. As such, they realize that the community cannot afford to let their youth drift without access to gainful employment. They also collaborate with local businesses to create industry partnerships that allow changes in skills requirements to be shared with community education, training partners, and program participants. Finally, these industry partnerships place young adults in jobs as interns or apprentices in companies that are members of the industry partnership, with a frequent expectation that the placement will lead to permanent employment.

It should be noted that these examples require formal and documented education and training of program participants. At the entry level, the manufacturing and automotive sectors demand higher skills than, for example, hospitality or retail. Thus, the program participants will be encouraged to stay in school or to return to school briefly if they are to participate. Community-based service organizations are engaged to provide help to participants in overcoming other life challenges so they can participate in the development programs.

For example, in Danville, Virginia, the disconnected youth without a high school equivalency are strongly encouraged to obtain a GED prior to participating in the program, because while workers can be hired without a school equivalency, one is required for promotion within the company. In central Wisconsin, the youth program connects high schoolers to jobs and to registered apprenticeships with the intent of minimizing the number of dropouts and providing contextual skills over time. In Milwaukee, the focus is on helping working technicians obtain teacher certifications so that they can bring their real-world experience to the classroom and provide the program’s youth with the “hard and soft” skills needed to start employment in the industry above the minimum wage.

The identified primary commonalities in this brief make their approaches to youth employment replicable:

- › Workforce development aligned with economic development
- › Industry partnerships engaged in on-the-job training, internships, and apprenticeships

- › Enhanced teaching methods based on new requisite skills and employer demands
- › Industry partnerships and education and training providers working together to engage students and graduates as participants in an employment talent pipeline.

Other communities that wish to replicate this work will face localized challenges in relation to its community’s political, economic, social, and cultural environments. However, in spite of idiosyncratic local conditions, this model is applicable to the communities that choose to invest in it, and the three initiatives described here are experiencing success.

MILWAUKEE AUTOMOTIVE YOUTH EDUCATION SYSTEM

Program Purpose

Unanticipated skill changes are a root cause of unemployment in many business sectors. So, as the transportation/automotive industries change, the Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance (MAWFA) is supporting automobile manufacturers, dealers, and other vehicle fleets to fill a crucial gap in the labor force. In Milwaukee alone, the demand for specialized automobile technicians is expected to grow by nearly 500 workers over the next 5 years. The Automotive Youth Educational System (AYES) program will help fill the skills and employment gap by providing internships and training to middle and high school youth.

The Collaborative

MAWFA is a consortium of private and public funders of workforce development (including education, job training and placement, and support services) dedicated to increasing employment, which benefits both businesses that need skilled workers and individuals seeking good jobs with family-supporting wages. The collaborative’s goals include advocating for policies that sustain effective workforce partnerships, strengthening and expanding the workforce system by leveraging local investments, building the capacity of the workforce system, improving career advancement opportunities for low-income individuals, and helping employers get the skilled workers they need to succeed. MAWFA accomplishes these goals by investing pooled funding in training for disadvantaged populations throughout

the Milwaukee area. MAWFA's recipients include adults, youth, and ex-offenders.

Project Design and Outcomes

Team Wisconsin (the program team of partners) comprises a public/private partnership of city officials and local philanthropic members including:

- › Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (youth services manager and director of programs, planning, and fund development)
- › Milwaukee City Grants Administration (public ally)
- › MAWFA (program manager)

Team Wisconsin members then partner with the Foundation of the Wisconsin Automobile and Truck Association (a member of MAWFA) and its industry members. Their automotive dealerships provide student internships for the program's youth.

MAWFA also provides scholarships and manages the program, while the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction reviews state trade certifications with the intention of ensuring that automotive and transportation certifications reflect industry demands, and certifications allow working technicians to obtain teaching certification credits for their work experiences. Team Wisconsin plans to increase the number of experienced technician teachers to ensure that the AYES program's students are receiving the most current instruction needed for employment in the sector. In 2014, the Teachers Institute taught 95 percent of transportation sector teachers in the MAWFA area and those teachers gained 658 credit hours toward their teaching certification and licensure.

With the expectation of filling this gap by providing more opportunities for high-quality technical training, AYES and the Team Wisconsin Education Partnership Grant of Milwaukee have recruited and vetted teachers for AYES training sites in Milwaukee and Racine, Wisconsin.

These teachers instruct students in AYES participating middle and high schools, and Team Wisconsin helps place the students in internships and job shadowing positions in auto dealerships to learn about car repair, customer service, and work-place ethics. Team Wisconsin expects to help employ 400 students by 2015, and their work has resulted in the AYES' national council declaring Wisconsin as the state with the second most effective youth training program in the country. This was based, in part, on the number of youth

that entered training and are destined for jobs. In 2013-2014, the total AYES student population in Milwaukee reached 887.

Additionally Team Wisconsin reviews the AYES school sites' progress and provides counseling and reporting tools for certification completion. Team Wisconsin members serve on all the business/education advisory committees in their school sites. These schools are required to have business/education advisory groups to maintain their industry certifications. MAWFA has industry partners, making it a natural partner for workforce-focused educational improvement and a critical addition to Team Wisconsin. To date, MAWFA has awarded 13 scholarships to students in the program.

WISCONSIN RAPIDS YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Program Purpose

Workforce Central partners with the state's Youth Apprenticeship Program to provide high school students real-world experience with a paid one- or two-year apprenticeship to help build a talent pipeline for the manufacturing sector in South Wood County.

The Collaborative

Workforce Central aims to transform workforce development in the rural Central Wisconsin region by implementing a dual customer strategy to achieve the best outcome for everyone in greater south Wood County to prepare and advance in productive careers. Their vision is that current and prospective workers can conveniently access a comprehensive, seamless array of education, training and support services, provided by a strong partnership of employers, educators, and service providers that take shared responsibility for a healthy workforce, economy, and job market.

The Workforce Central Manufacturing Partnership (the Partnership) focuses awareness in four areas: peer-to-peer leadership support, the talent pipeline, training solutions, and sector awareness. To address these areas, the partnership has collaborated with a technical college partner to develop incumbent and jobseeker training programs, convenes a CEO peer council for collective problem solving, and has a business/education committee which works the area's K-14 systems to narrow the skills gap.

Project Design and Outcomes

Workforce Central's Manufacturing Partnership works with the state's Youth Apprenticeship Program to provide high school students real-world experience with a paid apprenticeship of one or two years. The initiative is statewide and available to all youth in the participating school districts provided that they can offer the corresponding high school curriculum to the state program.

The program provides academic and technical instruction as well as mentored on-the-job training while student participants are in school. Additionally, the state's Department of Workforce Development has begun to coordinate its Registered Apprenticeship Program for adults with the state's Youth Apprenticeship Program to provide the connection between the two programs. It is modeled on a successful pilot program already conducted in the Manitowoc region, which ensures that youth who complete the two-year youth program receive credit toward a Registered Apprenticeship (as regulated by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship). The intent is to cut down on the time spent obtaining a registered apprenticeship, saving money and time for participants and employers, and hopefully decreasing the number of youth dropouts. The Partnership's employer-members provide on-the-job training for these youth and often hire them when they graduate. For example, Pointe Precision manufacturing has been providing on-the-job training, mentoring and jobs for youth for well over a decade, and is a member of Workforce Central's Manufacturing Partnership. Since 1997 Pointe Precision has provided 22 apprenticeships, with 12 now working full-time for the company.

DAN RIVER REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR CAREER READINESS

Program Purpose

Working with the local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to connect with out-of-work or underemployed youth, the Dan River Regional Collaborative (DRRC) is pursuing integrated career readiness, on-the-job training, and employment with several Danville manufacturers. The program seeks to prepare a skilled workforce for the region and to support its manufacturers and economic development strategy.

The Collaborative

DRRC promotes regional partnerships of employers, educators, workforce developers, and other stakeholders to address the skills needs of regional employers. Within its industry partnerships, the collaborative's efforts focus on capacity building, systems change, and policy advocacy. The collaborative focuses on creating employer-driven, sector-based partnerships, by working with employers to design career pathways with associated training opportunities. It seeks to increase the number of individuals with in-demand credentials, leverage partnerships to increase the number of high-skill, high-wage job opportunities, and provide a regional voice for policy change.

Decimated by the loss of manufacturing jobs in the past, manufacturing operations and jobs are returning again to the Dan River, Virginia region. However, manufacturers are having a difficult time finding the appropriately skilled workers for today's manufacturing jobs. The DRRC is filling this need by reaching out to employers and jobseekers and has developed an initiative that is placing disconnected youth into these new jobs.

The Dan River region is the pilot for the Commonwealth of Virginia ACT Work Ready Communities, which congruently pursues workforce readiness and economic development. The Dan River region's vision for their Certified Work Ready Communities (CWRC) is to create a new regional workforce narrative leading to business retention, expansion, and relocation. The CWRC program works in connection with the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), and serves as a validating tool that the community has a skilled labor force required for targeted industries.

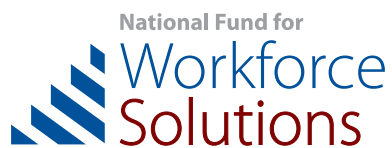
The DRRC and several manufacturers have committed to helping disconnected youth obtain a NCRC followed by on-the-job training. Martinsville's Monogram Snacks is the first employer to participate in this initiative and will hire youth with the NCRC and encourage them to seek a high school equivalency if they do not have one and wish to advance in the company. Additional employers have agreed to provide on-the-job training for NCRC holders with the ultimate goal of permanent employment. These employers, and the region's chambers of commerce, see this initiative as a platform for economic development in the region. The DRRC is the "glue" that holds this loose confederation together and provides a framework needed for participation and collaboration.

At A Glance

COLLABORATIVES	ACTIVITIES
<p>Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance</p>	<p>Provide counseling on workforce certifications, teaching methods, and scholarships to youth for training program participation</p> <p>Provide employers looking to train and hire</p> <p>Provide career exploration and employment for youth</p> <p>Help professional auto personnel certify as youth teachers</p> <p>Partner with WIBs and city administration officials to provide additional funding and support for youth and program</p> <p>Help high schools become certified to teach automotive technical training in the AYES program</p>
<p>Wisconsin Rapids Youth Apprenticeship Program/Workforce Central's Manufacturing Partnership</p>	<p>Provide strong manufacturing partnership for regional employers to belong for their own purposes as well as to help them fill their talent pipelines</p> <p>Provide career exploration and employment for youth</p> <p>Partner with state Department of Workforce Development, high schools, and employers to create a school-to-work pathway in registered apprenticeships</p> <p>Help arrange visits to manufacturing operations for youth, parents and teachers</p>
<p>Dan River Regional Partnership</p>	<p>Partner with community colleges, chambers, WIBs, and social service providers to identify program participants, and for identification of youth, training and support, including financing of program</p> <p>Provides career exploration and employment for youth</p> <p>Help employers connect and offer on-the-job training and employment</p>

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