



OH-PENN PATHWAYS TO COMPETITIVENESS (P2C)

NATURE OF THE INNOVATION: A workforce intermediary between businesses, training programs, and jobseekers in the Ohio and Pennsylvania Interstate Region, spanning three local workforce investment areas and five counties. P2C convenes regional employers to cultivate buy-in for industry-recognized credentials and better understand hiring needs; builds career pathways with education providers aligned with industry demand; facilitates work-based learning opportunities for jobseekers; supports “pipeline development,” programs aimed at shifting youth perceptions of manufacturing; and provides an outreach and marketing hub for all Oh-Penn constituents.

Key Features

Specialized Action Teams: At the implementation level, business stakeholders from the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition (MVMC) in Ohio and Industry Partnership of Lawrence and Mercer Counties in Pennsylvania, in tandem with local education providers and P2C staff, provide leadership to the dozens of programs operating through Oh-Penn via five Action Teams: Employer Engagement, Pipeline Development, Career Pathways, Work-Based Learning, and Outreach and Marketing. Each team includes a manufacturer “champion,” charged with creating industry buy-in and helping with implementation of the many efforts nested under each team.

Employer Engagement: The first priority of the Employer Engagement Action Team is to recruit additional manufacturing stakeholders to participate in Oh-Penn activities. Employers serve on action teams as well as host work-based learning and employ jobseekers. The action team also markets WorkKeys and National Association of Manufacturers–endorsed credentials to area businesses. To encourage businesses to adopt industry-recognized credentials in their hiring practices, the action team has created a formal “Credential Adoption Pledge” and, to demonstrate its value, funded employers to offer their own employees the National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC) test. (Scores were, it turned out, highly correlated scores with levels of seniority. Senior Managers were much likelier to receive Gold than entry-level workers.)

Pipeline Development: Pipeline activities work with students and educators to expose students to and change their perceptions of manufacturing careers. Programs such as youth boot camps—in which students tour manufacturing



PROJECT FOCUS

Systems Change

GRANTEE

West Central Job Partnership

PROGRESS AS OF MARCH 31, 2015

Programs will enroll new trainees through 10/31/15; certify and follow-up through 4/30/16.

Goal	Current #	% of Goal
2,293 Student Enrollments in Training	6,463	281%
1,146 Student Completions	3,792	330%
2,904 Credentials Attained	4,619	159%
220 OJT/Apprenticeship Placements	409	185%



sites—and career fairs serve students in grades 3-12. Educator in the Manufacturing Workplace pairs teachers with a local manufacturer for 32 hours of job shadowing. Educator boot camps facilitate group visits to several employers in one day. Both educator programs showcase manufacturing products, occupations, and skills that can then be integrated into classwork and conversations with students.

Career Pathways: P2C efforts in Career Pathways began with a skill gap analysis that measured basic alignment between regional employer needs and skills taught in area training programs. As one course of action stemming from the findings, a sub-committee of machining SMEs focused on the competencies needed at entry and advanced levels in their industry, then matched them to industry-recognized credentials from the National Institute for Metalworking Skills as well as the NCRC and Manufacturing Skills Standards Council Certified Production Technician (MSSC CPT) certifications. Following that, the group assessed machining programs in the five counties and ultimately sat down with instructors and curriculum designers at partner schools to work toward revising or designing new curriculum that addressed skill gaps.

Also in response to the skill gap analysis, P2C developed a 6-week Manufacturing Readiness Program that prepares individuals for employment as an entry-level production worker. Attaining a WorkKeys NCRC is a prerequisite to enrolling, ensuring that candidates begin the program with a common threshold of foundational skills. Employers participating in the gap analysis informed the curriculum, which teaches soft skills (integrating mock interviews with the same employers); basic math and reading skills; manufacturing safety; and core manufacturing functions. Graduates are qualified to attain a MSSC CPT credential. Oh-Penn intends to eventually place 85% of graduates into employment.

Work-Based Learning: Oh-Penn has worked with three groups of stakeholders to develop or enhance three paths to work experiences, using grant resources to subsidize participant wages up to minimum wage.

- In partnership with the high school CTE system, juniors and seniors in the Oh-Penn region can access a paid 300-hour work-based learning program. Participants are mentored by a teacher in their CTE Programs of Study and a manufacturer mentor works with each student hand in hand, ensuring they first and foremost learn.
- With 10 postsecondary training providers, led by Youngstown State University, Oh-Penn worked to develop consistent standards and paperwork for formal, transcribed internships. Oh-Penn also worked with YSU to create an online internship clearinghouse, through which employers can post openings and search for four-year, two-year, and certificate students of the partnering schools, who can likewise post portfolios as well as search openings. Students who obtain an internship through the clearinghouse receive a \$1,000 scholarship (which can be applied to future education and training programs, encouraging persistence) and are paid at least \$10/hour.
- Oh-Penn worked with its three local workforce investment areas to raise the wage threshold for OJT to \$12 per hour in each area.

Outreach and Marketing: The Industry Needs You website (<http://www.industryneedsyou.com>) features regularly updated resources on manufacturing, with career information and training resources for students, parents, and jobseekers; lessons plans for educators; and information about P2C services for employers. The Outreach and Marketing Action Team ensures that the strategies of other teams are publicized on the site. OMAT also publishes a popular newsletter which spotlights an Oh-Penn consortia member each month.



ADVICE TO PRACTITIONERS

Use Stakeholders to Build Capacity: Implementing P2C's aggressive project plan initially fell solely on staff and contractors. But breaking down the work plan into components and delegating ownership of program activities to small, stakeholder-led groups made carrying out P2C more feasible as well as credible. As an example of this structure, P2C staff might draft talking points for a group of manufacturers to record a radio series and work out the contract logistics with the station, but lean on OMAT to further develop the talking points and recruit participants. Employer leadership also keeps P2C relevant: at each Mahoning Valley and Industry Partnership quarterly meeting, manufacturers representing each Action Team report on their recent progress.

OBSTACLES OVERCOME

Uptake of Industry-Recognized Credentials: Getting employers to adopt credentials in their hiring and promotion decisions has proved challenging. The diversity of credential types and scoring systems create thousands of options that many employers have trouble mapping to job titles. But even when employers understand the competencies credentials convey, they may still refrain from listing them in a job posting so as not to dissuade qualified candidates without the credential from applying. And jobseekers may feel apathetic about updating their resumes to list credentials they have earned given that listings in the Oh-Penn region rarely mention them. Nevertheless, P2C staff have made progress in getting regional employers to value credentials, especially WorkKeys, by making site visits, demonstrating practice software, and explaining their value proposition.

Future Outlook

P2C leadership is evaluating the effectiveness and value of programs and strategies implemented under the WIF and planning for sustainability. In the near-term:

- A Career Pathways sub-committee has begun the process of aligning welding training programs local business needs to American Welding Society certifications.
- The Manufacturing Advisory Committee, comprised of the leadership of both the Industry Partnership and the MVMC, will continue meeting and working together as the Oh-Penn Manufacturing Collaborative.
- P2C has been working to certify faculty across the region to teach MSSC courses, allowing the Manufacturing Readiness Program to operate in each county. Staff are also working with Adult Education providers to embed contextualized remediation into the program.

Interested in Learning More?

To learn more, visit <http://www.industryneedsyou.com>. Grantee contact: Eric Karmecy, ekarmecy@wcjp.org.

