

During the March 27, 2023 Talent Pipeline Management Manufacturing Session, employers met directly with K12 program and district directors, workforce agencies and community-based organizations, and post-secondary program and training directors. During the separate provider group conversations, each stakeholder group had a two-way conversation with employers on candidate recruitment, assessments, program evaluations, and opportunities to improve and expand the industry workforce in our region. The meeting was the first of a few scheduled meetings between employers and providers. Ultimately, the groups will identify opportunities for collaboration between employers and provider groups to improve and/or expand general industry outreach and education for our region with a focus on a more prepared workforce on day one of their new career.

Some meeting takeaways and next steps are below:

Discussion Notes and Next Steps

K12 External Partners Meeting

- Employer Feedback
 - Start the career exploration and pathway development early. As an example, too many students think they are going directly into engineering when there is a more defined career journey that should be explored. 75% of the manufacturing workforce is on the production side.
 - Exploring the additional opportunities in Advanced Manufacturing may lead to a realization that engineering is not what they thought it was and the production roles more align with career desire. 4 year degrees are not the only entry into manufacturing or career development. It is not 4-year degree roles and then “lesser than” positions. Career development opportunities are extensive through all entry-level roles.
 - K12 and employers need to align budget and curriculum planning. Too often K12 approaches employers when the budgets are already set and flexibility for programming is low.
 - Help employers identify outreach to “hidden workforces” – female students, individuals with disabilities, justice involved youth, etc.
- K12 Partner Feedback
 - Counselors/teachers are not familiar enough with the roles and changing technologies. There is a need for externship, teacher/counselor job shadows, and/or industry provided instructors.
 - Increase exposure at all K12 levels. Improved emphasis in middle school (career exploration), but also in elementary. Students are already making the career decisions in high school.

- Provide non-degree mentors and job shadows. Too often it is only the engineers and 4 year-degree personnel providing insight and guidance.
- Increase paid internship opportunities.

Workforce Agencies Partners Meeting

- Employer Feedback
 - Candidates are often not prepared for rotation cycles – changes in shifts. This can often cause retention issues.
 - Physical challenges occur and new muscle memory/strength needs to be developed. Candidates need to allow time for this physical challenge and change. “An ache on the 3rd day will not be felt in 2 weeks.”
 - Childcare issues are always an issue, but become larger barriers during the non-traditional shifts.
 - Workforce agency referral communication can sometimes be an issue. Contact information is old or candidates do not respond.
 - Make sure we are not just “selling jobs”, but career pathways. Work together to better tell the success stories.
- Workforce Partner Feedback
 - Can shiftwork be reimagined? Specifically, Toyotetsu went to 4-week rotations instead of 2. Help us identify the companies that will require rotational shifts versus consistent shifts to better inform job seeker applications.
 - Help agencies identify the best transferable skills. Improve and collaborate on assessment tools.
 - Transportation remains an issue for some candidates, especially for shifts outside of traditional VIA hours.
 - Create opportunities for Case Managers to visit facilities to learn more about the roles and working environment.
 - Many agencies provide continued services to candidates even after job placement. Communicate with the agencies to see where support can be offered for various retention barriers.

Higher Education and Training Provider Partners Meeting

- Employer Feedback
 - Integrating work-based learning opportunities into curriculum has seen success with improved onboarding and retention.
 - Improve the K12 to post-secondary pathway alignment of coursework and curriculum.
 - Certain programs are successful, but have small capacity/quantity of graduates. How do we expand?

- Continuous feedback loop and training agility improved hiring success. Find opportunities for employers and training providers to debrief on program completers and recent hires.
- How do we engage beyond career fairs?
- Higher Ed/Training Partner Feedback
 - Continued issues with funding and facilities. Where are industry partnership available for equipment and space collaboration?
 - Instructor loan programs from industry would provide increased class offerings, improved current industry knowledge, and a possible recruiting tool for employers.
 - Education providers can provide testimonials from students and programs. Help track the student journey to tell better industry stories.
 - Engage employers in a more transformational way and less transactional. Find ways to partner in the classroom early on in the journey and not just during career/hiring periods.
 - Identify opportunities for incumbent worker training to upskill existing staff for leadership or higher-skilled roles.
 - Collaborative recruiting – partner with employers to visit K12 to tell the full story of education and hiring.
 - Campus engagement days – meaningful campus visits that include tabling, classroom discussions, targeting hiring and interviews, and discussions with all majors for all hiring needs.

What's Next

***Next Meeting:* Follow up meetings and next step planning**

We are working on follow up meetings between industry and provider group. The next session will be virtual and might combine provider groups to streamline communication. We are prioritizing K12 outreach due to summer schedules and closures. Please look for calendar invitations for May in the next 1-2 weeks. Our hope is to schedule collaborative conversations through Q2 to help outline the deliverable. Late Q3/Q4 will be focused action for the deliverables.

Thank you to the employers for committing to the TPM process and improving the long-term workforce pipeline for our region. The industry has done tremendous work and the partnerships and conversations with providers will lead to an improved manufacturing ecosystem in our region.

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