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National Solutions—Regional Implementation
November 6-8
Crystal City Marriott, Arlington, VA

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In addition, CEWD will host the National Forum—a meeting of state energy workforce consortia leaders to share best practices on November 6 from 8am-12:30pm.

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Special Issue: The Power of Collaboration

Tom Farrell Highlights Troops to Energy Jobs National Template in *Electric Perspectives*

Dominion chairman, president, and CEO Tom Farrell touts the industry's Troops to Energy Jobs program in an article for the July/August issue of *Electric Perspectives*. Farrell highlights the many benefits of hiring military veterans, and explains how electric companies can use the Troops to Energy Jobs National Template to develop comprehensive programs for military outreach, education, recruiting, and retention. Dominion led five other pilot electric companies and CEWD in launching the Troops to Energy Jobs program in 2011. The article quotes the CEOs from each of the other five pilot companies—American Electric Power, Arizona Public Service, National Grid, PG&E Corporation, and Southern Company—on the success of the program.

Read More:

<http://www.eei.org/resourcesandmedia/magazine/Documents/2013-07-01-VETPOWER.pdf>

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Boosting Test Scores at Oneonta Job Corps

The Construction and Skilled Trades (CAST) Battery has often flummoxed candidates for energy industry jobs, especially when it comes to one critical component of the test: Math. The math skills needed to do well on CAST and perform successfully in many industry jobs are typically developed over many years. Without intensive effort, it's very difficult for adult learners to develop these skills.

However, one group of students recently met this challenge head on. They were all part of a 14-week Oneonta Job Corps program, developed in partnership with CEWD, that included the Utility Industry Math Boot Camp for the CAST Battery, Learning to Learn Boot Camp-Foundations for SmartGrid, National Career Readiness Certificate, SkillsUSA Energy Industry Employability assessment, and the CAST exam. The curriculum development and implementation of these programs were provided by \$16,000 in funding from the Green Workforce Initiative Grant, Industry-Business Institute, Union County College in Cranford, New Jersey.

It was a busy 14 weeks for the students, and their hard work paid off! Using the average CAST cutoff score used by utility companies as a benchmark, the pass rate for the students was 58 percent, up from 32 percent for the previous year's class. A comparison of the results from the two classes showed that the increased pass rate was largely attributable to particularly strong improvement in the math scores.

"The impressive partnership between CEWD and the Oneonta Job Corps Center is the best example of strong collaborative efforts yielding positive results for all participants," said the U.S. Department of Labor's outgoing Assistant Secretary of Employment and Training Administration, Jane Oates. "The incredible scores on the EEI testing show that our Job Corps students excelled and their performance will mean good jobs for them and world-class employees for the industry."

Oneonta Job Corps is a federally funded Department of Labor program that provides training and education for disadvantaged American youth ages 16-24. Through the partnership with CEWD, Oneonta now provides additional training that leads to certification as part of its three energy industry-related programs: SmartGrid, Overhead Line, and Underground Residential.

"Prior to working with CEWD, students were finishing these training programs but they didn't have any certifications to go with them and the pass rate for the CAST test was dismal. This is the test utilities use as a pre-qualifier to see if you will even be given an interview," said Julie Strzempko, who, until a recent job change, worked as the liaison and business development officer for Job Corps and helped develop the partnership with CEWD.

Working with CEWD, last year Oneonta added the Math Boot Camp developed by Allannah Thomas/Helicon, Inc. More recently, they added a Learning to Learn boot camp developed by Dan Apple so that students would be mentally ready to work on their math skills. It was these two programs, in addition to advance preparation by Job Corps staff, that led to the boost in scores, those involved with the programs said.

The Learning to Learn boot camp is an intensive one-week program that helps students increase their capacity to learn and retain information, including a focus on time management skills, how to adapt to change, how to identify problems, how to articulate ideas, and how to communicate clearly through writing. Most importantly, Learning to Learn gives students the confidence and the ability to take control of their own learning or growth process and take ownership of their own success.

Oneonta Job Corps Academy Director Chris Kuhn said this was the first time the Learning to Learn boot camp was included and that he made sure students knew they'd be taking it, along with the Math Boot Camp. He told them that they were "part of something special" before they arrived, so that they wouldn't feel blindsided by the intensive academic component to their training. In addition, when the 35 students enrolled showed up, he spoke at length about what was ahead of them.

“We did a lot of promoting on the front end,” he said. “In the past, students have come in and expected to learn climbing but the math was a surprise to them. This time we wanted them primed for the academics. They knew it was coming. We told them that the math scores were what they needed to get the good jobs. And they bought into it.”

Thomas, whose math classes and courses have helped applicants in a variety of fields, said she recently made changes to her program that are making a marked difference in students’ scores. Realizing that students lacked a basic grasp of the multiplication tables, which was slowing them down on everything else, she added a Day of Remediation in math that precedes her 40-hour course. She also required that students complete two workbooks following the Day of Remediation math course in order to be allowed to continue with the rest of the boot camp.

“How can you do math without the times tables?” she asked. “You can’t. This is cognitively demanding work. But if you know your times tables, you can take my course and do well.”

During the Day of Remediation, Thomas drills students on the multiplication tables and uses research on developing better working memory to help them with faster recall so that they can keep up with the rest of the course. Then, students continue to drill and work problems on their own using two workbooks she developed, which they must complete over a two-week period before continuing with her 40-hour course. When the course is over, students spend a day with her working on practice tests and then they take the CAST.

“The students seemed very engaged,” Kuhn said. “They knew this was important. They wanted those good jobs.”

Growing Your Own, Together

In the Tennessee Valley, much like the rest of the country, employers are worried about how they’ll replace a graying workforce. At the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), skilled workers are a particular concern.

Other industries in the region are having the same problem. Whether it’s Blue Cross Blue Shield, Amazon.com, Volkswagen, or the chemical industry, everyone is wondering how they’ll find enough skilled workers as an increasing number of Baby Boomers retire.

Lane Winchester, Program Manager for Talent Sourcing at TVA, knows the problem won’t really hit hard for another few years. But she and her counterparts at other STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) industries in the region also know that if they don’t do something now to start generating interest among the next generation of workers, they just won’t have any applicants with the right skill sets.

So they’ve joined forces with other key stakeholders in the region to make sure young people in the Tennessee Valley have a much greater awareness of STEM careers, as well as an opportunity to do the kind of hands-on learning that will make them attractive candidates for these jobs. Industry leaders have partnered with the Tennessee Departments of Education and Labor to develop high schools specializing in STEM education that both share facilities as well as feed into the local community college system.

“To solve our problem five years from now, we need to focus on the 8th graders now,” Winchester said. “We want to encourage students to stay on this path so they will be prepared for these jobs and we won’t have to hire from outside the Valley. A local population of qualified, skilled workers is in all of our best interests.”

TVA and other industries provide funding for the STEM schools, as well as assistance with curriculum development and retired workers to teach some of the specialized classes. The community colleges, such as Chattanooga State, provide space on campus and likewise assistance with curriculum development. Chattanooga State also shares its lab facilities with the STEM-focused high school.

“The purpose is to get more students into the STEM disciplines, with the larger goal of getting into STEM careers,” said Tim McGhee, Dean of Engineering Technology for Chattanooga State Community College. “The program is in its infancy,” he added, noting that just 75 freshmen students had enrolled but that the hope was an additional 75 would be added each year until a full high school student body was created.

“We’re trying to bring in the entire southeastern part of Tennessee,” he said, explaining that there were six STEM high school hubs in all for the state.

Winchester said the schools are particularly useful to industry because they teach students how to solve real-world problems, work in teams, and focus on communications skills. “It’s a very practical way of learning and highlights the softer skills needed to work with a diverse workforce,” she said.

The STEM School at Chattanooga State will include a component that focuses on commercial nuclear power, since there are three nuclear power plants in the area, McGhee said. The region also includes a large manufacturing and IT base, “so there’s a need for STEM technicians and STEM engineers. It was kind of a natural fit for us to take the lead at Chattanooga State.”

Videos Highlight Minnesota Energy Grant Work

Remember the stimulus funds that were supposed to help people get jobs? Well, in Minnesota they’re doing just that, thanks to the efforts of the Minnesota State Energy Sector Partnership (MSESP).

Anyone who wants to see where the money’s going can log on to the partnership’s website at <http://www.gwdc.org/initiatives/mseps/index.html> and watch any of the 25 videos produced with roughly \$30,000 of a \$6 million Department of Labor grant. The videos highlight all of the work being done under the grant and the GIECP program, which identifies low-income youth aged 16-24 in need of training to position them for energy industry jobs in the region.

“The GIECP program has been very helpful,” said Michael Treasure, a student at Hibbing Community and Technical College, who is featured in one of the videos. “It has actually made it possible for me to go to school because I’m not exactly from one of the richest families.

Treasure’s tuition is paid under the federal grant, which is being used to bolster and continue programs launched under the GIECP grant from CEWD. Students participating in the program can also receive financial assistance to overcome other daily challenges such as childcare, transportation issues, and living expenses, Eriann Faris, Youth Program Manager for the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, Inc., explains in the video.

The GIECP program enables them to help low-income students overcome whatever barriers they face in completing their education and training, in addition to getting a better understanding of what energy employers are looking for, how to network when looking for a job, and how to navigate the entire job search process, she said. “They get great information at school but they don’t know how to sell it to the employer,” she notes in the video. “That’s where we come in.”

Teresa Kittridge, Project Manager for the MSESP Grant, said the videos were made to showcase and build sustainability forward for the projects, such as GIECP, made possible with the two grants. To date, the partnership has funded 25 projects around the state, training 1,782 individuals, 1,610 of whom have earned at least one credential. More than 1,000 have entered employment.

In addition to being featured on the partnership’s website, the videos (in the form of DVDs) were handed out to state lawmakers and other key stakeholders at a recent MSESP meeting at the state capitol, Kittridge said. There’s also a brochure that highlights all of the partnership’s work, she added.

The state energy consortium is continuing to look for ways to share the information to maximize its usefulness, she said, as part of a strategic plan under development to guide partners as they continue to move forward.

“That will help us determine what comes next,” she said.

Collaborating in the Great Lakes

Will a comprehensive strategic plan help state energy consortia better balance supply and demand when it comes to building tomorrow’s energy workforce?

It should, organizers of the Great Lakes Regional Consortium believe. That’s the hypothesis that’s being tested under a grant given to CEWD by The Joyce Foundation to determine what makes state energy consortia most effective in filling the energy workforce pipeline.

“We believe consortia that have a comprehensive strategic plan in place are better prepared in the long-term to ensure that they have an adequate supply of energy workers,” said Rosa Schmidt, a CEWD consultant who is the project manager for this initiative.

Consortia are developing strategic plans in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio, said Beth Britt, a CEWD consultant who is working with individual state consortia in the Great Lakes region to develop their long-term strategy. They will present their strategic objectives to each other at the end of the month and determine where it makes sense to collaborate at the regional level.

“There are two levels of collaboration, at least,” Britt said. “Within each consortium, the idea of bringing the right people to the table and planning as a team is important and generally more effective than a single energy company working alone to fill its hiring needs. So the state consortium itself is a great example of collaboration. At the regional level, collaboration among the states can leverage economies of scale and best practices, to everyone’s advantage.”

State consortia consist of representatives from the energy industry, workforce investment boards, educational institutions such as high schools and community colleges, and government agencies. Some consortia also include contractors and labor unions.

How these consortia will collaborate to work at the regional level remains to be determined, said Schmidt. “We are preparing for that. We will have a candid discussion about the best areas for collaboration after each state presents the work they’ve done already. The states share many things: they share geography; they share knowledge of labor relations activity that wouldn’t necessarily be shared by another region; they share employers, since many utilities operate in multiple states in the region. So there’s value in those companies looking at workforce solutions from a regional standpoint in addition to a state standpoint.”

Schmidt added this work is also providing value to state consortia beyond the Great Lakes. “The tool kits, guides, and other work we are producing for the Great Lakes States will be available to all CEWD members, which will help other consortia conduct systematic workforce planning and build stronger collaborative relationships.”

Bill Doty, Executive Vice President of Vectren and Executive Sponsor of the Indiana Energy Consortium, said collaborative efforts in the Great Lakes would play an important role in regional workforce development.

“The mission of the Indiana Consortium—and others like it across the U.S.—has never been more relevant or needed as our industry faces unprecedented workforce challenges, including emerging technology, evolving energy regulation, and an aging workforce. Indiana has much to gain from the collective intellect of our state consortium, as well as the Great Lakes

States Regional Consortium, and we are very appreciative of The Joyce Foundation for their funding and support.”

In the coming months, state consortia will begin to identify both short-term and long-term actions that will address their objectives, and begin building task force activities around these actions.

“There will be different objectives within each state based on their background and needs and data,” Britt said.

Though it’s too early to know all of the opportunities for collaboration, Britt said it’s possible the regional representatives will want to discuss diversity in the talent pipeline. “Every state has identified diversity as an area of concern in one way or another,” she said. “So are there opportunities to address diversity at a regional level?”

“That might be a worthwhile discussion.”

Upcoming

Careers in Energy Week

October 14-20, 2013

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Arlington, VA

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