

Right Skills Now

Providing Skilled, Credentialed and Work-Ready Manufacturing Talent Now

C CR

I

MODEL SUMMARY

The Right Skills Now initiative is a fast-track training program that provides participants college credit, four industry-recognized credentials and the opportunity to work at an accelerated manufacturing internship.

BACKGROUND

The Right Skills Now manufacturing program was started in 2011 in response to a request from the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness High-Tech Education Committee. At that time, a report from Deloitte and Touche and The Manufacturing Institute, *Boiling Point? The skills gap in U.S. manufacturing*, found that more than 80 percent of manufacturers reported difficulty recruiting skilled candidates to fill more than 500,000 open positions in manufacturing, despite reported high unemployment rates. Darlene Miller, co-chair of the High-Tech Education Committee and president and CEO of Minnesota-based Permac Industries, communicated to President Obama the urgent need for workers with the

PARTNERSHIP

Right Skills Now was designed in partnership with NIMS, ACT and The Manufacturing Institute, the 501(c)3 affiliate of the National Association of Manufacturers. Inaugural program educational partners included Dunwoody College

NUTS AND BOLTS

Right Skills Now is a 16- to 24-week hands-on training program that provides industry-demanded, competency-based skills and credentials needed for the machining industry. The focus of the program is on nontraditional entrants (career switchers, underemployed and unemployed) and transitioning military personnel looking for fast-track skills training leading to immediate employment opportunities.

KEY ELEMENTS OF MODEL

- Industry-recognized credentials
- National Career Readiness Certificate
- Pathway to career in manufacturing
- Credit toward an associate/bachelor's degree
- Skilled labor pipeline for manufacturing businesses of varying size

right skills and talent to drive innovation and to keep up with demand in the manufacturing industry. For Permac Industries, the demand for skilled computer numeric controlled machinists was particularly strong. The Jobs Council charged Miller with finding solutions to address the skills gap facing her industry. She took the challenge to the National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS) and the Manufacturing Institute, which together created a national fast-track manufacturing program to produce the needed credentialed talent.

of Technology and South Central Community College, both located in Minnesota. Right Skills Now programs have since spread across the country.

Key elements of the program include:

- **National Career Readiness Certificate:** Individuals interested in enrolling in a Right Skills Now program must first pass the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate Exam. The exam tests major employability skills demanded by American companies. After gaining certification, students register for the program at one of the nation's community colleges or technical schools offering the Right Skills Now program.

KEY:

A Apprenticeship

C Certification

CE Career Expo

CO Cooperative Education/Co-op

CR Credentials

CT Clinical Training/
Practicum

E Externship

H Hands-on Training

IT Industry Tour

I Internship

M Mentorship

OJT On-the-Job Training

OB Online and Blended
Classroom Training

- **NIMS Credentials:** At the culmination of each course, students complete performance and theory assessments to obtain four industry-recognized NIMS credentials.
- **Right Skills Now Certificate and College Credit:** Right Skills Now academic training provides students the knowledge and skills demanded by advanced manufacturing operations. Depending on the area of study, students receive up to 20 credits toward an associate or bachelor's degree and a Right Skills Now Certificate.
- **Career Counseling:** Schools guide students in the development of a professional portfolio (resume and sample classroom or lab project).
- **Paid, For-Credit Internship:** Students participate in a six- to eight-week internship at a Right Skills Now partner manufacturing company. As part of the internship, the intern completes identified learning objectives and receives a performance assessment from the company.
- **Mentorship and Career Exploration:** At Permac Industries, interns are placed in the company's Quality Lab and work one on one with skilled computer numeric control machinists who serve as their

mentors. Interns learn about the types of machined parts Permac produces while also exploring advanced manufacturing career paths — from quality technician to purchasing manager.

“At Permac, we do not measure the success of the program just in monetary returns. The rewards are evident in the smiles of Right Skills Now graduates who are growing the business, challenging staff to approach problems in innovative ways, and mentoring future students on the benefits of program participation and pursuing a career in manufacturing.”

— Darlene Miller, President and CEO, Permac Industries

PROGRAM BENEFITS, RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

For the student, the Right Skills Now program benefits include:

- **Attainment of the Academic, Personal, Career and Technical Skills Needed To Land an Immediate Entry-Level Manufacturing Job:** Right Skills Now is designed as a full-time program to ensure that students qualify for financial aid while in the classroom and at their internship site.
- **Access to In-Demand Jobs:** Individuals enrolled in the program pay tuition fees (depending on school location) and in return have immediate access to skilled manufacturing jobs. For students at Dunwoody College of Technology, for example, the Right Skills Now placement rate is almost 100 percent.
- **Being on Track to a Well-Paying Job with Opportunities for Advancement:** The average starting salary for Right Skills Now graduates at Dunwoody College of Technology is \$18 per hour. According to the latest Precision Machined Products Association (PMPA) research, the opportunities for advancement may result in pay of up to \$34 per hour.

For the business, the Right Skills Now program benefits include:

- **An established pipeline of qualified, skilled and credentialed individuals to meet employer hiring needs,** thereby reducing the time and effort wasted on unqualified or uninterested candidates.



A Permac Industries employee and Right Skills Now program graduate.

- **A cadre of dedicated interns** who have demonstrated their eagerness to learn new skills; are able to add value from day one on the job; and contribute to company growth, productivity and competitiveness.
- **Improved employee morale** and emphasis on approaching problems in new and innovative ways.

- **Opportunities for mentoring** entry-level colleagues.
- **Reduced employee turnover.**
- **Employees with NIMS-credentialed, transportable skills** in high demand by employers.

■ SUSTAINABILITY AND OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The Right Skills Now program is nationally recognized as a fast-track solution to providing high-skilled, credentialed talent for the shop floor in less than six months. Right Skills Now partners are dedicated to expanding the model to close the advanced manufacturing talent skills gap even further. In July 2015, the PMPA Educational

Foundation announced grant opportunities to cover the cost of credentialing incurred by educational institutions. As part of the announcement, PMPA awarded grants to Ohio's Lorain County Community College and Stark State College to develop Right Skills Now programs.

■ WORDS OF WISDOM

To develop a fast-track training program, the Right Skills Now program partners recommend:

To Companies:

- Establish a relationship with a local technical or community college to create the program.
- Commit to consistently hosting interns and hiring program graduates.
- Engage fellow businesses in supporting the program.

To Technical or Community Colleges:

- Establish a full-time internship program. This will enable participants to qualify for financial aid, making the program more affordable. At Dunwoody College of Technology, students are required to complete (at a minimum) a six-week internship with 30 hours of work per week.

- Work directly with invested employers to place interns and program graduates, rather than outsourcing through recruiting agencies.
- Include a prerequisite skills assessment, such as the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate Exam, to ensure that students have the aptitude necessary to succeed in a given career area.

Note of caution: Fast-track programs are not recommended for occupations, including careers in health care, that have state laws regulating the hours needed to complete a program or gain a certification.

INFORMATION, TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- **Right Skills Now** <http://rightskillsnow.org>
- **How To Join the Right Skills Now Initiative** <http://rightskillsnow.org/action>

CONTACT

Melanie Stover
Director of Strategic Initiatives
 NIMS
 Phone: 703-352-4971
 Email: mstover@nims-skills.org

Descriptions of Common Work-and-Learn Models

A Glossary of Key Terms

Following are descriptions of the most common and effective work-and-learn models that are a part of business and industry programs nationwide.

Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is a unique, flexible training system that combines job-related technical instruction with structured on-the-job learning experiences. It provides a unique combination of structured learning with on-the-job training from an assigned mentor. Related instruction, technical training or other certified training is provided by apprenticeship training centers, technical schools, community colleges, and/or institutions employing distance and computer-based learning approaches. The goal is to provide workers with advanced skill sets that meet the specific needs of employers. In many cases, these programs provide apprentices the opportunity to simultaneously obtain secondary and postsecondary degrees, as well as credentials issued by third-party industry organizations. (Source: U.S. Department of Labor)

Career Fair, Career Expo, Job Fair

A career fair, also called a career expo or job fair, is an event held for employers and recruiters to meet with potential job candidates. Industry representatives set up exhibition booths — usually at a secondary or postsecondary institution — where students and job seekers can find information about different career fields, training opportunities and jobs currently available. Career fairs give employers an opportunity to interact with future job candidates and make direct contact with students who are making decisions about what education, training and career to pursue. Quality career fairs offer hands-on activities to participants, allowing them to see firsthand what a job in the industry entails.

Clinical Training/Practicum

Clinical training combines classroom learning with supervised hands-on immersion experiences in specific fields, mostly in industries that involve human services. In health fields, clinical training is founded on actual observation and lab instruction and/or treatment of patients, as distinguished from theoretical or experimental training. The training is usually highly specialized and includes coursework specific to performing functions and tasks in an actual workplace. (Sources: Siemens Clinical Training & Continuing Education; Clinical Training Institute)

Cooperative Education/Co-Op

Cooperative education is the integration of classroom theory with practical work experience, through which students alternate attendance at school with periods of professional employment. At the high school level, the periods of classroom and work-based experience are usually half-days. In higher education, the alternation is most often on a longer time scale. Cooperative education programs enable students to apply technical skills already acquired through the education institution in a real-world workplace setting. Traditionally, cooperative education has been used to aid a student's transition from school to work, while providing participating employers an opportunity to attract, evaluate, train and ultimately employ a ready source of educated and skilled employees. (Sources: Center for Manufacturing Excellence, University of Mississippi; University of Cincinnati)

Externship

An externship is typically a training program offered by educational institutions and private businesses that gives students brief practical experiences in their field of study and insight and knowledge in a particular career field.

Often shorter term than internships, externships are intensive career learning experiences that typically range from two days to two weeks. Although more immersive and structured than job shadowing, these experiences provide the opportunity for students to see firsthand the work activities and responsibilities in various professions and industries. The experience should provide the learner a greater sense of the knowledge, skills and attributes of people who thrive within that given career pathway and industry sector and a complete experience of day-to-day work life.

Hands-On Training

Hands-on training provides student learners an opportunity to use their hands to perform tasks. This training aims to simulate conditions that are as close as possible to real work conditions while avoiding the risks commonly associated with a new employee. In hands-on training, participants typically have the opportunity for repeated practice.

Industry Tour

Companies offer guided tours of their facilities to let students, parents and the general public witness firsthand the day-to-day operations of the business. Typically lasting up to two hours, tours are led by knowledgeable staff members who show and describe the companies' processes, products and protocols, as well as point out the skills and training needed for different jobs. Quality industry tours typically result in greater awareness of the company and the industry and increased engagement with the local community, schools and future employees.

Internship

An internship is a formal program that provides practical experience for learners in an occupation or profession, during which the learner is immersed in a work situation for a limited period of time. Internships can be paid or unpaid and usually accompany or relate to academic coursework or training. A quality internship provides the learner an increasingly thorough grasp of the career field, extensive experience in specific job functions, application of education and training to specific duties, and a feel for what it is like to work on a daily basis in the industry. While not always intended to result in employment at the sponsoring company, internships help employers expose potential workers to their workplace and industry and recruit, screen and test-fit future job candidates before they are hired full time.

Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is a work experience option through which students learn about a job by walking through the working day as a shadow to a competent worker. The job shadowing work experience is a temporary, unpaid exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of interest to the student. Students witness firsthand the work environment, employability and occupational skills in practice, the value of professional training, and potential career options. Job shadowing is designed to increase career awareness, help model student behavior through examples, and reinforce for the student the link between classroom learning and work requirements. Almost any workplace is a potential job-shadowing site. (Source: Paris, K., and Mason, S. (1995). *Planning and Implementing Youth Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Center on Education and Work)

Mentorship

Mentorship is the coupling of a novice with an older, more experienced professional wherein the expert shares knowledge and experience with the novice over the course of time. Mentorship can be either formal or informal and can happen face to face; online; or in conjunction with other work-and-learn opportunities, such as internships and job shadowing. Mentorships help mentored youth improve their overall academic achievement and develop the necessary skills to enter or continue on a career path. They also provide guidance for decision making. Quality mentorships usually involve mentee training and alignment to the company's culture and goals.

On-the-Job Training (OJT)

OJT is training by an employer that is provided to a paid participant (either an incoming or incumbent employee) while engaged in productive work in a job that provides knowledge or skills essential to the adequate performance of the job. OJT is usually limited in duration, as appropriate to the occupation for which the participant is being trained, taking into account the content of the training, the prior work experience of the participant and the service strategy of the participant, as appropriate. (Source: Workforce Investment Act)

Pre-Apprenticeship

Pre-apprenticeship is defined by the Employment and Training Administration as “a program or set of strategies [that is] designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship program and has a documented partnership with at least one, if not more, Registered Apprenticeship program(s).” Since the pre-apprenticeship model is meant to prepare learners to enter a registered apprenticeship, a quality model provides sufficient applied academic training, as well as industry-based technical skills training and practice, to ensure that students transition successfully into an apprenticeship.

Registered Apprenticeship

A registered apprenticeship encompasses the details and benefits listed in the “Apprenticeship” definition. Additionally, it meets national apprenticeship standards outlined by the registration process with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship or through a state apprenticeship agency. Upon completion of a registered apprenticeship program, participants receive a portable credential (provided by DOL or the state apprenticeship agency) that certifies occupational proficiency as a journey worker for the selected occupation. For more information on the DOL registered apprenticeship program, please visit: www.dol.gov/apprenticeship. (Source: U.S. Department of Labor)

Returnship

A returnship is an internship specifically designed for older professionals who have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time to re-enter a career. In many cases, they are designed to help these individuals refresh their skill sets and learn new technologies before returning as full-time employees. Often lasting around 10 weeks, a returnship provides individuals with an opportunity to sharpen their skills in a given career path or pursue new areas of expertise in a work environment that may have changed significantly since their last experience as an employee. Returnships also give employers the opportunity to screen returning experienced applicants before hiring them full time. (Sources: Goldman Sachs; CareerBuilder)

RESOURCES

- **21st Century Competency-Based Apprenticeship Resources**
<http://bit.ly/1RcO4Uh>
- **Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce: *Learning While Earning: The New Normal***
<http://bit.ly/1XJMXzw>
- **National Network of Business and Industry Associations: Common Employability Skills**
<http://bit.ly/1KCBUUP>
- **National Network of Business and Industry Associations: Grads of Life ROI Calculator**
<http://bit.ly/1X6yKMP>
- **McGraw-Hill Construction Report: *Construction Industry Workforce Shortages***
<http://bit.ly/1NesrCd>
- **Change the Equation: *Work-Based Learning: An Employer's Guide***
<http://bit.ly/1jDn6du>
- **U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship**
www.dol.gov/apprenticeship

Contributors

The National Network acknowledges the contributions of the following companies, associations and educational institutions whose time, ideas and feedback made this guidebook possible.





NATIONAL
NETWORK

CONNECTING LEARNING AND WORK

www.nationalnetwork.org