

ABSTRACT

Applicant Name: West Central Job Partnership

Applicant Category: Consortia of Local Workforce Investment Boards

Lead Applicant City/State: New Castle, Pennsylvania

Areas Served By the Grant: Lawrence and Mercer Counties in Pennsylvania
And Trumbull, Mahoning and Columbiana Counties in Ohio

Project Name: Oh-Penn Interstate Region Pathways to Competitiveness

Funding Level Requested: \$6 million

Technical Proposal Costs: \$5,550,000

Evaluation Cost: \$450,000

Project Type: B

Description of the Proposed Project: The nation's first officially designated Interstate Region sits in the heart of the Marcellus and Utica oil and shale plays and is positioned for a manufacturing renaissance. On the border of Ohio and Pennsylvania in the Youngstown-Warren-Sharon OH-PA Metropolitan Statistical Area, the Oh-Penn Interstate Region seeks to address the acute and critical manufacturing skills shortages being created by manufacturing growth, combined with openings from the onslaught of Baby Boomer retirements, an insufficient pipeline of young people interested in manufacturing and competition from the oil and gas industry for an already insufficient talent pool.

The goals of the Oh-Penn Interstate Region Pathways to Competitiveness project are to:

- Build on the Nation's first Interstate Region to **create stronger cooperation** and alignment across state lines, programs and funding streams to achieve improved efficiencies and **better results** for job seekers and employers alike;
- Create a **robust sector strategy** that aligns employment and training services with the critical skill needs of regional manufacturers; and

- Build out manufacturing **career pathways**.

The primary activities that will be undertaken as part of the Oh-Penn Interstate Region Pathways to Competitiveness Project include:

- Promote Nationally-recognized Assessments and Credentials and Career Pathways to Employers and Job Seekers
- Replicate Successful Pipeline Development Activities
- Create More Opportunities for Professional Development and Industry Exposure
- Increase Availability of Hands-on Learning
- Integrate Sector Partnerships
- Conduct a Career Pathways Gap Analysis
- Improve and Align Programs to Fill Career Pathways Gaps
- Integrate Workforce Systems to Share Information

The desired outcomes for the Pathways to Competitiveness project include increased enrollment in manufacturing career pathway programs and attainment of nationally recognized credentials, which will in turn, lead to employment and earnings outcomes for individuals and increased competitiveness for employers. The project will position the public workforce system as an intermediary and will create a sustainable, collaborative operational framework to identify and meet the ever-changing needs of employers and, in turn, connect individuals to manufacturing opportunities.

Description of the Proposed Evaluation Strategy: The primary purpose of this evaluation is twofold: One, the Oh-Penn Interstate Region seeks to build evidence-based practices into the program, throughout the life of this grant and beyond; and, two, the Region seeks to determine whether, and in what ways, this program can be scaled to the broader workforce development community in the future.

Ultimately, the evaluation process will provide program partners a thorough understanding of whether activities led to the predicted outcomes and impacts and will result in a list of recommendations and best

practices for creating a collaborative, seamless and customer-focused partnership structure to deliver more effective and efficient business services through the public workforce system.

The evaluation strategy will focus on implementation and outcomes evaluation as well as a return on investment analysis. This evaluation process will allow the Oh-Penn Interstate Region to provide the following results:

- Gather valuable data regarding program performance, outcomes, and impacts;
- Incorporate lessons learned throughout the duration of the program;
- Make measurable adjustments to program strategy to improve outcomes;
- Identify the program's unintended effects, both positive and negative;
- Evaluate the program's return on investment;
- Integrate stakeholder feedback into future program sustainability decisions;
- Determine key elements of program implement
- Action most responsible for desired outcomes; and
- Provide the broader workforce development community with detailed recommendations, best practices, reasonable performance expectations, and suggestions for improvement, in order for other workforce boards to scale our efforts or translate our program design to other communities.

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