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SPECIAL SERIES: BUILDING CONNECTICUT'S WORKFORCE PIPELINE

Scaling the right models



Mark Hill, Chief Operating Officer, Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board

BUILDING CONNECTICUT'S WORKFORCE PIPELINE

A successful program

From Jan. 2016 to July 2018, the Eastern CT Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative has put up impressive numbers in terms of job placement success. Several officials around the state say the model can be applied to other industries and regions.

Job placements	1,023
Placement rate	92%
Placements with no prior manufacturing experience	78%
Direct and indirect jobs	2,500
Total value of annual wages	$88M

Source: EWIB

MATT PILON

One workforce-development effort that many insiders point to as a model for future success is the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board's (EWIB) Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative.

The program is anchored by the hiring needs of Groton submarine maker Electric Boat, which must add hundreds of workers to meet its obligations under massive federal submarine contracts.

Electric Boat has worked in coordination with EWIB and a network of area manufacturers, colleges and high schools, to develop employer-driven curriculum and standards that provide high odds of trainees landing jobs afterward.

From Jan. 2016 to July 2018, Electric Boat hired 1,023 program participants, equivalent to a more than 90 percent placement rate. Surprisingly, nearly four in five trainees have had no previous manufacturing experience.

The $50 million apprenticeship program approved by the legislature earlier this year was largely based on the pipeline program's success, officials said.

Mark Hill, EWIB's chief operating officer, said the initiative's secret sauce is an unusually tight collaboration between key stakeholders, and using American Job Centers as portals for assessing and upskilling candidates to funnel them into the intensive program, which involves up to 300 hours of training in welding, machining and design and drafting.

"You need the profession, the academia, the organized labor, you need all these groups at the table so they all buy into it," he said.

The program was launched with the help of a $6 million competitive federal grant, and has since been extended with the help of approximately $10 million in state and private foundation money.

Hill said he believes the model carries broader promise and hopes it will be utilized by others.

"This could theoretically be done in any geography or industry," he said.