

Workforce Learning Summit Innovation/Best Practice

Southeastern Community College

Project PRIME: Plastics Resources in Manufacturing Excellence

Project PRIME is designed to provide the comprehensive training and employment assistance necessary for individuals to fill identified new jobs in the polymer/plastics extrusion industry. While the immediate training need is for an announced industry expansion, the training plan is based on skills and third-party credentials that are easily transferable to other similar manufacturing companies in southeastern North Carolina. Components include customized industrial training, short-term workforce development (occupational skills) training, soft skills, health and safety training, articulation to associate degrees, transferable third-party credentials, on-the-job training (OJT), linkages with the Columbus Career and College Academy (CCA) in Fair Bluff, and paid internships for high school and college students.

This project serves unemployed, underemployed, and dislocated workers, as well as students enrolled at Southeastern Community College and the Columbus Career and College Academy (CCA), which is located in Fair Bluff, NC.

DETAILS

Project PRIME is designed to provide comprehensive training and employment assistance necessary for individuals seeking employment in the manufacturing sector with emphasis on skills sets associated with the plastics/polymer extrusion industry. Activities are based on skills and third-party credentials that are easily transferable to other manufacturing companies in southeastern North Carolina.

Partners and their roles include:

- Golden LEAF Foundation – planning, funding and third party evaluation assistance
- North Carolina’s Southeast – promotes SCC as a regional training center for plastics/polymer industries
- PlyGem, National Spinning, regional plastic employers/manufacturers, Columbus County Schools, NC Community College System, and the Whiteville and Columbus County JobLink Career Centers – assist with identifying necessary skills and competencies, assist with curriculum development and program design, help define and achieve program strategies and outcomes, and provide resources to support education/training.
- Columbus County Economic Development Commission - assists with identifying necessary skills and competencies, assists with curriculum development and program design, helps define and achieve program strategies and outcomes
- Cape Fear Workforce Development Board – helps define and achieve program strategies and outcomes; provides resources to support education/training

Project components are short-term workforce development training, third-party credentials, job readiness skills, health/safety training, paid internships for high school and community college

students, on-the-job (OJT) training, articulation to associate degrees (CE to CU), and linkages with the Columbus Career and College Academy.

Target populations are:

- Unemployed, underemployed and dislocated workers
- Incumbent workers employed part-time or in low-wage jobs
- Continuing education and curriculum students enrolled at Southeastern Community College
- Early college students enrolled at Columbus Career and College Academy

Implementation began in early 2013.

Partner Type(s):

- Business/Industry (direct involvement)
- Economic Development
- Workforce Development Board/One-Stop
- Public Schools

Impact/Outcomes

- Strengthened existing collaborative efforts with partnering groups
- Created new career pathways for target populations
- Increased responsiveness to employer-driven training and employment opportunities
- Increased capacity building and infrastructure for training programs requested by local and regional manufacturers

Funding Sources

Golden LEAF Foundation - \$275,000; NC Back-to-Work grant - \$120,000; Workforce Investment Act (WIA) approx. \$50,000

REFLECTIONS

Innovation or Best Practice

Project PRIME is a comprehensive program serving several target populations with opportunities for defined career pathways while incorporating third-party stackable credentials, OJT, apprenticeship, soft skills, occupational extension training, articulation from CE to CU, and customized training for incumbent workers. It is an employer-driven response to direct requests for assistance with training and employment to meet current and anticipated labor force needs.

Lessons Learned

- Have the right team/partners at the table from the beginning
- Design strategies that are responsive to employers' needs within their timeframes

Scalability

- Project PRIME components are available at most NC community colleges
 - While Project PRIME is a comprehensive approach, components can be broken apart for replication.
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RESOURCES

Workforce Learning Summit Presenters

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Southeastern Community College

Lauren Cole, Acting Vice-President of Academic Affairs
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For Further Information

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