

Armstrong County Manufacturing Consortium

February 05, 2009

Attending: Alex Stockmal (Mid-Atlantic District Labs), Joe Goldcamp (Nature's Blend), Vickie DeThomas (OmniTech Partners), Randy Bowser (Alkab), Chuck Slagle (CES Die Design), Rich Muth (IUP Northpointe), Joe Fullerton (Lenape Tech), Pat Hollinger (Penn State New Kensington), David English (AET), Jim Pish (Dielectric Solutions), Jeff Fullerton (DRS Technologies), Lori Harvey (Penn State Electro-Optics Center), Mary Salony (TCWIB)

Guest Speaker: Mindy Knappenberger (Armstrong County Community Foundation)

Chair Alex Stockmal called the meeting to order at 7:37 AM.

Guest Speaker

Alex introduced Mindy who presented information on the Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program for the company members. The program has changed over the last year, now allowing almost every business that pays taxes in the state to participate in the program. Options include scholarship organizations and pre-K scholarship organizations as well as educational improvement organizations. In our area, the Armstrong County Community Foundation and the Armstrong Educational Trust (on behalf of the Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center) are organizations which can be beneficiaries of these funds.

Tri-County Strategic Plan

Copies of the current tri-county strategic plan for manufacturing were available for members. The state is focusing on regional approaches. Shared training for all three counties has been a plus for us, but we need to keep looking at this more directly.

Mary mentioned that a visit from the state may be forthcoming to observe and report back on findings and recommendations for us to be more regional.

An option for working together may be to have more regional meetings and planning. We need to show how we are evolving and growing. The focus on continuing to work collaboratively with all the counties' employers should help us.

The group agreed that we can and should put together a joint meeting on a more routine basis.

The new coordinator will pull together a meeting of the Armstrong, Butler, and Indiana Counties' employers. At a meeting, we can update the current plan.

Alex asked members to review the current plan and make recommendations for changes or additions.

The group also received copies of the Tri-County Workforce Investment Board's strategic plan. The consortia's plans should tie in to this plan as well. Members should review this plan as well to see if there are any issues with tying our manufacturing plans into the overall plan for the three counties' workforce development plans.

Industry Partnership Funding

Our funding for this year (2008-2009) is still not here. We are told it will be available on March 1. Mary announced that the funding for IP was put together with the funding for the Tri-County Technology Consortium's funding. So the chairs have agreed to move ahead with the tuition reimbursement program now since the manufacturing industry partnership funding was sent with the technology consortium funds. The money will still have to be spent by June 30.

Funding will be a major issue for the coming year. The Governor's proposed budget includes many cuts in programs and services as well as increases in taxes. Dave suggested that we identify one or two priorities as a group to share with our legislative representatives.

Committee Reports

- Public Awareness - radio campaign. The January program showcased the marketing director from Catalyst Connection who discussed the regional manufacturing environment. For February, we may wish to focus on the adjustments in the budget and its impact on Armstrong County.
- Preferred vendors - no report
- Training - Everyone is encouraged to take advantage of the tuition reimbursement program which is available from July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009. Jeff asked about the possibility of in-house training programs for reimbursement. Application forms will be reviewed beginning in March. Electronic versions will be sent out to members who did not receive hard copies today.
- Educational awareness - We sent two students from Lenape to a robotics program at Robert Morris University. The Females Advancing STEM Excellence (FASE) group will meet next week to plan for programs and activities coming up.
- New members - We have a campaign planned to recruit new company members. We will ask the members to identify one or

two prospective members to speak one on one about membership.

Old Business

Adventures in Technology program - Scott Dietz sent a list of all companies and schools who have or are participating in the program for our review. Please let Dave or Scott know if you are interested.

Educator in the Workplace and Job Shadowing programs - We have many teachers interested in participating in these programs, and would like to try to add more employers to the list of possibilities. Please let Dave, Joe Fullerton, or Lori know if you are interested. Joe mentioned that he, as chair of the Career Pathways sub-committee, is strongly interested in the idea of working with counselors this year. He also suggested that we work on making the program a more intensive program with longer time spent at the workplace instead of just a visit. Joe reported that for Act 48 credits to be available for the participating teachers, they must spend at least 3 hours in the program. We may want to let teachers know that manufacturers are willing to host teachers without pay as workers for even a short time.

New Business

The county-wide career fair at Lenape will be held on February 23 for all ninth-graders in Apollo-Ridge, Armstrong, Freeport, and Leechburg schools. Vickie, Jim, and Jeff will be representing the manufacturing cluster.

Alex and Joe attended a presentation at Gorell in Indiana on using suggestions from employees to improve processes. They focus on suggestions that employees can actually use to make their jobs easier or implement. Gorell has identified several areas for improvements based on these suggestions, not just on the floor but in the administrative area as well. Gorell used WEDnetPA funding to help put the program in place. In Indiana County, Clark Metals has also used this quite a bit. Nature's Blend may decide to use some of what they learned.

Partners Update

- Penn State New Kensington - new manufacturing group bulletin board in Westmoreland County, may wish to enroll our companies here. Grant for encouraging manufacturing with Kiski Area School District, may wish to expand to other counties and companies. STEM state representative will be at PSNK next

- week. Leadership Alle-Kiski hosting a murder mystery coming up.
- Lenape has had great demand for welding this year. One class was already filled, and they are adding another class. If there is interest, please contact Joe.

Company Updates

- Nature's Blend - will have a booth at the StrongLand Home Expo this weekend at Pittsburgh Mills promoting the potential to do home wood work.
- Dielectric Solutions - they have several new customers in the pipeline, so they are very happy with the news in the current economy. May be hiring in the future as the business rolls in.

Alex reminded everyone to fill out and turn in the in-kind reports. These should be sent to Mary until the new coordinator, Ken Raybuck, starts.

Next meeting: March 5, 2009 at 7:30 AM for members and resource partners.