



Community Education Councils

**Accomplishing Incredible Results
In Spite of Incredible Odds**

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This “White Paper” was prepared by the Keystone Community Education Council Team to demonstrate the compelling need for continued funding for the Community Education Councils in order that the educational needs for the rural communities can be met.

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Overview

The Community Education Councils (CECs) are essential in driving Pennsylvania's rural economic engine. The CECs are facilitators/brokers of **employer driven** educational programs with the unique ability to be fluid and provide needed educational programming, in time and on time. The CECs have been noted for being "Strategic Doers" in meeting the educational and training needs of the rural communities. The CECs identify and fill current needs as well as predicting future needs and have demonstrated a **2-1 return on investment**. The CECs have been an integral partner in building a more competitive rural workforce and strong rural economies. Through their collaborative efforts they promote change and increase the skills of the local rural workforce.

Examples of employer driven educational programs that would not be available to the rural areas if the Community Education Councils did not exist are: National Hardwood Lumber Association Lumber Inspection Certification, Basics of Program Evaluation, Behavioral, Academic and Social Interventions for the Classroom, Advancing in Microsoft Excel: Manipulating Data in Excel with Tables & PivotTables, LPN cohorts, A.S. in Business Administration, MS in Education in Curriculum and Instruction, Career Transition Programs, Professional Development Certificate Series, Industrial Safety Programs and other Adult Vocational Education.

Foreseeing the importance of the Marcellus Shale Initiative, Keystone CEC began developing a strategic approach in 2009 to meeting the needs of the Oil and Gas Industry in the communities of the Northwest Region. The following is the sequence of events that have occurred.

- Development of the Northwest PA Oil and Gas Hub Taskforce.
- Meeting with Superintendents of area schools to promote curriculum needs.
- Held the "Community Awareness on Opportunities for you with Marcellus Shale" workshop.
- Development of the www.nwpaMarcellusShale.com website.
- Organized and facilitated the three day "NWPA Marcellus Shale Showcase" for educational professionals, business to business connections and land owners issues.
- Expanded the NWPA Oil and Gas Hub Taskforce, to include economic development, training facilities, and chamber of commerce partners.
- Coordinated the "Showcasing the Educational Opportunities and state of the art safety training facility in NWPA".

- Co-hosted the first Northwest Pa Regional Oil and Gas Job Fair Center with the Oil Region Alliance held in conjunction with the Oil Region CareerLink Job Fair.
- The next event in the sequence will be a high level business to business workshop on June 28, 2011.

There have been thousands of individuals as well as local businesses and Oil and Gas companies who have participated in these events.

The “**Technical Education Initiative**” highlighted in this report illustrates the exceptional collaboration efforts that occurred only because of the coordination expertise of the Keystone Community Education Council (Keystone CEC).

Keystone CEC, in conjunction with Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) and the Career and Technical Schools in Keystone CEC’s service area successfully coordinated the “**Technical Education Initiative**” to offer community college technical programs in Northwest Pennsylvania. Keystone CEC is one of eight CECs in the state’s rural areas which were created to fill a niche filled elsewhere in the state by community colleges. The Keystone CEC facilitates access to post-secondary education and technical training by arranging for existing providers to offer the instruction at local facilities. Programs offered through the initiative are designed to meet the specific workforce and economic development needs of the rural regions.

Challenges for the “Technical Education Initiative”

The challenge is to bring the same affordable, quality technical education offered at the Community Colleges to the underserved rural areas without building a facility. This is accomplished by utilizing the Career and Technology Centers as the “bricks and mortar” during the times that they are not regularly in use.

Pennsylvania is rich in institutions offering four year degrees, masters and doctoral programs but is unfortunately lacking in certificate and associate programs. This is especially true in the rural areas **north of Interstate 80 where there are no community colleges**. Pennsylvania's educational ladder -- outstanding though it may be -- does not reach all the way to the unskilled level. A major factor driving the outflow of jobs and people from rural Pennsylvania is the nearly total deficiency in providing one-year certificates and two-year associate degrees in technology-based disciplines.

Rural communities in Pennsylvania are facing increasingly tough challenges. Evolving technology and changes in the economy have created a need for rural communities to become competitive. As the lifestyle and economy of the rural communities change, so do the employment opportunities and educational needs of the region. Not only is there a need to develop a skilled workforce to meet the current demands of established area employers, but also to have available workforce that will draw new employers to the region.

In order for rural areas to address the challenges of dealing with barriers to higher education at the community, family, and individual levels it is imperative that certain needs be met.

- Families must be made aware of why higher education is important to their family and their community as well as the various types of higher education opportunities and financial assistance programs available.
- High schools must work closely with community colleges to ensure the programs that are provided are articulated and encourage the students to pursue some form of higher education.
- Rural community leaders must work closely with employers to identify training needs and to partner to provide the training necessary to develop a highly skilled local workforce.

Legislators, local workforce agencies, economic development, employers and education must collaborate to build a more competitive workforce and strong rural economies. The partners involved have to work together to develop a new system to promote change and to increase the skills of the rural workforce.

Methodology

The partners must address some issues common to rural counties as well as the programmatic issues in order to accomplish program goals:

- Change attitudes of families, communities, employers, local government, etc. and promote the concept that highly technical training can be provided in the rural areas.
- Provide recognized “portable” industry credentials as well as credit bearing certificates.
- Provide accessibility to training that is close to the student’s home and flexibility in the times of the day and week that programs are offered to accommodate the incumbent worker and their employers, the part-time worker, and the unemployed.
- Provide training in tune with the demands of local and regional employers.
- All partners must work toward creating an educational pipeline for the rural employers and with a consorted effort to include the Marcellus Shale gas industry.
- Break down territorialism by promoting team building and partnerships, and developing common goals.
- Partners must be prepared to quickly change direction to offer new programs as the needs of the communities change.
- Provide coordination of the program by employing a Student Service Advisor/Coordinator is critical.
- CEC’s act as an unbiased coordinator of the program and liaison between the partners.
- Demand meaningful results. Students graduating from technical education programs will achieve portable industry credentials and enter skilled occupations offering family sustaining wages.

Solutions

The “Technical Education Initiative “ is established in Northwest PA and includes the following partners: Keystone CEC, the Community College of Allegheny County, three area Career and Technology Centers, and the Oil Region Alliance.

During 2010 the “Technical Education Initiative” facilitated by the Community Education Council piloted the following Community College programs:

- **BASIC ELECTRONICS CERTIFICATE PROGRAM** - This college credit program is designed to provide the skills required to gain entry-level positions in the electronics and manufacturing industry. This program provides **26 college credits in 9 courses** that provide a path toward the completion of an associate’s in Electronics Engineering Technology or bachelor’s degree. This is a pre-engineering program that may provide an entry into other fields of manufacturing and engineering technology. The program provides **IPC Soldering Certification**.
- **WELDING TECHNOLOGY CERTIFICATE PROGRAM** is a college credit program through CCAC designed to provide the skills required to meet the needs of welding and manufacturing companies for welders, fabricators, and grinders. The certificate program provides **18 college credits in 6 courses** that can be used toward completion of an associate’s or bachelor’s degree. The program provides **AWS D1.1 or D1.5 Certifications**.
- **BASIC MACHINE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM** - The graduates of this program earns **23 college credits in 8 courses** in basic machine skills to gain entry-level positions in the machine and manufacturing industry. The basic machine operations of turning, milling and grinding are covered in specific courses. Students will work in a project-oriented environment with emphasis on precision, quality and development of sound work attitudes and skills. In addition to employment, the program can provide an entry to other fields of manufacturing and engineering technology. The program provides **up to seven NIMS Certifications**.

Outcomes

Accomplishments during 2010:

- Seven Community College technical certificate programs were successfully concluded by utilizing the local Career and Technical schools at times convenient for unemployed, underemployed and working learners.
- Sixty-six students have graduated and earned college credits and program certificates.

- 127 Portable Industry Credentials were earned.
- Students who were unemployed at the time of enrollment but are now employed are earning an average of **\$35,023.00 annually** compared to the average entry level salary in Northwest PA for careers as Electrical Assembler, Machinists, and Welders of \$22,283.

Remarks made during student graduations ceremonies:

- **Congressman G.T. Thompson** insisted that America remains “number one in manufacturing because of the American worker.” “A qualified worker is the best asset we can have,” he said, referring to the challenges ahead. He praised the program for providing “affordable and accessible” job training “right here in the community.”
- **Representative Scott Hutchinson** stated that it was “a model of the kinds of things we need to do if we want to succeed.” “Collaboration and thinking outside the box and getting our citizens access to these kinds of opportunities, that is a model of what we have to do going forward. If we collaborate and work together and invest in our people, we can make this a strong Commonwealth.”

This collaboration would not have occurred without the coordination and leadership of the Community Education Council.

Feedback from the students at the graduation ceremony indicates its success.

- Charles Pearce, a student in the welding certificate program, explained that after 19 years making mobile homes, he lost his job in November 2008. **“But now I have a skill.** I’m a documented certified welder right now and also have college credits,” he said. “This class means a lot to me.”
- Timothy Balas of Oil City noted he was only able to take the basic machine program because it was held locally. “If it had been anywhere else, I wouldn’t have been able to attend. **I’m just glad I had the opportunity to do this,**” he said.
- Forrest Harvey of Pleasantville said he was laid off a year ago and found out that he was going to be a father at about the same time. “I was scared to death. I didn’t know what I was going to do,” he said. But then he signed up for the basic machine course. He said he was recently called back to his job and was made a machine operator and is making \$2 more an hour than he was before he was laid off. “I encourage everyone. **If you get the education, you get the job,**” he said.
- Adam Baughman, a student in the welding certificate program, noted that due to the economy, jobs are hard to find in this area. He said he attended both college and technical school, but his skills did not match the job needs of the region. There are, however, openings in machining and welding, he said. **“We are getting the skills we need for building a career.”**
- Debra Ehrhart, a student in the basic electronics program and an employee of Matric Limited, said such a program that provides technology training for local workers makes it **possible for a company like Matric to remain in the area.**

Future Programs

- The Keystone Community Education Council continues to coordinate these efforts and is currently offering a nine (9) credit Pipe Welding Course and an eighteen (18) credit Welding Certificate program.
- A request has been made for an Electric Motor Control Course which will begin in the Fall of 2011.
- Coordination has begun for a twenty-six (26) credit pre-engineering Basic Electronics Certificate Program and a three credit stand-alone Electric Motor Control course.
- The Department of Environmental Protection has a new regulation for “Casing Welding” where shallow well drillers will be required to have a pipe welding certification by August 5, 2011. In response, a 9 - 12 credit Pipe Welding Program is being coordinated across northwestern Pennsylvania.

Conclusions

The lessons learned will help guide future programming and operations to continue expanding higher education opportunities in rural Pennsylvania.

- The “Technical Education Initiative” has proven to be an exceptionally productive use of resources that were made available to the Community Education Council and illustrates their expertise as facilitators and brokers of educational programs.
- With the ability to be fluid the Community Education Councils can provide training, **in time and on time**.
- The Initiative has been an excellent venue for expanding and increasing access to higher education in rural Northwest Pennsylvania.
- By offering low cost, high quality technology based training in a rural setting, the program has bridged the gap between high school education and formal four year educational institutions.
- The program partners will engage in continuing quality improvement to hone policies, processes and procedures.
- The “Technical Education Initiative “ was able to bring the same affordable, quality, technical, education offered at the Community Colleges to the underserved rural counties at the lowest cost possible.
- The CECs have developed a way to meet the education needs of the rural community without the additional cost of building a facility by utilizing the Career and Technology Centers already in existence as the “bricks and mortar” during the times they were not being used by high school students. Utilizing facilities that are already in place in the community is a win-win for employers, community colleges, perspective students and current high school students, the school district, and the economic future of the community.
- Employers have access to needed local training and a trained workforce that is **cost and time effective**.

- Community colleges save on day-to-day upkeep of a facility, cost of equipment, and save on administrative costs by utilizing CEC employees.
- Students benefit from up-to-date training at a reasonable cost and the opportunity to access training/education locally.
- School districts benefit from the additional income from rent and the use of equipment purchase via grant funds.
- The community benefits when the community college employs local educational professionals as Adjunct Faculty for the programs.
- Program equipment and supplies are purchased through local businesses which benefit the local economy.
- During 2010 the economic impact from the Basic Welding Programs was over **\$300,000.00** to the local area.
- The whole community benefits from a skilled workforce and a strong economy.

Getting all the above players to work together on the “Technical Education Initiative” was a feat that had never been accomplished before. It took the unbiased coordination only available through the CEC to keep partners working together to address issues and accomplish common goals.

If there is a need the CECs fill it. They don't just talk about it, they do it.