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# Lehigh Valley Manufacturing Apprenticeship Program Expanding with New Certifications, Employers

by Paul Muschick

A year after being launched, the Lehigh Valley's unique, collaborative apprenticeship program that supports manufacturing is growing.

The Industrial Training and Education Consortium of the Lehigh Valley (iTEC) is a partnership of industry, education, government, and community organizations that promotes careers in advanced manufacturing and prepares people for those skilled jobs. Manufacturing is a key driver of the Lehigh Valley's \$55.7 billion economy.

Since launching in Fall 2023, iTEC has added additional apprenticeship programs and several new manufacturers.

State-registered apprenticeship programs are offered in mechatronics technician, industrial manufacturing technician, numerical control machinist, and laboratory tester career paths. New programs continue to be developed based on the needs of member companies.

Those roles are in high demand in the Lehigh Valley, which is in the top 15% of markets nationwide for manufacturing. More than 700 manufacturers collectively produce an output of \$9 billion annually. That represents 16% of the Lehigh Valley's Gross Domestic Product. Nationally, manufacturing makes up 12% of GDP.

"By working together, the Lehigh Valley is developing the talent the region needs to continue to be a leader in manufacturing and producing goods the world depends on," said Morten Rasmussen, Chair of the iTEC Management Council and Corporate Vice President, Operations Human Resources at B. Braun Medical.

B. Braun Medical is a founding member of iTEC and led the creation of the program. In May, B. Braun was honored for its leadership role with a Governor's Employer Award for Achievement, from the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association.

When at full capacity, iTEC expects to have several dozen apprentices across the member companies. The first apprentices graduated from the program this year.

"The earn-while-you-learn opportunities available through iTEC apprenticeships are positioning participants for meaningful careers and building a pipeline of talent so Lehigh Valley manufacturers can grow," said Karianne Gelinas, Vice President of Regional Partnerships and Talent Strategies at Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC), which provides administrative support to iTEC.

"The iTEC apprenticeship training program provides alternative career pathways for students, parents, and the entire workforce through registered pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. While learning or upgrading skills, apprentices earn a salary on the job with the option of earning a tuition-free college degree or industry-recognized credentials. This is a fantastic opportunity for anyone looking for a rewarding career in advanced, diversified manufacturing," said Nancy Dischinat, Executive Director of Workforce Board Lehigh Valley.

iTEC is based on the German apprenticeship model, and the German American Chamber of Commerce plays a central role. It coordinates approval of certification programs with the state, develops curriculum, trains the trainers, and recruits apprentices.

iTEC is funded by a state grant and member companies.

Participating manufacturers: B. Braun Medical, Lutron Electronics, Heidelberg Materials, OraSure Technologies, Bracalente Manufacturing Group, HCSC, Evonik, Julabo USA, HindlePower, Oldcastle APG, Tyber Medical.

Education partners: Allentown School District, Bethlehem Area School District, Bucks County Community College, Cedar Crest College, Lehigh Carbon Community College, Lehigh Career & Technical Institute, Northampton Community College, Northampton Area School District.

Collaborating partners: German American Chamber of Commerce, Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, LVEDC, Manufacturers Resource Center, Workforce Board Lehigh Valley.

