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Northampton Community College to Develop Pathways to Manufacturing Program

By Colin McEvoy

Northampton Community College will receive \$199,125 in state funding through the Manufacturing PA Training-to-Career Grant program. (photo courtesy Discover Lehigh Valley)

Northampton Community College (NCC) has been awarded new state funding to develop a Pathways to Manufacturing program for low-income individuals, veterans, and others in the Lehigh Valley.

NCC will receive \$199,125 through the Manufacturing PA Training-to-Career Grant program, which is designed to help companies identify and train a skilled workforce for existing or newly open positions.

This program aligns squarely with the work of the LVEDC Education and Talent Supply Council, a partnership of Lehigh Valley educational institutions, major employers, and economic development and workforce agencies focused on creating and executing data-driven regional strategies that help the Lehigh Valley maintain a competitive talent supply.

"Manufacturing is the Lehigh Valley's second-largest sector and the region recently became a Top 50 manufacturing market in the United States in terms of economic output," said Karianne Gelinas, LVEDC Vice President of Business Development and Talent Supply. "It's important that we have a robust talent pipeline fortifying the future of this sector here in Lehigh Valley."

NCC will use the funds to create a seven-week, 150-hour program that will introduce manufacturing occupations to low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, veterans, and out-of-school youth who are unsure of their post-graduation plans or have had to change those plans due to the pandemic.

"These programs have been developed based on robust and current input from our local manufacturing employers regarding what they need in the way of hands-on skills and the employability skills so necessary to allow new hires to succeed and grow their careers long-term," Salkin said.

The Lehigh Valley has more than 34,000 manufacturing jobs, and manufacturing makes up \$7.9 billion of the region's \$42.9 billion gross domestic product. That's 18.5% of the regional GDP, compared to manufacturing making up only 12.5% of the national GDP.

A total of 54 of the 118 development projects LVEDC worked on in the last five years were manufacturing, and the Lehigh Valley has added 2,000 manufacturing jobs in the last five years, despite the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

The NCC program will serve 40 students. Those students who complete the program are expected to obtain entry-level employment in manufacturing or continue their education at a post-secondary institution.

The Manufacturing PA initiative was launched in October 2017, and since then has funded 59 projects and invested more than \$13.7 million through the Manufacturing PA Training-to-Career Grant program.

Training-to-Career grants support projects that result in short-term work-readiness, job placement, or the advancement of manufacturing, according to the state.

The Manufacturing PA Training-to-Career Grant program works collaboratively with local manufacturers to identify and teach missing essential skills for entry level applicants seeking manufacturing employment, engage youth or those with barriers to career opportunities in manufacturing, and or advance capacity for local or regional manufacturers.

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