



Promising Partnerships:

The Workforce System and Registered Apprenticeship A Deeper Look into Models of Success

VERMONT HITEC

OVERVIEW

The Vermont HITEC program has been in place for nearly 15 years. HITEC is a non-profit, intermediary organization that takes full accountability for the success of its Registered Apprenticeship services for both job seekers and employers. HITEC provides outreach, recruitment and educational training for the Vermont and New Hampshire employers engaged in the apprenticeship model. Working closely with the State Apprenticeship Council, Vermont's Department of Labor and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, as well as other government and non-profit agencies, HITEC provides employers with the quality, trained workforce they need. The program's founder describes it as "a mission of hope for under-skilled and underemployed residents."

The HITEC program uses a compressed, accelerated learning approach. That is, apprentices are immersed in the field of study for nine hours per day, five days a week, plus homework each night and projects during weekends. The classrooms are typically set up at the employer's facility, an approach that ensures the academic material provided in the up-front instructional phase of the apprenticeship is grounded within a practical, on-the-job setting. For many occupational areas, a portion of the technical training involves hands-on experience in the specific apprenticeship occupation. This unique training model ensures that participants are trained on the specific job elements they will need to succeed as apprentices in the job setting.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Vermont HITEC uses a three-phase process for its apprenticeship model.

PHASE ONE: The State of Vermont has established sector strategies in the Healthcare, Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing and Business Services industries. HITEC uses labor market information to identify job openings that need to be filled in these key sectors. Project staff then coordinate with local and regional employers to determine their needs and gauge interest in apprenticeship. Once a commitment has been secured from an employer or group of employers in a given industry, HITEC identifies suitable funding from an array of Federal and State resources, including Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program funding, state funds, the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, and other sources.

Once these elements are in place, HITEC works with the employer to determine the essential functions of the occupation. Uniquely, HITEC staff actually perform the work of that occupation for up to two months to allow staff to identify the precise competencies that apprentices will need on the job. HITEC staff then design the curriculum for that occupation's apprenticeship program.

The program concurrently conducts outreach and recruitment of suitable apprenticeship candidates. HITEC works with the Vermont Department of Labor to identify potential candidates through the state workforce system, including Unemployment Insurance recipients and job seekers enrolled in WIOA programs. The program also uses social and traditional media to recruit candidates.

ApprenticeshipUSA

Candidates attend a mandatory orientation session, followed by a series of assessments and interviews. The initial assessment, conducted by HITEC and workforce system staff, is behavioral. This permits staff to evaluate candidates' suitability for the specific apprenticeship position. They also conduct hands-on aptitude testing and work simulations. Candidates that pass this screening are then interviewed by the employer, who determines which apprentices would be the best fit for the organization.

PHASE TWO: Once candidates have been selected, they are immersed in the related instruction (classroom training) portion of the apprenticeship. Depending on the occupational area, apprentices may spend 8 to 10 weeks, for nine hours per day, learning the academic requirements of the occupation. The industries that HITEC works with require new hires to have extensive knowledge of the field and precision in their work. This makes the immersion approach to training particularly valuable, since the incoming apprentices typically have no prior experience or education in the occupational field for which they are being trained.

Related instruction consists of an extremely rigorous and aggressive schedule; in addition to more than full-time attendance during the week, apprentices spend three to four hours per night – plus weekends – on their course work. The approach provides participants the opportunity to gain extensive knowledge of the field in a short period of time. Support services – such as transportation, housing and clothing – are provided, as needed, to ensure apprentices can continue the program. Funding for support services and the instructional component is customized for each apprentice, based on the individual's eligibility for the available funding streams.

Related instruction involves a combination of classroom, online instruction and laboratory or clinical work. Teamwork among apprentices is strongly encouraged throughout the training period. Testing on the behavioral and technical competencies to be mastered occurs throughout the course of study. Graduates receive a national certification upon completion of the formal study period. HITEC partners with Burlington College, and its co-founded Institute for American Apprenticeship, to ensure that participants receive college credits for the instructional areas mastered. Additional college credits are earned during the on-the-job phase of the apprenticeship.

PHASE THREE: Once classroom training is completed, the apprentices move into the job setting full-time to apply these technical competencies on a daily basis. Each apprentice has a dedicated mentor, who provides support for on-the-job instruction. Apprentice knowledge is evaluated monthly and merit increases are earned for mastery of key competencies. Support services are again provided, as needed, throughout Phase Three of the program.

Apprentices that complete Phases Two and Three of the process are considered "fully-titled" employees (i.e. they are fully proficient to perform the job). They also receive an industry-recognized credential, academic credit towards an associate degree, and a Certificate of Completion from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

HITEC has established relationships with businesses in several diverse fields, including Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Information Technology and Business Services.

HITEC considers employers its primary customers and customizes its training approach to ensure that each participating employer receives qualified apprentices with skills meeting their precise workforce needs. This includes working with each employer to establish the best apprenticeship model (e.g. time-based, competency-based or hybrid) for their specific business. Most of the apprenticeships established use the competency-based model. Participating employers have indicated they consider apprenticeship to be a key business strategy for building a sustainable workforce, particularly in rural America.

The organization also works with employers beyond Vermont's borders – currently including New Hampshire employers and a Vermont-based employer that provides virtual inpatient and outpatient medical record coding throughout the country. Through a new "virtual" model for apprenticeship, both the academic instruction and the on-the-job training provided to apprentices for medical coding is delivered via Skype and Webex platforms, mirroring the at-home work environment the apprentices will have once on the job.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

In addition to HITEC and employers, the program's partners include the Vermont Department of Labor, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the State Apprenticeship Council and other agencies and non-profit organizations.

In New Hampshire, HITEC works with New Hampshire Employment Security, the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development and a variety of employers, including Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and Hypertherm. Both of these companies have added valuable employees through HITEC's apprenticeship model.

To provide the supports needed by customers enrolled in the program, HITEC works closely with state and community partners to leverage needed resources and services.

TARGET POPULATIONS

Unemployed and underemployed job seekers are targeted for outreach and selection into the program. Candidates do not need prior experience in the occupational area to be selected. Veterans and dislocated workers are especially sought after. Older youth, refugees, older workers and individuals with disabilities are also recruited to participate in HITEC.

The program has worked with businesses to create opportunities for youth still in high school, as well.

For example, Husky Injection Molding Systems and Hypertherm have both developed a program for high school juniors and seniors, known as the Husky/Hypertherm Summer Institutes. Selected youth participate for eight weeks during the summer, learning both academic and on-the-job aspects to become computer numerically controlled (CNC) machine operators. College credits are awarded to successful completers, who then have the opportunity to pursue a full-time apprenticeship opportunity after high school graduation.

TARGET INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS

HITEC has concentrated its efforts on four primary industries:

- **Healthcare** – positions including phlebotomists, pharmacy technicians, medical assistants, registration representatives, licensed nursing assistants, electronic health record data extractors/go-live support positions and medical coders.
- **Information Technology** – positions including IT account managers, software developers, interface analysts, software installation consultants, software support specialists, web developers and IT support analysts.
- **Advanced Manufacturing** – positions including CNC operators, machinists, structural steel welders and fitters.
- **Business Services** – positions including technical document writers and technical illustrators (coming soon).

FUNDING SOURCES AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

FUNDING SOURCES	USE OF FUNDS
CURRENT FUNDING SOURCES INCLUDE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs (funded by the U.S. Department of Labor) • National Emergency Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor • Trade Adjustment Assistance program (funded by the U.S. Department of Labor) • Vermont tax incentive program (VEGI) • New Hampshire Health and Human Services funds 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related instruction • Support services for apprentices (e.g. transportation, housing, clothing) • Employer incentives for hiring apprentices 	
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTCOMES (CUMULATIVE FROM 2000 THROUGH JUNE 2015)
Number of apprentices served	1,257
Apprenticeship completion rate	88%
Employment rate for program graduates	94%
Annual wage after apprenticeship	\$24,000 – \$50,000 (varies by industry & position)

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- **Customized curricula to meet employers' immediate staffing needs:** Each curriculum HITEC staff designs addresses the specific work activities and competencies that will need to be mastered for each apprenticeship job.
- **Professional staff dedicated to each employer's apprenticeship program:** HITEC staff work in teams to support each employer's program, from start to finish. This approach also provides continuity for the apprentices in each program, as they receive continued support and mentorship while on the job.
- **Guaranteed employment upon acceptance into the program:** On the front end of the process, employers ensure that each qualified apprentice that completes the program will, in fact, remain employed. This provides incentive for participants to complete the rigorous related instruction phase of the program.
- **Flexibility in apprenticeship design to match employers' needs:** Since the curriculum is custom-designed for each employer, they have the opportunity to specify all elements of the program, within the federal guidelines for Registered Apprenticeship programs.
- **HITEC guarantees that graduates have all of the necessary competencies – and soft skills – to be fully-qualified and high-quality employees:** The HITEC program guarantees that its graduates will be proficient in the skills and competencies the employer needs from its workers.

For more information about the Vermont HITEC program, please visit www.vthitec.org