



Strategic Partnerships to Connect Youth to the Trades: Lessons from Detroit

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Long-term investments are sorely needed to connect youth to the trades – and to change the general public’s perception of the trades – but we can’t lose sight of the partnerships already taking place. UMA’s Workforce Community of Practice featured two organizations' creative partnerships around and approaches to bringing youth into the trades. Both examples of partnerships demonstrate intentional inclusion of underserved communities and the benefit manufacturing jobs can bring to them and their communities.

Featuring Kathy Laird of [Goodwill Industries](#) and Tammie Jones of the [United Way](#); facilitated by Jen Guarino of [Shinola](#).

Takeaways

Changing the perception of a manufacturing career path. The featured programs that are shifting the narrative around manufacturing, starting with their youth participants; however, it is equally important to talk to parents and families about the value of a manufacturing career.

You don’t need a four-year college degree to enter the manufacturing sector. Experience through apprenticeship programs, internships and two-year degrees are pathways to manufacturing careers. In order to attract more youth to manufacturing we need to speak openly about these alternative pathways. Our civic leaders can help reshape the dialogue around the value of two-year degree programs and hands-on experience in a high school setting.

For both organizations, local and/or state government played the vital role of connector and convener. When developing a manufacturing workforce pipeline, it’s integral to build a community of stakeholders; engaging companies, municipal and state governments, schools and other service-providers will be key to a longstanding program with community buy-in. Whatever you do – don’t go at it alone! And better yet, get out into your community and be present in civic conversations where collaboration can unfold.

To employers, soft skills are as important as hard skills, and often employers don’t have the capacity to provide the training. Instead, they may rely on workforce providers and schools to provide soft skills training for students.

Additional Resources

- [Department of Defense’s LIFT Program](#)
- [TechShop or other makerspaces in your area](#)
- [Linked Learning](#)
- [How to start a youth internship program](#)