

Learning the Ropes

Participants in the new Minnesota Apprenticeship Initiative will receive on-the-job training and classwork in high-growth occupations.

The Minnesota Apprenticeship Initiative (MAI) is on track to bring 1,000 people into newly registered apprenticeship programs in 30 high-growth occupations in Minnesota in the next five years.

The U.S. Department of Labor's American Apprenticeship Initiative awarded a \$5 million grant in September 2015 that is helping 70 Minnesota employers expand and create new registered apprenticeship programs in industries that typically don't have apprenticeships. Participants will receive classroom and on-the-job training.

Participating employers are eligible to receive up to \$5,000 for each registered apprentice, covering the cost of support activities, supplies and materials, instruction costs and more.

DEED and the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry are partnering in the program, providing outreach and recruitment, assessments, adult basic education, support services,



and on-the-job and industry-recognized credential training.

The grants will focus on five industries that need assistance with workforce development and talent acquisition but historically have not been affiliated with the apprenticeship model: advanced manufacturing, agriculture, health care services, information technology and transportation.

Those high-growth industries were chosen based on employer needs and data showing they will be facing labor shortages in the next 10 years.

A statewide outreach effort explained some of the benefits of the program to employers and dispelled myths about apprenticeships. Benefits for employers include higher skilled workers, better productivity, more diverse workforces and reduced turnover. Workers will have the opportunity to gain skills, advance their careers and earn better pay.

The grants are designed to help employers create long-term, sustainable registered apprenticeship programs that continue beyond the life of the grant.

One program goal is to target and recruit under-represented Minnesotans into registered apprenticeships, including people of color, women, veterans, people with disabilities and young adults.

Owens Corning

MAI's first registered apprenticeship program was signed in July 2016 at Owens Corning in Minneapolis. The business makes roofing products (shingles and accessories) and insulation.

Owens Corning employee Brandon Carlsen is a maintenance mechanic apprentice. He is completing related classes at Hennepin Technical College, including courses in pneumatic components, advanced programmable logic controllers and fluid power technology.

His on-the-job training includes preventive and corrective maintenance, troubleshooting, and pipefitting and plumbing (welding, fabrication, brazing, soldering and other jointing processes).

Carlsen was already employed at Owens Corning. Recognizing his work ethic and desire to learn, managers developed their registered apprenticeship program with him in mind.



Brandon Carlsen

Carlsen has been in the program for nine months, and managers say he has far exceeded their expectations. Other Owens Corning employees have inquired about joining the program, and the company has used the program as a tool for recruiting new job candidates.

Owens Corning has enrolled two more apprentices since Carlsen began and plans to enroll a total of 10 under the MAI grant. When Carlsen finishes the program this fall, he will mentor new apprentices.

More details about the program are available at www.dli.mn.gov/aai.asp. 

COURTESY: MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY