

## Jobs for the Future

*American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI) Grantee (2015) funded through the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration and H-1B training funds.*

### **BACKGROUND: ABOUT THE GRANT AWARD**

Jobs for the Future (JFF) is a national nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems. JFF provides consulting and strategy services to promote economic advancement and college and career readiness. As part of its approach, JFF runs the Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning, which analyzes labor market information, shares innovative solutions through national networks, and shapes policy that strengthens the labor market at the federal, state, and local level.

JFF is leveraging its American Apprenticeship Initiative<sup>1</sup> grant to expand registered apprenticeship in states and to bring in more partners to support the work at the local level, with a focus on sustainability and accountability of existing and new programs. JFF is partnering with the Working for America Institute of the AFL-CIO, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP), Michigan Human Resource Development Institute (HRDI), Labor Institute for Training (LIFT), Keystone Development Partnership (KDP), and Chicago Federation of Labor Workforce and Community Initiative (CFL Initiative) to establish and promote the Industrial Manufacturing Technician (IMT) hybrid apprenticeship. JFF and its grant partners are focusing on recruiting and training new and incumbent workers to increase the number of skilled workers in the IMT occupation. They are employing a network model to train IMT apprentices in 16 states: California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Washington, and Wisconsin. While JFF's apprenticeship programs cover several occupations, its IMT apprenticeship program is its most expansive and successful apprenticeship program.

### **KEY LEARNINGS**

JFF is using its AAI grant to support sustainability and accountability for expanding registered apprenticeship in states and engaging with more partners at the local level. JFF and its grant partners have been successful in enrolling apprentices and diversifying the manufacturing sector by utilizing intermediaries, responding to employer needs, leveraging resources, and engaging underrepresented populations, including English-language learners, women, people of color, and older workers. JFF's success in developing the IMT program has depended on coordination across its extensive network of intermediaries. JFF leverages local partnerships and a variety of funds to create nimble programs that respond to employer needs.

#### APPRENTICESHIP INTERMEDIARIES CONNECT EFFORTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

##### *Partnership Building*

Through its AAI grant, JFF is strengthening the role of the intermediary in two ways – to build its own intermediary capacity as a national organization, and to coordinate the work of regional and local

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<sup>1</sup> In 2015, building on historic bipartisan support from Congress for “earn and learn” training opportunities, the U.S. Department of Labor launched the American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI), which awarded \$175 million to 46 public-private partnerships across the country. These grants are financed by a user fee paid by employers to hire foreign workers into the United States under the H-1B nonimmigrant visa program. This initiative is intended to provide a catalyst in supporting a uniquely American Apprenticeship system that meets our country's particular economic, industry, and workforce needs. American Apprenticeships (also referred to as Registered Apprenticeships) are innovative work-based learning and post-secondary earn-and-learn models that meet national standards for registration with the U.S. Department of Labor (or federally recognized State Apprenticeship Agencies).

intermediaries around program development and implementation. Intermediaries connect efforts across the education and workforce systems and help streamline processes and programs for businesses.

As an intermediary, JFF supports employer sponsors in apprenticeship program management and leverages local resources, including funding from local workforce boards, dislocated worker funds, and individual employer contributions, to cover related technical instruction (RTI) costs. JFF has also customized its engagement approach in response to industry and employer needs. For the first two years of the AAI grant, JFF and the intermediary partners hosted discussions with employers to better understand their challenges related to recruiting and hiring. JFF found that employers' main challenges were a scarcity of qualified workers and difficulty in training recruits who lack essential skills. Although the outreach and relationship-building efforts took longer than expected, they were necessary to gain employers' trust. These conversations, along with an analysis of workforce and labor market data, guided JFF's decision-making and intermediary engagement strategies.

JFF and its partners used two successful employer outreach methods: an industry needs assessment and on-the-ground support. The industry needs assessment, led by WRTP, surveyed local employers, helped bring in regional labor unions and employers, and allowed JFF and its partners to connect with human resources staff at companies and learn about their hiring and recruiting pain points. Additionally, JFF and partners leveraged their existing connections to connect with local employers and to build relationships with local workforce boards.

Employing its national perspective, JFF is connecting regional and local intermediaries to help develop and implement registered apprenticeship programs across the country. These intermediaries also engage employers, manage relationships with organized labor partners, coordinate among regional stakeholders, and provide apprenticeship navigators and technical assistance as needed.<sup>2</sup> Apprenticeship navigators serve a variety of functions, from working in the classroom and helping students with paperwork to strategizing implementation and engaging with employers.

JFF worked with regional and local intermediaries to implement the IMT apprenticeship program. The IMT program is an 18-month or 3,000-hour hybrid apprenticeship model that can be tailored to meet employer needs and integrates sector partnerships and labor-management leadership into its design. The IMT apprenticeship program trains both new and incumbent front-line production workers for middle- and high-skilled advanced manufacturing occupations. As of June 2019, JFF has enrolled 1,255 apprentices, 553 of whom are IMT apprentices.

When JFF noticed that some intermediaries were struggling to accomplish their goals, it conducted a study to map the tasks of its intermediaries and navigators. Through the study, JFF identified common challenges and processes used by each entity and provided technical assistance on strategies and best practices they could utilize. For example, intermediaries struggled with being flexible to meet employers' needs. At the beginning of the grant, JFF and its partners only offered the IMT apprenticeship, but some employers preferred to start with more traditionally apprenticeable manufacturing occupations. In response to industry demands, JFF successfully modified its AAI grant to expand geographically and offer more occupations.

## BLENDING AND BRAIDING FUNDING SOURCES

### *Leveraging Resources*

Initially, JFF had trouble finding funding to support the expansion of apprenticeship. However, by utilizing partnerships and braiding funding sources to support its AAI grant, JFF and its partners were able to

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<sup>2</sup> Sullivan, M. M. (2016, October 7). Seven Ways Intermediaries Help Develop Apprenticeship Programs. Retrieved April/May, 2019, from <https://www.jff.org/points-of-view/seven-ways-intermediaries-help-develop-apprenticeship-programs/>

successfully implement programs and expand their geographic reach. JFF's definition of braiding funding is the strategic integration of federal, state and private funding streams to support a program or partnership. By December 2018, JFF and its partners braided together \$1.1 million towards apprenticeship program support, strategic engagement, and technical assistance. JFF and its partners utilize Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding and engage the Industrial Union Council and state labor federations to leverage further funding to support the IMT apprenticeship program's RTI. They encourage eligible apprentices to use Pell grants and GI Bill benefits and work with employers to access tuition reimbursement or corporate training funds. Additionally, JFF and its partners leverage resources from America's Promise, the U.S. Department of Labor's (US-DOL) state apprenticeship expansion grants, state funding streams (e.g. Ohio's Job Creation Tax Credit, Illinois' employment opportunities grant, and the Michigan Works! Association), US-DOL Office of Apprenticeship industry partner contract incentive funds, in-kind expertise from the AFL-CIO, and the private sector.

#### ENGAGING UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS HELPS RESPOND TO EMPLOYER NEEDS *Engaging Underrepresented Populations*

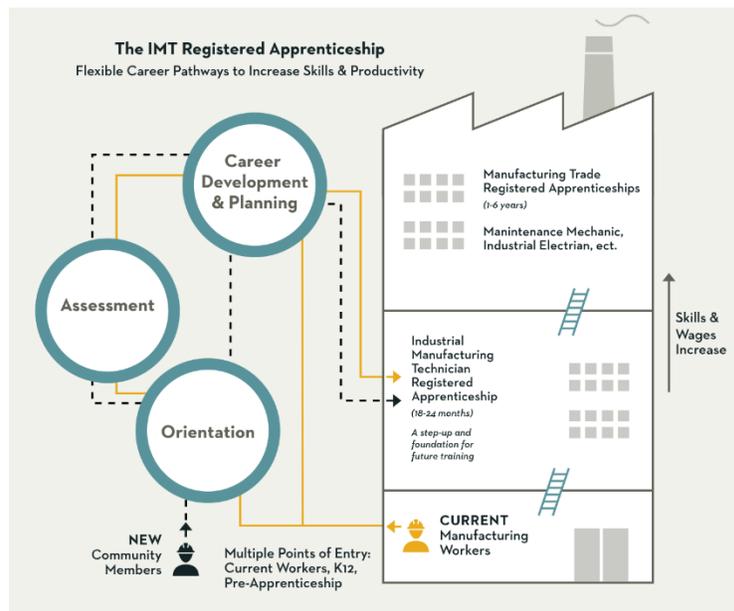
JFF and its partners work with federal, state, and community-based partners to assist women, people of color, and English-language learners to enter the advanced manufacturing sector. Currently, 52 percent of JFF's advanced manufacturing apprentices are from underrepresented populations. Connecting underrepresented populations to high-quality employment opportunities supports community growth and increases employers' pools of qualified candidates. This strategy directly responds to concerns that employers shared with JFF during its initial fact-finding.

JFF ensured the IMT program includes touchpoints that allow underrepresented populations to engage in continuous learning in a structured manner that allows flexibility for apprentices who may experience life changes or need more support. The model, as illustrated in Figure 1, includes orientation for new apprentices, assessment, and career development and planning. It also offers multiple points of entry for current workers, K-12, and pre-apprenticeship.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dresser, L., & Kahn, W. (2018). Manufacturing Pathways in Milwaukee. Retrieved April/May, 2019, from <https://equityinapprenticeship.org/case-studies/manufacturing-pathways-in-milwaukee>

**Figure 1: The Industrial Manufacturing Technician (IMT) Registered Apprenticeship Model<sup>4</sup>**



Through conversations with its employer and intermediary partners, JFF identified a lack of training opportunities for non-English speaking communities in the states it serves. JFF, in partnership with Indiana’s Labor Institute for Training (LIFT), offers English-language instruction and translated curricula for manufacturing occupations to Spanish-speakers through the Growing Opportunities for Latinos! (GOAL!) program.<sup>5</sup> JFF’s strong partnership with local intermediaries, such as LIFT, allows it to customize curricula to local needs, providing opportunities to previously disconnected populations. Through its intermediaries, JFF has now implemented this flexible model across several partner communities.

Of the new apprentices enrolled in manufacturing under this grant to date, 48% are from underrepresented populations including people of color, women and older workers. JFF’s intermediary partner Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership/BIG STEP (WRTP/ BIG STEP) took this grant goal and analyzed local labor needs, identifying a noticeable skills gap among local employers. Although people of color and women make up a significant share of Milwaukee’s manufacturing workforce, many have not received opportunities to train and grow in these positions. As a result, WRTP/BIG STEP implemented the IMT program in Milwaukee, with a special focus on recruiting women and people of color already in the field who would benefit from new training and career opportunities. The IMT program requires collaboration between employers, employees, and training providers, ensuring constant communication that keeps apprentices engaged and feeling that they have ownership over their career development.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Sullivan, M., & Kobes, D. (n.d.). Giving Manufacturing Career Pathways a Lift. Retrieved April/May, 2019, from [https://jff-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Giving\\_Manufacturing\\_Career\\_Pathways\\_a\\_LIFT\\_-\\_02-11-2019.pdf](https://jff-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Giving_Manufacturing_Career_Pathways_a_LIFT_-_02-11-2019.pdf)