



MWCA Promising Practices

SUBMISSION FORM

WIB Name/WSA Stearn-Benton Workforce Council, Stearns-Benton Workforce Service Area #17

Submitted by Kathy Zavala, Executive Director, Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council

**Attach a description (no more than two pages) describing the innovative practice.
Please address the following points:**

- Overview describing the innovative practice
- Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)
- Employer/Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)
- Identification of those involved, including collaborators
- Leveraging/alignment of outside resources
- Ideas for replication/lessons learned

Information can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to:

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DUE DATE: MONDAY, JULY 21, 2014

Criteria for Selection of Outstanding Practices	Maximum Points
Overview describing the innovative best practice	20
Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)	20
Employer/Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)	20
Identification of those involved, including collaborators	15
Leveraging/alignment of outside resources	15
Ability for use or replication by others	10
TOTAL	100

GNP Incumbent Worker Training Stearns-Benton WSA #17

Overview describing the innovative practice

SBETC's Innovative Practice is supporting a local employer in developing their workforce skills and career pathway *over time*.

The Company

GNP Company (Gold'n Plump) is a family-owned, vertically integrated chicken products company founded in 1926 with processing plants in Cold Spring and Luvurne Minnesota as well as in Arcadia, Wisconsin. GNP owns hatcheries, feed mills, primary processing plants and distribution systems distributing product to nearly all 50 states and is an international exporter. Annual sales are \$400 million+. GNP is a Six Sigma highly regulated company.

Over 700 employees work at the Cold Spring facility, 600 of whom are production workers. GNP anticipates a 10% growth over the next several years and is currently recruiting for entry level positions at over \$11/hour plus a \$1/hour shift differential with an additional \$1/hour after 6 months. GNP remains interested in promoting employees. Mr. Helgeson, CEO and third generation GNP leader, has committed to developing their workforce, acknowledging workforce growth is coming largely from the immigrant and refugee communities that possess limited English-language proficiency.

In 2006, Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council (SBETC) began developing incumbent worker training in response to a request by CEO Mike Helgeson. Through special allotments and FIRST Grants, SBETC and GNP initially partnered Adult Basic Education to provide integrated Intermediate English Language Learning classes to GNP employees. Curriculum content focused on lean manufacturing in GNP as a Six-Sigma and highly regulated company. Students were incumbent workers at GNP who were paid to attend class, which was held in the morning so that night shift and day shift employees could attend between shifts. GNP Human Resource staff were committed to the project as the liaison between the students and the supervisors who provided critical input, scheduling and work application opportunities. SBETC, through a St. Cloud State University graduate intern and utilizing tools through the Aspen Sector Skills Academy, presented Return on Investment data to the GNP Executive Team in 2009.

GNP has continued the classes, committing extensive "in-kind" contributions and Adult Basic Education contact hour reimbursements able to support the classes after 2009. In 2014, GNP added their first Advanced English Language Learning class. GNP now operates two co-horts of students/employees in ESL classes.

In 2013, GNP approached SBETC about further developing the technical skills of their workforce by providing credit-based manufacturing classes to incumbent workers on-site at their Cold Spring Facility. GNP is investing in technologies requiring advanced manufacturing skills. SBETC and the partnership secured FastTRAC funding for the "GNP Academy." Beginning in Fall, 2013, 12 incumbent workers began training in classes provided jointly by Adult Basic Education and St. Cloud Technical and Community College that lead to a MSSC credential as Production Technician and prepare the employee to continue in manufacturing training. After the first set of classes, employees may apply to GNP for tuition "reimbursement" for year 1 that can be applied to year 2 training. And in 2014, a second co-hort begins. Participants include individuals who completed the Intermediate ESL classes begun in 2006.

Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)

All training participants have benefited through advanced skills.

Additionally, since 2006, 6 Intermediate ESL classes were held at GNP for a total of 139 students. Of these, 75 employees remain with GNP of whom 20 have moved into posted positions for advancement and 14 have become department trainers, also an advancement with higher compensation.

In the first Advanced ESL Class, 21 employees participated with 14 of whom in posted positions and 1 as department trainer – advancement steps with higher compensation on the internal career pathway.

For year 1 of the GNP Academy providing credit-based programming, 11 have remained in the program and employed to date of the 12 recruited for the initial classes. Evaluation is on-going.

Employer/Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)

GNP has tremendous economic impact to the region. They have demonstrated their commitment to investing in the development of their workforce and community. This investment has demonstrated a positive ROI including retention and advancement of training participants at GNP. This has led to increasing partnership opportunities and career pathway development.

Employees participating in the training, from Intermediate and Advanced ESL to credit-based coursework are encouraged to participate fully in their communities. These classes at GNP are now connecting to ROCORI schools and ESL and non-ESL students in the District, GNP is opening the SCTCC offered classes at their site to non-GNP employed students desiring to take the classes in a local community.

GNP is also committed to exploring affordable local housing and transportation options in the region in order to retain and grow their workforce. These bring additional exciting partnership opportunities in community development.

Identification of those involved, including collaborators

“On the ground” collaborators include:

- Janelle Heesch, HR for GNP Company in the Cold Spring facility. Others from GNP include line supervisors, HR staff both at the facility and corporate, as well as the Plant Manager and the Executive Team at GNP.
- Scott Wallner, ABE. Others include instructors and support staff.
- Matt Keil, SCTCC as well as manufacturing instructors
- Kathy Zavala, SBETC as well as Career Navigators and Tech staff

Leveraging/alignment of outside resources

This project has utilized:

- ✓ Formula and grant resources available through state funding obtained by SBETC;
- ✓ Contact hour reimbursement resources available through Adult Basic Education
- ✓ Significant In-kind and cash contributions by GNP, including wages, tuition reimbursement, classroom and computer lab space as well as time of Human Resources, Supervisor and Management employees.

Ideas for replication/lessons learned

Several other local manufacturing firms are expressing great interest in the “GNP model.” Recently, GNP, ABE and SBETC partner staff were asked to share model information with a growing transportation manufacturing employer in the area.

As shared in that session:

- This does require more support than you think initially. Working with scheduling, growing line support and interest, and determining and promoting “value add” for both the employer and employee are critical before any class recruitment begins.
- A liaison inside the company who is excited and committed to making it work is essential. None of these projects would have been successful without Janelle Heesch, HR for GNP in the Cold Spring plant.
- Relationship building among the partners takes time and trust is earned through performance. This includes understanding and appreciating the roles, perspectives and restrictions of each partner. Clearly defining jointly developed timelines and success definitions helps greatly.
- Communication must be clear, continuous, and inclusive.