

## ALLIANCE FOR WORKING TOGETHER (AWT) TECHCRED FUNDING IS 'GAME CHANGER' FOR NE OHIO APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Increasing numbers of manufacturers in Northeast Ohio are participating in a new apprenticeship program sponsored by the Alliance for Working Together (AWT).

AWT's apprenticeship program serves Eastern Cuyahoga County, Lake County, Ashtabula County, and Geauga County. Different cohorts target different prospects – from entry-level incumbent workers, to individuals who need to be upskilled, to participants in a pilot program serving unemployed Ohioans. The group's stated goal is to train 288 apprentices in the Northeast Ohio region by 2023.

The AWT apprenticeship program is an earn-and-learn model designed to have the apprentice working full-time while receiving education in a blended format, with both online and in-person expert training. The apprenticeship program includes 25 self-paced online courses for between 576 to 612 hours of related technical training. Because of the blended format, students can work at their own pace. Apprentices will also receive instruction by an AWT instructor/industry expert.

The program currently focuses on four occupations: (1) tool & die maker, (2) mold maker, (3) precision machinist, and (4) tool programmer/numerical control. These high-demand skills were chosen because they are widely used in AWT manufacturing companies in our region.

John Ribic, President of Rimeco Products, Inc., says the AWT apprenticeship program is a great match for his company: "The AWT program was appealing to us because we are a CNC shop specializing in aerospace and defense parts, and we need qualified personnel to operate, set up and troubleshoot our CNC machines," Ribic said. "The program was also appealing because it is a mix of online training, enabling us to expend less on training."

**But the real "game changer," according to AWT Executive Director Juliana Petti, is the Ohio TechCred program, which gives businesses a chance to upskill current and future employees through credentialing to help them qualify for a better job in today's tech-infused economy. What's really most important is that through TechCred, the employer doesn't have to pay (i.e., is reimbursed) for the apprentices' classroom training and certification.**

Under TechCred, businesses that submit successful applications will be reimbursed up to \$2,000 per credential, when current or prospective employees complete technology-focused credentials. Even though TechCred has existed for just one year, AWT has gotten every year (1-4) of its apprenticeship program approved for TechCred. Registered Apprenticeship programs can be modularized and packaged in a way that they fit the TechCred parameters – technology focused and less than one year in length – so that they qualify for funding.

"Over the last 20 years, we have learned that partnerships are really important," Petti said. "We have a shared understanding among our manufacturers that we need to collaborate. We all had stigma problems, whether our companies were large or small. There would be no poaching. We value the success of our entire region. Training, upskilling, and credentialing don't happen in a silo," Petti said. "It's really a collaborative effort."

For AWT, TechCred's role in subsidizing employers' training costs has been indispensable.



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