

CAREER BRIDGE:

Forging Innovative Partnerships to Build the Talent Pipeline

Many people living in poverty are employed in traditional low-wage jobs like fast food and retail. Yet they often lack the resources and confidence to advance to a sustainable career. Career Bridge, a pilot project by the Partners for a Competitive Workforce, a strategic initiative of the United Way of Greater Cincinnati, is helping the working poor move forward while building the talent pipeline to in-demand jobs such as advanced manufacturing.

Launched in 2018, Career Bridge forges collaboration among three key partners:

- A sending employer who identifies employees well-qualified to advance a higher-wage work
- A community provider that provides support services to help the employee transition
- A receiving employer who provides a job opportunity for the Career Bridge applicant and helps fund the support services

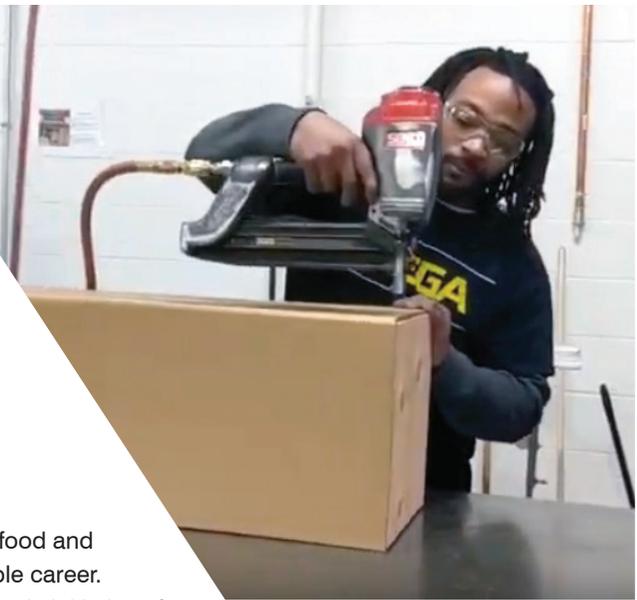
For instance, Career Bridge partnered with a local Chick-fil-A franchise owner as a sending employer to identify candidates for the program. While the employees were recognized as dependable, diligent workers, there was not a viable path to advance into higher-wage positions at the restaurant. Recognizing the employees might leave anyway, the owner connected them with Career Bridge.

While many employers might be reluctant to help employees leave, it's a good business practice, according to Dustin DiChiara, Chick-fil-A owner in Florence, Kentucky. "Career Bridge solidifies my culture as a place where we help employees become better people. It's not seen as a dead-end job – it's seen as a start," he said. The program also generates positive word of mouth in the local community, which boosts the brand and increases sales, he said.

The employees selected for Career Bridge received coaching on interview skills, resume development and more from Brighton Center, a local nonprofit. Through this process, the employees landed jobs at a local advanced manufacturing company with a significant increase in pay. Brighton Center also helps the restaurant recruit replacements, who start work as part of Career Bridge with support to transition to higher-wage jobs after at least a year in the position.

By helping fund the program, receiving employers enjoy multiple benefits, said John Kronenberger, Co-CEO at VEGA Americas. "We found a nice synergy between being able to help the community through partners like the Brighton Center and United Way while finding some amazing talent with people who were looking to do more with their life," he said.

View the [Career Bridge Video](#).



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