

## WORKING TOGETHER: APPRENTICESHIP & ENERGY & UTILITIES

*This document summarizes an April 2020 call for ASE & SAE grantees. The call featured speakers from Consumers Energy, DTE Energy, and the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. Speakers discussed resources and promising practices in using Registered Apprenticeship in the energy and utilities sector.*

### ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

- The [Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity](#) is home to the True Partnership task force, Michigan's response to the problem of companies replicating the same efforts. The task force pools together knowledge, efforts, and work-based learning knowledge. It standardizes work and creates toolkits so that all companies speak the same language. They also hold events called Michigan Career Fests, which are career awareness events that allow students to practice the work they would be asked to do. For more information, email Scott Jedeles at [jedeles@michigan.gov](mailto:jedeles@michigan.gov).
- [Consumers Energy](#) is one of the largest regulated energy providers in Michigan with more than 8,000 employees. Because their biggest challenge is getting the word out on the variety of jobs in the industry, they built the Michigan Energy Consortium, which aims to broaden knowledge and awareness of energy careers. For more information, reach out to Amber Fogarty at [Amber.Fogarty@cmsenergy.com](mailto:Amber.Fogarty@cmsenergy.com).
- [DTE Energy](#) has more than 10,000 employees and is the largest energy provider in Michigan. DTE's five Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) include overhead line worker, cable slicer, substation operator, substation maintenance, and nuclear technician. To find out more, reach out to Deborah Majeski at [Deborah.Majeski@dteenergy.com](mailto:Deborah.Majeski@dteenergy.com).

### WHY APPRENTICESHIP WORKS IN ENERGY & UTILITIES

Apprenticeships provide employees with nationally recognized credentials, which is important in highly regulated industries such as energy and utilities. Many employers already use an apprenticeship model but are seeking to register their apprenticeship programs for three main reasons. First, the national certification and structure make the programs more appealing to job seekers and make hiring easier for employers. Second, Registered Apprenticeship allows veteran populations to access GI Bill benefits to offset other costs. Third, RAPs, rather than less formal training programs, open doors for employers seeking grants and other funding opportunities for training programs.

### A LOOK AT APPRENTICESHIP IN ENERGY & UTILITIES TODAY

There are more than 70,000 active apprentices concentrated in a few occupations within the sector, and while that is a small fraction of employed workers in this sector, that number is growing. Consumers Energy is very pleased with the 97 percent completion rate they see from their registered apprentices; they rely on a thorough vetting process that admits about 60 percent of those who apply to the program. DTE on the other hand found that their vetting process using an industry test was creating unnecessary

hurdles and screening out too many people. DTE switched to a skills test readiness program, which gave them many more candidates who have been successful. The change had the further benefit of helping more individuals with employment and education barriers find their way into the programs.

## CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**When working with employers, focus on collaboration and communication.** When working with an employer, it's important to have a good point of contact with whom to communicate from the start. Also, when creating new RAPs, lead with the "why." Let the employer know how their company will benefit from registering an apprenticeship program.

**Partner with training providers to create consistency.** Consumers Energy partners with two community colleges in their pre-apprenticeship programs, and they hope to expand that to include more community colleges that will help prepare students to enter apprenticeship programs. DTE suggests leveraging unions and the trainings they have already proven valuable. Leveraging existing resources, including other private company training vendors, can build consistency across programs and employers by ensuring every apprenticeship class receives tried, tested, and reliable classroom instruction.

**Start with the easiest career paths, and look for innovative opportunities to grow from there.** For those looking to expand existing programs, the supply chain is full of opportunities to grow through the Registered Apprenticeship model. For those looking to create new programs, start with tried and tested occupations and career paths and grow from there. Use the power of partnerships and passionate leaders for advocacy. Having executive-level champions can help greatly with political barriers. As always, communication is key.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Apprenticeship.gov's [Energy page](#) links to a toolkit, competency models, apprenticeship standards in high-demand energy and utilities occupations, and more.
- The [Apprenticeship in Energy page](#) on Workforce GPS offers program examples, outreach materials, and other resources to help expand apprenticeship in the energy and utilities sector.
- [The U.S. Energy & Employment Report](#) is an annual report, based on a survey administered to more than 30,000 employers across 53 different energy technologies.
- The [Power and Trades Pathways program](#) trains graduates for in-demand jobs and trades in the energy sector such as electric operations and engineer technicians.