

PA Apprenticeship Training Summit: Symposium Summary

On September 25th and 26th, Chrissie Klinger, Workforce Development Project staff, attended the Pennsylvania Inaugural Apprenticeship Summit. Approximately 380 employers, educators, training providers, workforce development system staff, and community and economic development staff gathered in Harrisburg, PA to learn about best practices and innovative ideas related to the “learn while you earn” model of progressing through career pathways. Participants also heard about collaborative efforts among various departments and agencies and the shared vision of both pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs in Pennsylvania.

Keynote speaker, David Kirkland, President of Greiner Packaging USA (located in Luzerne County, PA), wanted more hands-on learning experience after high school. Kirkland shared how apprenticeship allowed him to follow a career pathway from tool technician, to senior technician, to engineering manager, to his current position as a president. Kirkland emphasized that in addition to the technical skills training he received, he was able to build foundational workplace skills such as effective interpersonal relationships, observing and thinking critically, and demonstrating self-management skills both inside and outside of the workplace. These skills helped him progress successfully through his career path. He also accumulated college credits along the way, with no debt, and continued to earn steady wage increases over his 14-year journey.

Community collaboration was a recurring theme throughout the presentations of employers, apprentices, mentors, educators, department secretaries, and workforce board staff. Creating Next Gen Sector Partnerships, identifying industry needs, developing career pathways consortiums, improving access to programs for children and adults despite economic status, working within the workforce development system to combine resources and expertise all require collaboration. Further, many of the best practices presented and awards given involved collaborations with local workforce development boards.

Apprenticeship training involves a job from day one, however, all registered apprenticeships in Pennsylvania must focus on a sustainable career path in a designated industry with a documented plan for both skill and wage progression. In addition, apprenticeships can help sometimes overlooked populations into self-sustaining career paths. For example, apprenticeship Council member Michael Neill, indicated that

Pennsylvania has apprenticeships in a variety sectors serving those with diverse backgrounds (e.g. ex-offenders, college graduates, low-income individuals), and apprentices range in ages from 16 years old to 60 years old. Adult educators may currently be working with out of school youth and adults that are eligible for both pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programming.

If your agency would like additional technical assistance to align to local apprenticeships or Next Gen Sector Partnerships, please contact KayLynn (klh267@psu.edu) or Chrissie (cok5111@psu.edu).