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Regional Partnership Sharpens Industry's Competitive Edge

Thanks to a new grant, Northwest boat builders are getting the training they need to sharpen their skills and advance the region's competitiveness, pioneering state-of-the-art construction and design that attracts customers worldwide.

The *Intracoastal Marine and Advanced Manufacturing Industry Alliance* received a \$200,000 High Skills, High Wages Strategic Fund grant from the Workforce Board, a state agency that advocates for workers to receive the education and training needed to obtain family-wage jobs, and Washington businesses to have the skilled workers needed to compete.

The grant has leveraged a partnership of boat builders, regional Workforce Development Councils and educators, providing training for over 300 current employees and leading to 14 new hires.

For example, three boat builders from Skagit and Island counties sent 10 employees to Saturday training sessions at Skagit Valley College's Northwest Center of Excellence for Marine Manufacturing and Technology where they earned American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC) certification in marine electrical systems. ABYC certification has become the national, and increasingly international, skill standard for the marine manufacturing industry.

Other projects include: helping a Kitsap County boat builder train 19 workers at its job site; contributing to a rough terrain crane class at Port Townsend Paper; and underwriting Industry Readiness Certifications and Trainings at Grays Harbor, Centralia, South Puget Sound Community and Olympic Colleges.

Cooperation among local manufacturers would not have been possible without the formation of the Intracoastal Alliance.



Munson Burlington Facility

Skill Panel Brings Key Players Together

As the recession recedes, Northwest boat builders from Skagit County to Grays Harbor County are realizing the benefits of collaborating with workforce partners in building a talented workforce. A skilled workforce helps ensure these businesses are prepared to achieve the full benefit of economic recovery.

Dubbed the *Intracoastal Marine and Advanced Manufacturing Industry Alliance*, the Skill Panel brings together ship and boat builders in 12 Western Washington counties, along with three regional Workforce Development Councils, educators and community officials.

Formed in 2005, this Skill Panel focuses on marine manufacturing and advanced manufacturing—two high-wage industries that call for similar skill sets and often draw from the same pool of workers.

By bringing key players to the table to hammer out training plans and expand the pool of highly skilled workers, the Intracoastal Alliance makes it possible for competing firms to collaborate in building a regional, talented workforce capable of fostering innovation, improving production and building profits to further increase work opportunities.

The Intracoastal Alliance is the lasting result of an earlier investment by the State of Washington. The state's Industry Skill Panel program underwrote the formation of the partnership which resulted in a needs assessment and the development of industry-specific training curriculum.

How Industry Skill Panels Make a Difference

Industry Skill Panels, such as the Intracoastal Alliance, help employers move from the sidelines to the frontlines, to take a central role in discussing specific workforce needs with other manufacturers, workforce professionals, community leaders, and educators.

Skill Panels enable competitors to collaborate in addressing common skill gaps, training needs and setting and monitoring performance outcomes.

This active engagement in continuously improving training systems attuned to regional key industries has resulted in more competitive companies and better jobs for Washington residents.

A 2008 independent evaluation of four Washington industry panels found that these initiatives had leveraged over \$18 million in additional investments—more than 30 times the amount of public funds invested. They have demonstrated effectiveness in decreasing skills gaps and vacancy rates in the industries targeted.



High Skills Strategic Fund

The Workforce Board invests in growing regional industries around the state through the High Skills, High Wages Strategic Fund. The fund has helped kick start relationships among employers, educators and their communities, creating curriculum for workers that target specific skills needed by local industries.

In other cases, the fund has helped existing partnerships move from curriculum design into implementation by helping private companies pay for worker training through a public-private match.

Employment

Over 4,200 people were employed in marine activities in the Intracoastal region in 2007. The region employs close to 40 percent of the statewide marine workforce and represents 35 percent of total wages.

Source: Employment Security Department

Family-Wage Jobs

(Median hourly wages with five years experience)

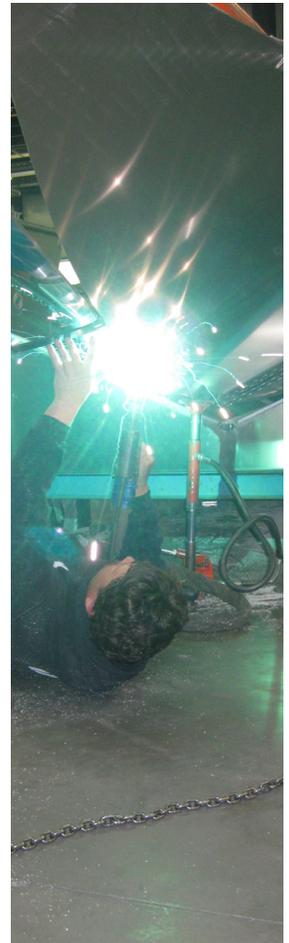
- Marine Electricians, Mechanics, Carpenters and Welders--\$20
- Composite Laminators and Painters--\$18
- Fiberglass Laminators, Riggers--\$17

Source: Washington State Marine Industry Employment and Compensation

Intracoastal Alliance

Intracoastal Alliance counties include: Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, Grays Harbor, Mason, Thurston, Lewis, Pacific, Island, San Juan, Skagit and Whatcom.

The project is coordinated by the Northwest Workforce Development Council, located in Bellingham, together with the Olympic Consortium Workforce Development Council in Port Orchard and the Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council in Olympia.



Munson Burlington Facility

"You can have the latest equipment, the best facility, but it won't matter if you don't have people with the right skills."

**Mark Burchette,
Production
Manager of
Munson High
Speed Landing
Craft in
Burlington**

Learn more: <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/IndustrySkillPanel.asp>

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