

Youth work experience

Program nurtures Seattle's industry pipeline

PARTNERS:

- King County Work Training
- Manufacturing Industrial Council of Seattle
- South Seattle Community College Apprenticeship and Education Center
- Puget Sound Industrial Excellence Center
- Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County

Since the summer of 2009, the Seeking Opportunities Developing Occupations (SODO) Inc. program has helped disadvantaged youth move past joblessness and low-wage employment into a solid career path that leads to the manufacturing sector. At the same time, the program has helped Seattle's manufacturers recognize the benefit of cultivating a talent pipeline from the ground up.

Located at South Seattle Community College Georgetown Campus, SODO Inc. is a partnership between the college, King County Work Training Program, the Manufacturing Industrial Council of Seattle and the Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council (WDC). Started originally as a summer youth employment program with federal stimulus funds, the program currently operates year-round under a federal Department of Labor Pathways out of Poverty grant managed by the WDC. Participants come from disadvantaged backgrounds and are between the ages of 18 and 24. Many lack a high school diploma, speak English as a second language or are ex-offenders.

SODO calls for a significant commitment on the part of participants. Before entering an internship, all participating youth are required to complete a four-week South Seattle Community College introductory industrial training class. Those who

successfully complete the course move on to a four-week internship through the King County Work Training Program, which places them in a worksite usually arranged by the Manufacturing Industrial Council. Employer concerns about liability are reduced as the youth are paid by the County during their internships.

Since June of 2010, when SODO Inc.'s Pathways out of Poverty grant began, 122 participants have completed the training, 115 have entered into paid work experience and 71 have completed the internship successfully. Of that number, 39 have found unsubsidized employment (including 12 who were hired by the internship employer) and five others have gone on to further education or work experience programs. Another class of 21 youth started their internships in October, 2011.

The SODO Inc. program has been instrumental in building support among area manufacturers, Seattle officials, community-based organizations and educators--all working toward a more comprehensive program that makes it possible for students to earn post-high school credentials with a career progression into Seattle's manufacturing sector.



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