

Hire Expectations: Youth learn commitment, job skills

Be on time. Dress appropriately. Show respect. These are the workplace standards youth in the SODO program are expected to meet, at the same time they learn hands-on work skills that prepare them for a manufacturing internship.

Partners

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

SODO, or Seeking Opportunities Developing Occupations, specializes in recruiting, training, placing and retaining disadvantaged youth ages 18-24 in manufacturing while also introducing the participants to emerging green trends and apprenticeship opportunities. The program has been recognized as one to watch by the statewide team that reviews best practices in workforce and economic development.

The program follows a simple credo: Set adult worker expectations and students will respond. Students are paid for their training and treated as employees. They are subject to and experience consequences for their actions, including wage reductions if needed. Students have risen to the challenge, with many completing the program and entering internships.



Located at South Seattle Community College, SODO is a partnership between the college, King County Work Training Program, the Manufacturing Industrial Council and the Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council.

South Seattle Community College provides a four-week introductory course to green industrial job skills, featuring work readiness and math skills. Students receive certifications in a range of areas that support their preparation for jobs in green manufacturing and construction.

The Manufacturing Industrial Council uses its industry relationships to place interns with companies who agree to expose a young person to the industry. So far, 30 employers have participated in the program. King County Work Training assumes the liability for the students while they participate in their internships. Additional wage subsidies come from a mix of federal funding streams.

A critical component of the program is skillful engagement where at-risk young adults are coached through the application process with the message that commitment to this stepping stone could lead to a brighter future. Case managers address problems and remove barriers to make sure that the participant's other life factors do not prematurely undercut and derail the experience.

Since the program's start in July 2009, 108 youth (out of an original 117) were placed in internships. Of those, 67 kept their internships for the duration. While not intended as a job placement program, 16 of SODO's interns have been hired by their internship provider.

"I don't see how this program can't be a big plus for anyone involved in getting real world experience. Would do it again."
Nick Perovich,
MC Electric Vehicles

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"A Program to Watch" – the Governor's Best Practices in Workforce in Economic Development Award Review Committee