

9 Steps to Revitalize America's Manufacturing Communities

Action 6: Increase the Number of Minorities and Women in Manufacturing

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Rationale

America's manufacturing workforce needs are forecasted to grow, but it's unclear if women and people of color, and black and Latinx workers in particular, will have access to those opportunities. (Before proceeding, it's important to note that research on "people of color" in manufacturing focuses mostly on black and Latinx experience, but some researchers include all non-whites in their definitions, while others define "people of color" as black and Latinx alone.) Despite employers' recognition of the multiple benefits of diverse workplaces, participation by African American and Hispanic people working in manufacturing increased only modestly over the past twenty-five years.¹ This slow diversity growth suggests that companies will need new strategies to hire and retain the growing numbers of people of color in the country, who are projected to comprise half of the U.S. workforce by 2045.² Similarly, although women make up 47 percent of the total U.S. workforce, they fill only 29 percent of manufacturing jobs,³ and women were hired for a mere 7 percent of the 650,000 manufacturing jobs that were created in the United States between 2010 and 2014.⁴

Women's low participation in the manufacturing sector is not due to having bad experiences in factory employment or a lack of interest. In a 2012 survey, over 70 percent of women working in manufacturing described their careers as interesting and rewarding, highlighting good pay and opportunities for challenging assignments as top reasons to stay in the industry.⁵ Women and people of color present an enormous untapped human resource, and states should support programs that can strengthen and build on the work some manufacturers are already doing to grow their inclusive hiring practices.

Key Actions

- In order to increase the number of women and people of color in manufacturing jobs, programs need to address barriers to entry. Two primary barriers are access to childcare and transportation. Childcare in particular can be an especially difficult obstacle for single parents who may be new on the job and are required to work night shifts, during

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which access to reliable, affordable childcare may be hard to find.

- Opportunities for “earn-and-learn” training are also hugely important. Low-wage workers may be interested in switching to a manufacturing career, but leaving a wage-paying job to take training courses may not be a viable option: even if the cost of the training is covered, workers are still giving up a valuable paycheck.
- All workers—including women and people of color—are much more likely to seek employment in a particular sector if they can imagine themselves in a job in that sector. Unlike fields such as IT and medicine, many people can’t easily visualize what manufacturing work is like, hence in a sense it can remain an invisible option to job seekers. Mentoring programs—both at the career-coaching stage and the post-placement stage—are low-cost initiatives that can build a sense of “manufacturing identity” and potentially yield outsized results for recruiting people of color and women; these programs can be especially impactful if they come from within the local community.
- Educational outreach both to young people and adults has the potential to greatly increase enrollment in the manufacturing workforce: manufacturing-focused STEM programs for K–12 students can tap the next generation of workers who will be needed to replace the millions of current manufacturing employees who are slated to retire over the next decade. At the same time, contextualized education for adults who may need additional literacy and/or numeracy skills can get workers into the many available jobs that need to be filled right now.
- The U.S. Employment Plan is a policy tool that government agencies can use in their requests for proposals to directly address hiring in the

manufacturing sector.⁶ While an agency’s minority and women’s business enterprise standards can support inclusivity for small business owners, the U.S. Employment Plan accomplishes similar goals for workers: manufacturers bidding on federally funded agency contracts can win extra points on their bids by committing to inclusive, high-road hiring plans should they be awarded the contract.

Issues to Remember

- The U.S. Employment Plan has been shown to not have a significant impact on price or the number of bidders,⁷ and was therefore found to be consistent with the federal laws and regulations⁸ that require all procurement involving federal funds be conducted in a way that maximizes full and open competition.

Recent Progress

- In March 2018, Illinois State Representative Mary Flowers introduced H.B. 5062, a bill to sustain and expand advanced skills manufacturing training and education programs in Illinois public schools.⁹ The bill directs the state board of education to institute a program aimed at facilitating education in advanced manufacturing technical skills in twelve public high schools where the youth unemployment rate is at least twice the national average. The bill ensures that the participating high schools will each have funding for at least one industry coordinator, tutoring, pre-employment and on-the-job mentoring, professional and leadership development, and life and financial management instruction.
- In January 2018, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) Board of Directors unanimously adopted a motion to establish an agency-wide Good Jobs and Equity Policy:¹⁰ for federally funded train, bus, and related equipment purchases, Metro will apply the U.S. Employment Plan to all projects above \$100

million to incentivize companies bidding on Metro contracts to create and retain high-quality jobs, partner with community and labor organizations to develop and implement apprenticeship programs, and hire disadvantaged workers.¹¹ It is estimated that the policy can support up to 20,000 jobs if Metro replaces its entire fleet and the work is performed domestically.

Model Programs

- The Manufacturing Connect (MC) program has successfully reintroduced industrial education into African-American neighborhoods in the City of Chicago.¹² Their model program includes work-based learning, training up to NIMS metalworking credentials, and state of the art equipment. The program is undergirded by the Chicagoland Manufacturing Renaissance Council, a longstanding sectoral coalition between community organizations and local manufacturers who provide work-based learning experiences, job opportunities, and constant feedback to the program.¹³ Critically, MC's Young Manufacturers Association provides ongoing mentoring and career counseling from people of color who have been successful in the manufacturing sector to new trainees.
- States can bring together their departments of education and departments of labor in coordination with Perkins funding to develop comprehensive manufacturing-focused recruiting, training, and education programs, using programs like Manufacturing Connect as a prototype. Ohio has developed such a program: the state's Department of Education Career-Tech Education (CTE) team, in collaboration with the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, used Perkins funding that was earmarked for outreach to nontraditional populations to create a set of resources (one for students and parents, and one for teachers) specifically designed to recruit female students and students of color to manufacturing careers.¹⁴
- The National Skills Coalition provides guidance on state policy for alignment programs, which have been shown to be key to building career success for low-income and/or low-skilled adults.¹⁵ Comprehensive alignment programs can be focused to address manufacturing workforce needs, and should include integrated education and training; career counseling; support services; attainment of high school diplomas or equivalent credentials; training leading to industry-recognized and stackable postsecondary credentials; and industry engagement. Among other key elements, alignment policies should include multiple entry and exit points for adult education and middle-skills training.
- Multiple examples of applications of the U.S. Employment Plan can be found on the Jobs to Move America website.¹⁶

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Notes

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- 2 "All in: Shaping tomorrow's manufacturing workforce through diversity and inclusion," PwC and Manufacturing Institute, 2018, <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/industrial-products/publications/assets/pwc-manufacturing-workforce-diversity-inclusion.pdf>.
- 3 "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population," U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>.
- 4 Ariane Hegewisch et al, "Pathways to Equity: Narrowing the Wage Gap by Improving Women's Access to Good Middle-Skill Jobs," Institute for Women's Policy Research, March, 2016, http://womenandgoodjobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Middle-skills_layout-FINAL.pdf.
- 5 Craig Griffi, Trina Huelsman, Michelle Drew Rodriguez, and Katherine McClelland, "Women in Manufacturing 2017 Study," Deloitte, 2017, <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/manufacturing/articles/women-in-manufacturing-industrial-products-and-services.html>.
- 6 "U.S. Employment Plan Resources," Jobs to Move America, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://jobstomoveamerica.org/resources/us-employment-plan-resources-2/>.
- 7 Scott Cummings, "Effect of U.S. Employment Plan on Competitive Bidding," letter to Molly Moran, acting general counsel at the U.S. Department of Transportation, December 7, 2016, available at https://jobstomoveamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Cummings_Moran_Memos.pdf.
- 8 Anthony Foxx, letter to transportation stakeholders, Office of the Secretary of Transportation, U.S. Department of Transportation, February 18, 2016, available at https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/S10-160211-003_F.pdf.
- 9 "Bill Status of HB5062," Illinois General Assembly, accessed April 4, 2019, <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocTypeID=HB&DocNum=5062&GAID=14&SessionID=91&LegID=110554>.
- 10 Erika Thi Patterson, "A Pathway to 22,000 Jobs: Los Angeles County Metro Board Unanimously Approves First-of-Its-Kind Good Jobs Policy," Jobs to Move America, January 26, 2018, <https://jobstomoveamerica.org/pathway-22000-jobs-los-angeles-county-metro-board-unanimously-approves-first-kind-good-jobs-policy/>.
- 11 Disadvantaged workers are workers that meet certain income requirements and face at least two of the following barriers to employment: (1) being homeless; (2) being a custodial single parent; (3) receiving public assistance; (4) lacking a GED or high school diploma; (5) having a criminal record or other involvement with the criminal justice system; (6) suffering from chronic unemployment; (7) emancipated from the foster care system; (8) being a veteran of the Iraq/Afghanistan war.
- 12 See the Manufacturing Connect website at <https://www.mfgren.org/manufacturing-connect>.
- 13 See the Chicagoland Manufacturing Renaissance Council website at <https://www.mfgren.org/cmrc>.
- 14 "Career Guidebooks – Ohio," National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://www.napequity.org/products/career-guidebooks/ohio/>.
- 15 "Alignment Policy Toolkit Summary," National Skills Coalition, October, 2016, <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/alignment-policy-toolkit-summary-pdf.pdf>.
- 16 See "U.S. Employment Plan Resources," Jobs to Move America, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://jobstomoveamerica.org/resources/us-employment-plan-resources-2/>.