



MGEA Works Board

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The eleven counties that compose the Middle Georgia region have established a workforce development program in conjunction with grant funds allocated by the Governor's Office of Workforce Development. The program of work revolves around the Governor's High Demand Career Initiative (HDCI). This program was begun under the leadership of Governor Nathan Deal in 2014 and current Governor Brian Kemp is continuing the work. The genesis of the program was to identify across the state those skill gaps that industry partners were having difficulty finding and filling within their workforce. From those meetings, the HDCI program was created and the focus of the Middle Georgia Economic Alliance (MGEA) is on addressing the needs of the advanced manufacturing sector within the region.

MGEA Works is the workforce development arm supporting all industry in the advanced manufacturing sector within Middle Georgia. The group has several initiatives that they are working on but the main focus is connecting industry to the K-12 school systems while establishing connections to available resources that may be utilized. The current work goals are as follows:

- MGEA Works in conjunction with local Development Authorities are conducting workforce surveys in all eleven counties within Middle Georgia. Based on community population a formula was created to garner feedback to create a baseline data set to work from. The goal is to collect 57 surveys from Middle Georgia industries in the advanced manufacturing sector and the group is tracking to complete 100% of these surveys. The data will be compiled and then the 11 economic development professionals will discuss "next steps" to address the challenges that were expressed during these confidential surveys and provide actionable items moving forward.
- The Project Manager for MGEA Works has met personally with all eleven Career, Technical & Agriculture Education (CTAE) Directors in the Middle Georgia school systems. These discussions revolved around the desire to better connect the school systems with local industries so that the workforce pipeline can be strengthened within the region. All eleven CTAE Directors have pledged their support to assist in the efforts of MGEA Works and are excited about the new partnerships that can be fostered with industry partners across county lines.
- In the summer of 2020, teachers and counselors from Middle Georgia will be participating in a two-day Externship program where they will shadow a local industry to learn more about what they do. It has become apparent that, to no fault of their own, the local school systems are not aware of the activities related to advanced manufacturing that are occurring within their communities. The goal is that these teachers may be able to add to their curriculum the following year on what they learned during their Externship and they may also be able to recommend students who fit the need of the company for future work opportunities. The goal was to identify 15 companies in Middle Georgia that would be a "Champion" for each county to participate in the program. To date, 25 companies have pledged to host these teachers for an Externship opportunity.

- MGEA Works has partnered with the local school systems to address the Perkins V Needs Assessment that is a federally mandated program which has funding implications for the CTAE course of work. The group has met twice and the response from both the school systems and the over 20 industry partners in attendance was overwhelmingly positive. Both entities realize that they need to do more to strengthen the workforce pipeline in Middle Georgia and positive action items are being taken to meet these needs. Areas of concern related to work ethic and specific skills gaps are being reviewed and overhauled if necessary by the school systems and industry partners are volunteering their time to help with the programming to make sure all facets of what they need are being met. This is the first time that these two bodies have sat at the table in a regional manner to discuss the local workforce.
- Goals are being set to track the number of plant tours for students as well as work-based learning opportunities. Since the first Perkins V meeting in early December of 2019, 15 net new work-based learning opportunities have been identified. Additionally, three plant tours have occurred and several more have been scheduled for students to visit manufacturing facilities in Middle Georgia.
- The MGEA Works Project Manager is providing economic data on a quarterly basis to the CTAE Directors so that they can better align their programs of work internally with what the industries are doing in the community. Additionally, data from the school systems are being collected based on interest and aptitude from the students to share with industries so that there may be a more strategic pipeline for these students to focus on when they graduate.

The MGEA Works team understands that these changes won't happen overnight and this is going to take time to properly align the schools with the industries. However, there is sincere, positive momentum by all parties involved to better the pipeline of workers for the local industries and thus for the communities with the region.