

# All About Adults

By Symone C. Skrzycki

## 'Middle-skill Jobs' Shortage: Education Is the Answer

The jobs – more than 550,000 representing professions such as nurses, police officers, firefighters, air traffic controllers, electricians, mechanics and truck drivers through 2020 – are here, but where are the workers to fill them?

According to *Indiana's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs 2013: an Updated Look at Employment and Education Patterns in Indiana*, 54% of all jobs in Indiana are classified as middle-skill – occupations that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year college degree – yet only 47% of Hoosiers likely possess the necessary skills and credentials.

These statistics are especially alarming in light of the fact that middle-skill jobs encompass the largest portion of job openings projected for the state by 2020.

The *Forgotten Middle-Skill* report was released by the Indiana Skills2Compete Coalition, which raises awareness of the skills gap and advances policies that help more Hoosiers access training and education. Members represent a bipartisan group of business, community, education, legislative and workforce development leaders.

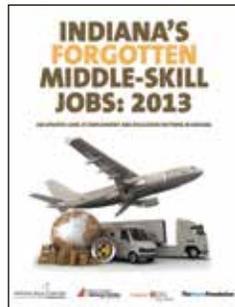
A similar report released in 2010, through a partnership with the National Skills Coalition, served as a springboard for the Indiana coalition's formation. It revealed that two-thirds of Indiana's future workforce (in 2025) will already have been working as of 2005. That means that training must target not only young students, but also adult workers such as those who currently hold low-wage, low-skill jobs.

"What we're talking about with the skills gap is an attainment gap. It's hard skills that folks can prove with a certificate in their hand," asserts coalition co-chair Jessica Fraser. "Those are the skills that are going to make people competitive. We're talking about getting people transferrable, provable skills they can build a career with."

Coalition members hope to see a 20% increase in middle-skill credentials by 2020.

Kris Deckard, executive director of Ready Indiana (the Indiana Chamber's workforce initiative) from 2007-2013, serves on the coalition with Chamber vice president of education and workforce policy Derek Redelman.

"It could benefit us greatly economically if employers looking for people with these types of skills and credentials could find more qualified workers," Deckard comments. "Otherwise, employers turn away work because they don't have the capacity to fulfill orders; that work potentially goes to other states and other countries. It's really part of a bigger issue in terms of the effect it has on our overall economy."



## Making Training Personal

Employees at Snyder's-Lance – a manufacturer of pretzels, potato chips, cookies, nuts and a variety of other snacks – are learning to think outside the “bag” by participating in leadership, conflict management and technical training through Ashland, Ohio-based Transformation Network.

Transformation Network is a faith-based workforce development organization that provides skills training and staffing services for manufacturers and individuals.

At Snyder's-Lance, machine operators from its Jeffersonville plant took part in a 10-week training program that focused on pneumatics, robotics, automation, and electrical and mechanical systems.

"They learned a lot of the basics around how to troubleshoot if they had a problem, and that's important because those are the people who are closest to the 'fire,'" remarks Andre Boom, director of manufacturing at the company's Jeffersonville and Ashland plants. "If they have to call a mechanic for support, they'll lose five to 10 minutes before the mechanic can get there."

Transformation Network President Dan Phillip explains that the training gets employees to think more like an employer than an employee.

"We're trying to change the culture. The key is to understand that you don't get paid for how hard you work and the hours you put in; you get paid for the value you (bring to) the company," Phillip observes.

Transformation Network has three Ohio locations and recently expanded into Indiana. The company is scheduled to open an on-site Community Tech Center for hands-on training in Jeffersonville in mid-January.

"We're at a time in this country where we have a lot of manufacturing jobs, and we as a nation and as a group of manufacturers can't find enough people to fill those jobs," Phillip declares. "We have a disconnect or a lack of desire to work in manufacturing, but we believe that we can partner with manufacturers to help develop the people they need with the skills they have to have to start meeting the needs of those manufacturers."

Boom also mentions the benefit of boosted employee engagement for those already in the Snyder's-Lance organization.

"I don't want people just to be here for the money, but because they're being recognized and developed and feel like they have a future here," he stresses. "I don't care what rank or role they have at the company – all of them have a say. That's the kind of culture you (want to) create, and I think that over time that really will help set us apart from a lot of the competition that's out there."



Tackling it together: Employees from snack manufacturer Snyder's-Lance hone problem-solving skills.

**RESOURCES:** Jessica Fraser, Indiana Skills2Compete Coalition, at [www.incap.org/indianaskills2compete.html](http://www.incap.org/indianaskills2compete.html) | Ready Indiana at [www.readyindiana.org](http://www.readyindiana.org)

**RESOURCES:** Andre Boom, Snyder's-Lance, at [www.snyderslance.com](http://www.snyderslance.com) | Dan Phillip, Transformation Network, at [www.transformationnetwork.org](http://www.transformationnetwork.org)

## Sending the Right ‘Manufacturing’ Message

Got a minute?

In less than 60 seconds, you can log onto this resource, [www.advancingmanufacturing.com](http://www.advancingmanufacturing.com), to discover job training and career opportunities at manufacturing companies throughout a 12-county region.

The web site is a key piece of the Advancing Manufacturing initiative, which includes the following counties: Benton, Carroll, Cass, Clinton, Fountain, Howard, Miami, Montgomery, Tippecanoe, Tipton, Warren and White.

Search for positions (aircraft inspector, production technician, welder, maintenance technician and many others) and apply for direct hire online. Need to boost your skills? Seek scholarships through a Certified Production Technician (CPT) program offered by Ivy Tech Corporate College. Curriculum covers four areas – safety, quality and measurement, manufacturing and production, and maintenance awareness – over a period of eight weeks.

“(The initiative) is about raising people’s awareness of the opportunities and fulfilling aspects of working in a manufacturing

career,” explains Roger Feldhaus, executive director of the Region 4 Workforce Board in Lafayette.

“The program is set up to operate as close as a pre-program could be to mimic what it would be like in a manufacturing environment – time clocks, teamwork, respect for authority and those kinds of things. We’re looking at more than technical skills, but work-related behaviors as well.”

As of late November, the Region 4 initiative boasted 193 graduates and 262 people enrolled.

To qualify for training, individuals must complete WorkKeys® testing (focusing on areas such as reading, locating information and mathematics), pass a drug screening and participate in a personal interview.

Nanshan America Advanced Aluminum Technologies in Lafayette is one of the program’s employer partners. Its two-press aluminum extrusion operation spans 600,000 square feet and employs nearly 100 people. The company plans to double in size over the next year.

“The view many people have of manufacturing is that there are dark, dirty plants with jobs that involve menial labor, sweating and hard work, and breaking you down by the end of the day,” observes Dave Kummer, manager of human resources, training and community involvement initiatives. “That was the plant my dad worked in back in the ‘50s, but today’s manufacturing plants are clean, well lit and have high degrees of automation, so people aren’t breaking their backs to do jobs anymore.

“That message isn’t out there in all the schools yet – we need kids and young people who are prepared for opportunities in industries like ours.”

Nanshan and other employers are helping to reverse misconceptions by hosting field trips, participating in interview fairs, presenting workshops and more.

“Generally speaking, we know that 80% of the graduates are working during the quarter after they completed the program,” Feldhaus reveals.

A similar effort, called Manufacturing Matters, kicked off recently in East Central Indiana. It includes Wayne, Fayette, Rush, Union and Franklin counties as well as two nearby Ohio counties.



High school students learn about trailer design and construction at Wabash National Innovation Center during Manufacturing Career Day, part of a 12-county Advancing Manufacturing initiative.

**RESOURCES:** Roger Feldhaus, Region 4 Workforce Board, at [www.region4workforceboard.org](http://www.region4workforceboard.org) | Advancing Manufacturing at [www.advancingmanufacturing.com](http://www.advancingmanufacturing.com) | Manufacturing Matters at [www.ManufacturingMatters.info](http://www.ManufacturingMatters.info)