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**Joint Labor-Management Training and Career Ladder Programs: Winning Solutions for Employers, Workers, and Communities**

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**Introduction: the American VET System**

The American vocational education and training (VET) system generally conforms to an individualis­tic, market-based model in which personal responsibility and freedom of choice are elevated as paramount values (Marschall 2012). As young people move through compulsory elementary and secondary public education (through the age of 18), the children of middle-income and higher socio­economic status families are likely to enroll in four-year colleges, where they are expected to achieve baccalaureate or advanced degrees. In the national cohort of students who entered college in the Fall 2008, the beginning of the Great Recession, only 55 percent completed their studies and obtained a degree by 2014 (Shapiro, et al. 2014). Others move directly into the labor force, where they may receive on-the-job training from specific employers, or attend one of some 1,045 community colleges where they have access to occupational training, certificates recognized by industry groups, two-year associate degrees in specialized areas, and a conglomeration of other services (Hansen 1994).

The community college system – highly decentralized and largely funded by state governments – is a prime provider of remedial education for those who performed poorly in secondary schools. Union apprenticeship programs frequently have working partnerships with community colleges, where re­lated theoretical instruction is offered. The direct federal role in VET is small, though loans and grants provided by federal agencies influence the ability of many students to attend college. Overall, the non-federal VET, which includes some 3,800 private and public two- and four-year institutions, is a complex environment with little coordination or capacity to respond to national priorities. The fed­eral government does not prescribe a role for labor unions in VET institutions.

Young workforce entrants receive minimal career guidance about how to navigate the patchwork of organizations that provide career and technical education. The fragmented, uncoordinated character of American VET leads to many persons “falling through the cracks,” failing to receive the required skills and knowledge about job opportunities to obtain steady work at family-sustaining wages. To address this problem, the federal government has established a series of workforce development programs, with multiple goals and policy approaches, that target low-income persons, workers dislo­cated due to plant closings and mass layoffs, youth, and other categories of disadvantaged persons (Barnow and Nightingale 2007). Since being introduced in the early 1960s, these programs have be­come highly decentralized, with the bulk of policy and administrative authority residing in the states and local governments.

Unions have a prescribed role in the most recent of these federal job training programs, the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). It maintains a network of some 1,600 one-stop career centers that were intended to consolidate employment and training services in a single loca­tion to facilitate access by eligible participants. Centers are governed by Workforce Development Boards. While the statute mandates that a majority of WIB members be representatives of business interests, the boards also are required to include persons nominated by union organizations. About 1,100 labor representatives serve on them.

The American industrial relations system is highly legalistic and conflictual. Though workers have the legal right to organize collectively at the workplace level, opposition to unions among employers and business associations is vehement. Individual employers face little state constraint on thwarting unionization campaigns through intimidating union supporters and breaking the law. In those instances when unions do win an election and successfully negotiate a contract, the terms can vary widely from one employer to another, both across industries and in the same industrial sectors. The decentralized nature of collective bargaining and the breakdown of national contract patterns within industries (Thelen 2001) tends to foster innovation, a willingness to negotiate provisions that respond to the production needs of particular shop-floor situations, outcomes that are especially pertinent when employers are pressured by the competitive demands of globalization and workers are beset by precarious labor market conditions.

Among scholars in industrial relations and human resource management who have inter­preted long-term labor market trends, a consensus has emerged that the post-World War II insti­tutional structure of relatively stable career paths, employment continuity in a single firm, perceptions of mutual obligations, and a predictable “psychological contract” between workers and employers has eroded (Osterman 1999; Stone 2004) and no longer functions to direct the human resource policies of firms or guide employee behavior. In turn, there is widespread experimentation with new institu­tional forms (Osterman 2001), such as regional labor market intermediaries, that are more attuned to the values of individual responsibility, limited expecta­tions of employment security, career self-management, and a more market-based employment relationship (Cappelli 1999).

Unions have a long history of designing and implementing innovative and effective job training and apprenticeship programs that benefit workers, business, and local communities. Support for educa­tion stretches back to the earliest days of American trade unions, when workingmen’s parties advocated local public school systems and unions were instrumental in passing federal vocational education legislation (Stacey and Charner 1982). As craft unions among printers, machinists, and iron molders matured in the decades surrounding the Civil War, masters and journey-level workers cob­bled together apprenticeship systems that set minimum time periods for apprentice training, wage levels, and educational requirements (Rorabaugh 1986). After mass production firms and large government bureaucracies became the standard organizational forms for producing goods and delivering services, and a Taylorized division of labor came to dominate the managerial design of work tasks, the industrial, service and public sector unions that emerged from the 1930s onward par­ticipated in the construction of a tradi­tional industrial relations regime. That system featured distinct spheres of influence for management and labor: managers controlled strategic decision-making over investments, the planning and implementa­tion of technology, and the determination of what skills were necessary to perform particular jobs, while unions used the levers of collective bargaining to negotiate over wage levels, proce­dural fairness, and a limited range of “bargainable” issues oriented toward the economic interests of their members (Thomas and Kochan 1992).

As American labor reassessed its position on new forms of work organization, the AFL-CIO (1994, 15) called upon its member unions “to embrace an expanded agenda and to assume an expanded role as the representative of workers in a full range of management decisions...” Direct sponsorship of workplace learning programs was framed as a way for unions to augment the employment security of members, help them advance on the job and adjust to changing workplace conditions, and reach out to new con­stituencies (AFL-CIO 1999).

The programs recounted here demonstrate that many US unions have come to regard the establish­ment of workplace learning systems, and strategic involvement in community-based workforce and economic development initiatives, as consequential activities that bear the potential to achieve posi­tive sum outcomes: helping their members attain employment security and adjust to the demands of a precarious labor market, while increasing the capacity of receptive employers to implement high performance work systems. As unions institutionalize workplace learning systems through collective bargaining, they contribute to structuring the cooperative conflict between union and management in a manner that enhances union influence over the conduct of work practices and empowers union members to direct their individual career progress more effectively.

Examples of innovative programs are evident across the United States, in industries slated for high future growth and in mature industries with distinct needs that are essential to community revitalization.

**In Hospitality: Culinary Academy of Las Vegas**

The Culinary Academy of Las Vegas, Nevada, was created in 1989 as a labor-management training trust negotiated by the Culinary Workers Union/UNITE HERE Local 226, Bartenders Union/UNITE HERE Local 165 and Local 26 with owners of properties on the Las Vegas Strip. The Academy is the largest provider of training for entry-level and incumbent workers in the Las Vegas hospitality indus­try and has trained over 35,000 workers. Its goal is to provide high-quality training that will enable people to have great careers in the hospitality industry, with good wages, opportunities for career advancement, and health and retirement benefits. The program seeks to provide a reliable supply of highly trained employees to employers. In meeting both goals, it has significantly reduced costly turnover in an industry typically plagued by high turnover.

The academy provides training for hourly workers, many of whom are immigrants, who want to enter the hotel industry. It also provides education and training for current union members looking to upgrade their skills and gain greater career mobility in the hospitality industry. The Culinary Academy is a model for employer-employee partnerships. Employers get skilled workers and academy graduates are on track for quality, union jobs. The Culinary Workers Union is recognized for its leading role in providing prominent employers with needed, worker- focused skill development and employment opportunities for workers.

**In Health Care, regional Union-hospital partnership: AFSCME District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund, Philadelphia**

The District 1199 Training & Upgrading Fund is the premier health care training program in the coun­try. It is a jointly administered training trust fund created in 1974 by the collective bargaining agreement between AFSCME District 1199C and nine Philadelphia hospitals. Currently, 55 employers contribute 1.5 percent of payroll to the training fund. The Training and Upgrading Fund’s Learning Center provides basic and job skills training to over 2,000 students per year. New participants can receive basic health care training and other needed supports like GED programs and English as Second Language tutoring. And enrolled workers can upgrade their training in a variety of health related occupations over the course of their career. About half of the students are union members and half are community residents, including laid-off workers and welfare recipients. The Fund’s Learning Center supports an experienced staff of 60 part-time instructors and 35 full-time staff.

The fund provides scholarship assistance, education leave, a living stipend and continues all benefits for workers who take time off from their jobs to participate in training. As a healthcare sector initiative, the Fund also provides leadership in creating and sustaining industry partnerships of regional employers, institutions of higher learning, school districts, community based organizations, advocacy groups, and government agencies.

**In Health Care, national union coalition grows in partnership: Kaiser Permanente and the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions**

Kaiser Permanente (KP) is the nation’s largest health care organization, serving more than 10 million health plan members in eight states and the District of Columbia. The Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions, AFL-CIO, is comprised of 28 local unions and 11 international unions that represent 105,000 Kaiser employees—nurses, pharmacists, lab technicians, medical assistants, maintenance and custodial staff and other health care workers. Kaiser Permanente and the Coalition have pursued their common goals of the highest quality health care and service, com­petitive wages and benefits, and suitable working conditions through collective bargaining by negotiating a series of innovative contracts since 1997 that provide education, skill training and career development services to the workforce.

In their 2005 National Agreement, the Union Coalition and Kaiser Permanente launched Work­force Planning and Development (WFPD) initiatives—which harnesses the power of their Labor Management Partnership to provide the organizational infrastructure and corresponding devel­opment resources through national and regional WFPD teams. In these teams, management and labor co‐chairs work together to ensure that incumbent workers are prepared for evolving roles in the health care industry. Two Taft‐Hartley educational trusts, the Ben Hudnall Memorial Trust and the SEIU UHW‐West & Joint Employer Education Fund, both offer a portfolio of programs and services that contribute to organizational effectiveness, continuous work-based learning, and worker empowerment on the job. In 2014, more than 20,000 employees participated in at least one Trust or Fund training or education program. The services provided are determined by min­ing KP’s operational strategies, considering healthcare workforce drivers, and incorporating insights from Trust-funded career counselors working with individual employees.

For current workers, targeted services and programs result in career mobility, upskilling and lifelong‐learning. **Career Upgrade Programs** offer career advancement and greater job satisfac­tion, resulting in wage increases and greater lifetime earning potential. **Degree Completion Programs** support workers pursuing academic degrees by removing financial barriers and providing access to general education and a variety of Associate degree majors. **Career Counseling** is integrated into the system, helping identify the financial, academic and emotional support necessary to thrive in workers’ current career choice, move to the next level, or success­fully pursue new career goals. **College Preparation/Pre‐Requisites** are a series of flexible web‐based programs and courses provided by a network of contracted educational providers, includ­ing community colleges, designed to reduce or eliminate barriers to engaging adult learners. **Skill Enhancement Programs** help current workers gain the confidence to function at a higher level in their current jobs. Skill programs include soft-skill competencies, certifications, language proficiency and digital fluency. Program evaluations have found that an average of 76 percent of those participating in trust programs experienced higher‐than‐negotiated wage increases over time.

**IN AEROSPACE: IAM/BOEING Joint Training Programs**

[Text to be added.]

**In Manufacturing: Wisconsin AFL-CIO Regional Training Partnership**

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP) was formed by Milwaukee area business and labor leaders in 1992 in response to skill shortages created by the recovery of manufacturing, retire­ment of an aging workforce, and diversification of the regional economy. It is one of the largest sectoral training programs in the country working with more than 300 firms, including small and medium size employers training employing 1700 workers in machining, electronics, plastics and related sectors in 2012 alone. The WRTP has developed successful models for implementing new technologies and work processes and educating and training the workforce.

The WRTP recently has collaborated with BIG STEP a Building Trades led initiative with employers and community groups to increase participation by minorities and women in the trades through training. It also has launched an Industrial Manufacturing Technician apprenticeship program in part­nership with AFL-CIO Working for America Institute. The program is state-certified and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor under its H-1B program. The program is being piloted in Milwaukee and is on pace to enroll 80 incumbent manufacturing workers. It will expand statewide and expand the partnership to include Michigan and Minnesota in 2014.

The collaboration between WRTP and BIG STEP began during the Department of Labor grant term when construction was one of the industry sectors selected for replication. With their own highly successful histories, WRTP and BIG STEP partnered to facilitate more effective coordination of employer-driven worker readiness to best ensure that individuals preparing for employment gained the skills and experiences that employers needed.

**In Construction: Building and Construction Trades Apprenticeship and Upskilling Programs**

The apprentice model of skill acquisition is distinctive because it integrates systematic on-the-job training, guided by an experienced master-level practitioner in an occupation, with related classroom in­struction. An estimated 490,000 apprentices were active in registered programs in 2003 (Glover and Bilginsoy 2005), an increase from the 283,000 enrolled in 1990 (Bilginsoy 2003). While the U.S. government has identified more than 800 occupations as apprenticeable, the bulk of active appren­tices were being trained in 2003 as electricians, carpenters, pipe fitters and other occupations in the building and construction trades, where the admission of new ap­prentices varies according to local labor market conditions. Though some programs are spon­sored by non-unionized employers, the majority (70 percent) of registered apprentices participated in labor-management programs, gov­erned by an infrastructure of local Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committees (JATC) and funded through collectively-bargained contributions to local tax-exempt trust funds. The multi-employer/multi-union apprenticeship and skill upgrade training programs invest more than $1.3 billion a year in apprentice and journey-level training. The 15 unions in the building and construction trades maintain 1,900 training centers throughout North America. (North America’s Building Trades Unions 2015). More than 500,000 workers are trained annually in this system.

The AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department made a commitment to the Clinton Global Initiative to train workers in emerging energy conservation construction techniques—a commitment it has exceeded by more than double.

Over the past three years, the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department has been leading an effort to develop a standardized pre-apprenticeship program, the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum, aligned with registered apprenticeship programs. The program is an effort to make train­ing more effective, particularly for members of underserved communities. In 2011, the project was piloted in five cities as part of the national “Pathways Out of Poverty.” The project brought together community groups, employers, and the building trades unions to train hundreds of community-based trainers to deliver the curriculum.

**An Innovative High School Program: Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council and Austin Polytechnical Academy**

The Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council (CMRC) brings together business, labor, govern­ment, and community groups to advocate for policies and programs that enhance the local manufacturing economy. A major part of this effort is support for education, training, and access to careers in manufacturing—especially for economically disadvantaged communities.

CMRC founded Austin Polytechnical Academy (APA), a college and career prep high school on Chi­cago’s west side. APA’s mission is to educate the next generation of leaders in all aspects of manufacturing, from skilled production and engineering to management and company ownership. APA has a state of the art manufacturing technical center that teaches students real-world jobs skills and offers students the industry-recognized National Institute for Metalworking Skills credentials. The 65 local manufacturers that belong to the CMRC offer these qualified students internships, job shadowing and summer job opportunities. The APA model is being studied for replication in other U.S. cities and in other countries.

CMRC also uses APA to train incumbent workers from member firms in the evening, and has started a reentry training program for those leaving prison, which placed 16 of its first 17 entrants in manu­facturing positions in the Chicago area.

**In the steel and rubber industries: United Steelworkers’ Institute for Career Development**

The United Steelworkers Institute for Career Development (ICD), headquartered in Merrillville, Indiana, is a unique workforce training program for eligible members of the United Steelworkers (USW). The Institute was created in 1989 as a result of contract negotiations between the USW and major steel companies.

Today, ICD has expanded to include the tire and rubber industries, as well as glass and packaging companies. Fifteen companies participate in the plan.  Instruction ranges from basic skills, such as GED preparation or financial investing, to graduate-level college courses, emphasizing portable skills. A tuition assistance program provides up to $1,800 annually for tuition, books and fees at accredited institutions. This educational benefit is negotiated by the USW in contracts with partici­pating companies. The companies set aside 15 cents for each hour worked by a steelworker – or some other contractually agreed-upon amount – to fund the program.

**In Auto Manufacturing: UAW Big Three Training Partnerships**

Similarly, the United Auto Workers (UAW) has training partnerships with the General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler that are negotiated as part of the collective bargaining agreement, including other labor-management cooperation initiatives, as well. At its height, the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources was training more than 400,000 workers each year.  The UAW partnerships also adminis­ter scholarship programs for employees, children, retiree services, health and wellness program, financial planning, and a range of other initiatives to improve labor management relations.

**Transportation: Transportation Learning Center**

The Transportation Learning Center (TLC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving public transportation at the national level and in local communities. The Center builds labor-management training partnerships that improve the performance of transit organizations, expand workforce knowledge, skills and abilities, and promote career advancement. The Center is the only national organization that focuses on the frontline workforce in public transportation and the transportation industry in general.

The Center makes committed investments in frontline technical workers to benefit all stakeholders in public transportation through, for example, labor-management partnerships that support employee voice, engagement and career development. By supporting cutting edge research and development, the Center improves human capital development in the industry. In career ladder programs, incumbent workers have the opportunity to advance through training and education. Career pathways into public transportation jobs provide living wages and benefits to employees, with an emphasis on young people and men and women from disadvantaged communities who obtain continuing education and training. The greener work processes that are part of Center programs create more sustainable communities.

The Center has accomplished a great deal since 2001. It has sponsored or supported local and statewide training partnerships in 12 state, providing more than 27,000 training opportunities for transit mechanics. For bus, rail vehicle and elevator-escalator technicians, the Center has created national apprenticeship frameworks that include mentoring and train-the-trainer activities. The TLC also operates a Transit Training Network, an industry-wide effort for occupational training commit­tee members and local practitioners to view the most updated industry training standards, share information, and rate coursework that has been created by committees or individual agencies.

In Hospitality: UNITE HERE Hotel Partnerships

In 1985, a Boston hotel workers unions, now UNITE HERE Local 26, began offering ESOL classes in response to the changing demographics in the hotel and restaurant industry and the articu­lated needs of their membership. The pilot project was so successful that Local 26 and the GBHE Trust established an employer-funded labor-management education trust fund. The education program has been institutionalized since then, growing into the Boston Education, Skills & Train­ing (BEST) Corporation, which enhances the quality of life and skills for hospitality workers in more than 25 unionized hotels. Program participants come from 88 different countries and speak 48 different languages. The BEST Corp. offers classes for incumbent workers in English for Hospitality, technology skills, US Citizenship Preparation, Academic Skills, Banquet Service, and Basic Culinary Arts. Participants have completed more than 3,152 courses since BEST opened in 2006.

BEST Corp. offers a biannual Room Attendant Training program for those hoping to apply for hotel jobs. Their simulated work site includes a full-size hotel room and a professional kitchen. A team of career coaches help students apply for jobs and achieve their employment goals. Their coaching model focuses on building social capital among hotel workers and shining a light on pathways to a better life for them and their families. Moving from low-paying hospitality jobs (e.g. fast food restaurants) to employment at partner hotels typically doubles the income of pro­gram participants. Since 2011, about 90 percent of Room Attendant graduates have obtained jobs resulting in average wage increases of 75 percent upon placement. A Social Return on Investment (SROI) study of the Room Attendant program by a Northwestern University scholar revealed that it yielded more than $2.9 million in savings to society.

In 2006, a panel of industry, community and labor leaders in Los Angeles founded the Hospitality Diversity Task Force to promote opportunities for African American workers in the city’s top hotels and food service companies. Tourism and hospitality employers were adding jobs at a rapid pace – faster than any other sector in the regional economy. The task force recognized the opportunity and established the Taft-Hartley Hospitality Training and Education Fund (HITEF), building upon contributions generated by UNITE HERE Local 11’s hotel and food service collec­tive bargaining agreements. The organization has grown into a broad-based partnership, the Los Angeles Hospitality Training Academy (HTA), that includes employers, labor, community col­leges, workforce investment boards, and County and City agencies.

The HTA provides a range of education and training services, including customer services train­ing (e.g. “Tools for Problem Solving” and “Developing Effective Work Teams”). Courses are built around the experiences and needs of frontline workers and operations managers. The HTA has received funding from the local workforce investment board to serve as a “sector intermediary” that will monitor the needs of the industry, develop new employment and training strategies, and strengthen the business/labor/education/government/community partnership for the ben­efit of all stakeholders and the health of the regional economy.

**Across Industries, Communities, and Unions: AFL-CIO Working for America Institute and the IMT Apprenticeship Program**

The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute was founded in 1968 to support labor unions, employers and other partners in the development of training programs and engagement with the nation’s workforce system. The Institute has advanced labor and management initiatives in economic devel­opment, the formation of multi-stakeholder High Road Partnerships, and utilized labor's capital resources to create demonstration projects and highlight job growth opportunities in all sectors of the economy.

With funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Institute is working with industrial unions, the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Council, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP), the Michigan AFL-CIO Human Resources Development Institute (MHRDI), the Minnesota AFL-CIO and Jobs for the Future, a national workforce intermediary to pilot a new, innovative apprenticeship for frontline workers in manufacturing – the **Industrial Manufacturing Technician (IMT) Apprenticeship** program.

The IMT apprenticeship is based on the Manufacturing Skills Standards Certification (MSSC) - world-class standards set by industry and labor. The IMT was developed by WRTP in collaboration with a diverse group of manufacturing employers and unions that include machining, electrical and food processing.

Representatives from key industrial unions included the United Auto Workers (UAW), International Association of Machinists (IAM), United Steel Workers (USW), International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM). This ensured that employer, training and worker interests were aligned in the develop­ment of the IMT apprenticeship. Representatives from the workforce development system and career and technical education also assisted in the development of the IMT apprenticeship.

The IMT apprenticeship was formally recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor in November 2014.The IMT apprenticeship works because it is designed and implemented through a joint labor-management structure. The IMT provides career pathways to advanced manufacturing as well as stackable industry recognized credentials. Related instruction is competency-based and the design is flexible to respond to specific employers and industry sub-sector needs.

Summary

In summary, the transformation of labor market relations due to corporate investment practices, the rise of high performance work systems, and forces related to globalization has presented a historic challenge to US labor unions. Unions have responded in a strategic manner, modifying their approaches to organizing additional members, changing their institutional structures, and imple­menting a host of innovations that indicate their willingness to intervene in both the design of work practices in individual workplaces and the wealth-creation (workforce and economic development) dynamics of local and regional economies.

The move of American trade unionism toward strategic intervention, continuous coalition-building, and aggressive organizing is reflected in union involvement in the construction of workplace learning institutions. Some of this activity builds upon existing structures, such as long-standing joint appren­ticeship programs and public employee union commitment to membership education. Other activities involve the formation of new labor-management partnerships in industries that have been severely impacted by foreign competition (automobile manufacturing, steel, and aerospace), digital communication technology (telecommunications), and rapid employment growth in service sector enterprises (hotels, restaurants, gaming, hospitals, and home health care.) Through the formation of social partnerships in alliance with community-based organizations, and experimentation with asso­ciations based upon occupational allegiance, unions are seeking to limit the economic damage associated with global restructuring and shape public policy, creating an environment more recep­tive to the sorts of changes in US labor law that sets the stage for a resurgence in union organizing success.

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