
President's High Growth Job Training Initiative

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities



Grantee: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

Industry Focus: Renewable energy production

Key Partners: Alexandria Technical College; Century College; MN West Community & Technical College; St. Cloud Technical College; MN Department of Employment & Economic Development; SW MN Workforce Council; South Central Workforce Council; Xcel Energy; Minnesota Rural Electric Association; Verasun Energy; Southwest Minnesota State University; Minnesota State University-Mankato; Discovery Academy (St. Cloud); Range Association of Municipalities and Schools; and iSeek Solutions

Grant Amount: \$1,000,000

Leveraged Amount: \$767,885

Location of Grant Activities: Minnesota

Challenge: A panel of industry experts convened in October 2007 by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities identified several workforce challenges faced by Minnesota's energy sector. Among these are the many entry-level hires lacking basic skills needed to thrive in energy careers. Xcel Energy, one of the key partners, noted that 50% of applicants lack basic reading, math, science and/or employability skills. Another challenge is the aging workforce. Northern Natural Gas reported an average age of its operations and maintenance workforce to be 52. Xcel also reported that 50% of its workforce is eligible for retirement by 2017. In light of these and other challenges, recruiting and training has become a top priority of the state's largest energy firms.

Addressing the Challenge: The Minnesota Training Partnership for a Sustainable Energy Economy will create training and education programs that lead to career opportunities for regional workers. This will be accomplished by developing core curricula leading to AAS degrees; developing and delivering customized training modules; providing professional development for instructors; creating certificate-granting programs in ethanol, biodiesel, wind, and solar technology; developing two hands-on high school modules; and developing and maintaining an energy careers website and other marketing initiatives.

Projected Outcomes:

- 105 trainees will enroll in the core curriculum program
- 215 incumbent workers will enroll in certificate programs, and 172 (80%) will earn a certificate
- A minimum of 30 high school students will be served through the learning modules

