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## *Competency Models In Action:*

### **An Energy Sector Workforce Development Strategy**

June 2013

- Lorain County Community College facilitates broad collaborative initiative to build a talent pipeline for energy sector jobs
- Integrates energy sector industry competencies into career pathways using existing models, tools, and resources
- Brings together energy companies, utilities, higher education and workforce development partners

#### **Introduction**

Lorain County Community College (LCCC) has a long track record of using ETA's competency models to address workforce needs. In 2009, it was selected as one of four community colleges to pilot the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) Manufacturing Skills Certification System, and today has made substantive progress to embed industry-recognized credentials into targeted fields of study for the manufacturing industry.

Energy-related companies in Northeast Ohio share a similar need for a strong pipeline of skilled workers, including technicians, engineers and other Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)-related occupations. Within the renewable energy cluster, LCCC and its partners have leveraged grant resources to forge new levels of collaboration on workforce needs between traditional utilities and renewable energy companies. Northeast Ohio's traditional energy companies face challenges confronting the energy workforce throughout the nation: an aging workforce poised to retire; a desire to attract a diverse applicant pool, including women; and the loss of a wealth of experience and institutional knowledge that cannot quickly be regained. Renewable energy companies are often recruiting for similar talent needs, although their organizational culture and growth patterns may be very different from those of a large utility.

LCCC is using ETA's Energy/Generation, Transmission and Distribution (EGTD), Advanced Manufacturing, and Construction Competency models and career pathways tools to address this need by leading a group of northeastern Ohio universities, colleges and energy industry leaders to assess supply and demand for talent within the regional energy sector. This initiative informs ongoing work to create industry-led career pathway models in renewable and traditional energy occupations.

#### **Northeast Ohio Speed-to-Market Accelerator (STMA) Program**

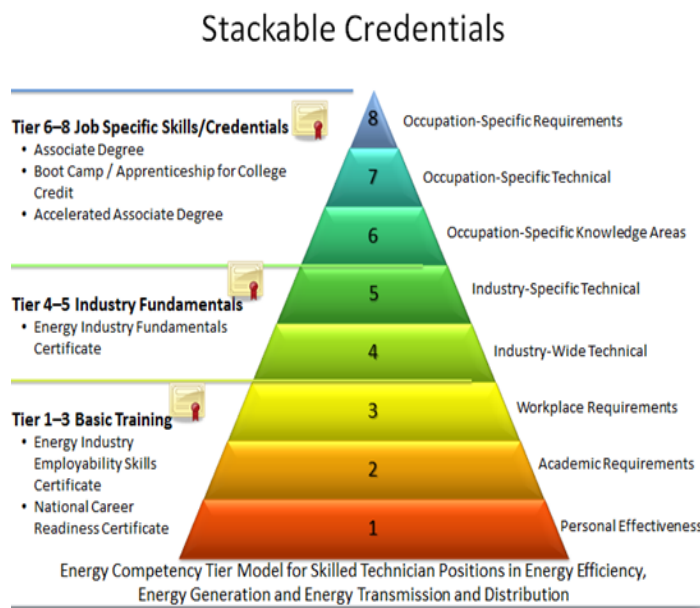
Northeast Ohio is one of 20 regions in the country to receive a Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge grant, funded by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), the Economic Development Administration and the Small Business Administration to support the advance of high growth industry clusters. The region has developed the STMA program to implement this grant. STMA is a collaboration of four non-profit organizations – NorTech, MAGNET, JumpStart and LCCC – designed to accelerate the commercialization of flexible electronics and

renewable (advanced) energy products, services and technology. LCCC is facilitating a regional talent consortium of higher education and workforce partners to help companies anticipate their talent needs in high skill jobs, establish effective assessment and training programs, and build a robust pool of job-ready candidates.

### Addressing the Challenge through Collaboration

Terri Burgess Sandu, LCCC’s project manager for the STMA project, brings a robust workforce development portfolio to support this initiative. She is LCCC’s Director of the Entrepreneurship Innovation Institute and Executive Director for Workforce Development. Before joining LCCC, Ms. Sandu ran a nonprofit organization, Hard Hatted Women (HHW), dedicated to helping women enter and succeed in non-traditional careers. During that time, she established a strong working relationship with the Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD), the national non-profit consortium of electrical, natural gas and nuclear utility companies and associations that helped develop the EGTD Competency model. In 2009, she helped CEWD organize the Ohio Energy Workforce Consortium, comprised of major energy employers including American Electric Power, Duke Energy, Dayton Power and Light, First Energy, NiSource and Dominion. HHW became one of several pipeline organizations working with CEWD on the Outreach and Student Support component of their Get Into Energy Career Pathways model.

### CEWD Get Into Energy Career Pathway Model



LCCC also leads a network that includes seven northeastern Ohio universities - Case Western Reserve University, Eastern Gateway Community College, University of Akron, Kent State University, Stark State College and Youngstown State University - in assessing energy sector workforce needs and developing education programs to fill gaps between industry needs and the potential workforce. New partners continue to be added, and the consortium members work closely with Workforce Investment Boards in their respective communities. Ms. Sandu collaborates actively with industry partners by aligning efforts with the

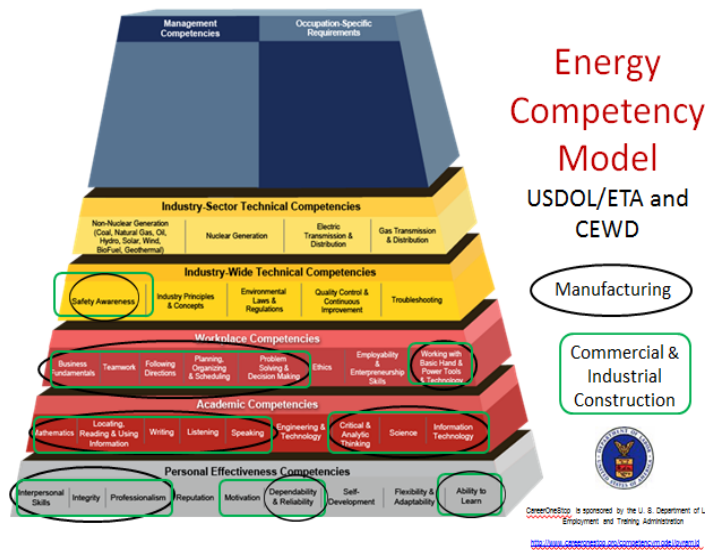
Ohio Energy Workforce Consortium; meeting with emerging renewable energy companies; and forming and Industry Leadership Committee. In 2012, she facilitated a forum, co-hosted by LCCC and Columbia Gas/NiSource, to have CEWD introduce their Get Into Energy Career Pathways model to regional employers and educators.

Utilizing ETA’s Common Competencies and CEWD’s Pathways Model

Ms. Sandu’s familiarity with CEWD’s use of the EGTD Competency model to create the Pathways model and to help companies target that model to different audiences informed this recommendation to her STMA partners. “The best way to create a renewable energy career pathway would be to help establish collaboration between renewable energy companies and utilities,” says Ms. Sandu. “This simplifies the message for students and counselors and leverages the strengths of all parties to the benefit of Northeast Ohio’s energy sector.”

CEWD’s Pathways model, first profiled on the Competency Model Clearinghouse in February 2010, is focused on three key components: Outreach and Career Coaching; Career Pathways, Curriculum and Stackable Credentials; and Employer Collaboration and Support. The model was initially developed to focus on low-income young adults ages 16-26, but can be used for broader population groups, including returning members of the military, women, and dislocated workers, to create a workforce development process for the energy industry. It offers tools and resources that can support the mission of STMA. “In our discussions with educators and industry, we focus on the common competencies in ETA’s Energy, Advanced Manufacturing and Construction Competency models needed for energy-related occupations as well as the Stackable Credentials component of CEWD’s Pathways model,” says Ms. Sandu.

**STMA: Common Competencies Across Energy, Manufacturing & Construction**



“One of our lessons from the grant is that economic development professionals and employers are not necessarily familiar with competency models and career pathways,” says Ms. Sandu. “We’ve found it very effective to use these graphics as visual aids in talking with them, so that they can become champions when talking with companies. We really need employers to lead the way, so we are often asking them for a significant investment of time and creativity. What we are doing now with companies is showing them the common competencies in Tiers 1-3

of ETA’s Energy, Manufacturing and Construction Competency models. The tiers allow us to demonstrate that there are common foundational talent needs across the energy sector and energy-related industries. Our goal is to get more of those companies collaborating on the front end. We can increase traffic in program that prepare people for high demand jobs, help them make good decision early in their education, and assure our students that there are good jobs with local companies that need these skills and credentials.”

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## Conclusion

“We are committed to building a talent pool in Northeast Ohio that meets industry needs, and we are doing that by using ETA’s competency models, and continuing to utilize the expertise of groups such as CEWD and NAM,” says Ms. Sandu. “We also hope to leverage the Jobs and Innovation grant investment made in Northeast Ohio as a model that can inform innovation throughout the state.”

### **Related Links**

Lorain County Community College

<https://www.lorainccc.edu>

Get Into Energy Career Pathways

<http://www.cewd.org/roadmap>

NorTech

<http://www.nortech.org>