



New COWS website

COWS is proud to unveil our newly revamped website! With a new look and better navigation, we think you'll like it. Everything you visit cows.org for is still there — information on high road economics, news clippings, profiles of our projects and alliances, and of course the COWS notes archive.

We hope you'll check it out at www.cows.org.

Observations from the Industry Partnerships Project

From 2002-04, Jobs With a Future (JWF) — a partnership of leading stakeholders in South Central Wisconsin's workforce development system — provided free skills training in health care and manufacturing to incumbent and dislocated workers across the region. The Industry Partnerships Project, funded by a \$1.14 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin, a key JWF partner, involved over 100 local employers and trained nearly 1,000 area residents. COWS produced several reports evaluating the project. The latest in this series, *Effective Workforce Training on the Frontline: Observations from the Industry Partnerships Project*, identifies the important and applicable lessons from implementing a large-scale training program that involved two distinct groups of workers, two separate industries, and a wide array of institutional partners.

Our evaluations of the project indicate it was a success for all involved. Workers felt more confident and better able to perform their jobs as a result of training. Employers witnessed improved job performance among those workers they sent to training, and rewarded some with promotions and/or pay raises. And employers and workforce development institutions got much better at sharing information and aligning resources through their participation in the project. In addition to these concrete results, our evaluation of the project has led to some broader insights into the implementation of workforce training programs and the target of incumbent worker training.

A basic lesson is that infrastructure for partnership and employer buy-in matters: If industry and institutional partners are in the practice of sharing ideas, pooling resources, and working together to supply build training, they are well-positioned to respond to shifts in the local economy and new opportunities for investment. During the grant period for the project, the growing health care industry experienced occupational and skills shortages while the contracting manufacturing industry experienced substantial lay-offs. These circumstances, while extremely different, led to active participation in the partnership by employers in both sectors: health care employers actively directed workers to intensive and technical skills training, and manufacturing employers used training geared toward leadership and communication skills development to promote internal advancement. Ultimately, the project shows that a limited-term, publicly funded investment in training can serve the needs of workers and employers across industries, while building long-term relationships between firms and public partners.

Read the paper here (www.cows.org/pdf/rp-effective_training.pdf). For more information, contact Kira Dahlk at kdahlk@cows.org.

COWS notes October 2005

COWS Notes, the monthly e-newsletter of the Center on Wisconsin Strategy.

For more COWS info:
www.cows.org

For a printer-friendly version:
www.cows.org/pdf/nl-05_oct.pdf

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Working for Energy Independence

A recent editorial in the South Florida Sun-Sentinel by Robert Borosage and COWS Director Joel Rogers calls for a crash program to achieve energy independence in America. The new energy bill, they say, represents a failure of leadership and keeps this country on an unsustainable path. We import over 13.2 million barrels of oil a day, and this bill does nothing to reduce that dependence. Imported oil contributes to our unsustainable trade deficits, now over \$1.9 billion a day. This energy bill contains numerous special interest subsidies, largely to big oil and gas producers that actually will leave us more dependent on foreign oil.

The Apollo Alliance has outlined a 10-step national agenda of strategic planning and investment to move the country towards energy independence by the year 2015. The benefits of such a project are substantial: 3 million new jobs, more than a trillion dollars in new economic activity and the environmental and health benefits of cleaner air and water. A broad coalition has united around these goals, including labor leaders, business executives, environmental groups, the civil-rights community, urban and rural constituencies, and elected leaders. Progressive governors and state legislators have begun to introduce and pass legislation that promotes energy efficiency, creates jobs, increases our security and better maintains the health of our environment and our children. States will continue to show the way, but the president and Congress must either lead or get out of the way. This is a national security imperative and an economic opportunity that cannot be ignored.

Read the editorial here (www.cows.org/pdf/ar-apollo.pdf). Find out more about Apollo here (www.apolloalliance.org/).

New Cities Prepares for January Meeting

The New Cities project, a collaborative effort of COWS and Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz, is continuing to work hard in the run-up to our next meeting in January 2006. In addition to recruiting new mayors to our learning network, we're also bolstering our web presence. In the past months, the New Cities Project website (www.newcities.us) has added the materials from our past meetings and more general text on the project, including a new brochure.

COWS staff is developing a set of policy briefs that outline 'high road' metropolitan strategies in each of the topic areas for the January 2006 meeting: new streams of municipal revenue, efficient government service, and economic development. Check back in winter for these materials, as well as meeting materials for our Washington D.C. meeting on January 27th and 28th, 2006.

For more information visit www.newcities.us.

A New Industrial Model for the Midwest

From 1998 to 2005 the US manufacturing sector lost four million jobs and American manufacturing seems destined to continue to stagnate or shrink. Millions of the high-wage jobs it provides may be driven to extinction by lower-wage domestic production or by low-price alternatives abroad. A new paper from COWS director Joel Rogers, COWS Research Associate Matt Vidal and others outlines an industrial model — encompassing manufacturing economics, the tools of lean manufacturing, and public and private purchasing policy — that stands a chance of helping manufacturing companies increase productivity enough to succeed onshore. The new model "full-utilization learning lean," or "FULL" encompasses high and relatively steady demand, an emphasis on learning, and lean manufacturing methods.

Based on nearly 100 case studies, including 17 conducted exclusively for this project, the paper, titled "Full-Utilization Learning Lean" in Component Manufacturing: A New Industrial Model for Mature Regions, & Labor's Stake in Its Success, concludes that the thoroughgoing use of the full lean toolkit is most effective when the workforce is skilled and empowered. Because of advantages in skill, collective voice, and protection against arbitrary discipline and discharge, unionized plants could enjoy a marked advantage in implementing and sustaining FULL manufacturing. In addition to calling on local unions to insist that their employers upgrade and on international unions to champion employer upgrading following the "FULL" model, the authors propose bold new policy initiatives for Great Lakes region governors, state legislators, county commissioners, and mayors. By focusing on the minority of firms that demonstrate a commitment to large productivity growth and high wages, scarce state resources can still generate large returns. They also propose a sharp increase in direct training, technical assistance and tax incentives to high-paying employers that purchase heavily within the region.

Read the full report here (www.cows.org/pdf/rp-amp_wai_final.pdf). For more information, contact Matt Vidal at mvidal@cows.org.



See you next month! And don't forget to visit our website regularly: www.cows.org.