

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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IT'S PAST THE TIME FOR YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP



The ongoing pandemic has exposed many challenges for workforce development teams, not the least of which is the urgent need for successful training strategies, especially in certain

demographic categories like “opportunity youth.” In a recent article posted on the JFF (Jobs for the Future) website, researchers noted: The number of opportunity youth—young people ages 16 to 24 who are neither working nor in school—more than doubled to over 10 million during the pandemic-driven economic downturn of 2020. And while the employment rate for this population did increase amid the stirrings of an economic recovery in 2021, it was still lower than it had been prior to the pandemic in 2019. Moreover, many of those workers are in low-paying jobs with little opportunity for advancement.

We know that apprenticeship is a proven method of turning aspirations into rewarding careers and now we must turn our attention to “opportunity youth” here in Central New York.

Serving this group comes with its own special hurdles, but we know that it works. There are examples of innovative programs from all over the country, and closer to home in New York State. Take the experience of FLYAP, the Finger Lakes Youth Apprenticeship Program, founded and managed by The Rochester Manufacturing and Technology Association (RTMA) and Monroe Community College, in the Fall of 2019.

During the first year of the program, they matched over 20 Finger Lakes employers with more than 50 students for job shadows and paid co-ops. In year two, 65 students were placed with 35 Finger Lakes employers. The increased awareness – from employers, education partners and students – has led to further expansion for FLYAP’s third cohort. Bob Coyne, RTMA Executive Director, states, “They’re calling us now, and the requests are coming in from outer-lying counties, asking, how can we get involved?”

This brings us to Central New York. We need everyone at the table on this as we make plans to launch our own CNY version of FLYAP. Please join us on [January 13 from 9 - 10 am, for a virtual roundtable event](#), featuring Bob Coyne, FLYAP founder, and Rich Turner, Apprenticeship Program Manager, both from RTMA. Our speakers will present their best practices, share their passion for the program, and answer your questions about youth apprenticeship. To register for the roundtable event, please visit macny.org/events.

We’re excited to venture into this innovative workforce development initiative as it presents us another opportunity to collaborate with our community partners to address our collective challenges. Work-based learning through apprenticeship has proven its effectiveness for adult learners. Now is the time to formalize this method with our youth who can thrive in high-demand careers if we recruit and train them the most effective way.

For more information, please contact me via email at edonovan@macny.org. See you on the 13th!