

The Launch of the Bay Area Manufacturing Renaissance Council

The Bay Area Manufacturing Renaissance Council will be modeled after a partnership in Chicago that has evolved over the past 5 years—the Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council (CMRC). Chicago has successfully maintained a close working relationship among labor, the manufacturing business community, local government, educators, and community-based organizations around the shared goal of rebuilding manufacturing as a foundation for the Chicago economy and a commitment to join projects reflecting that goal. Advanced Manufacturing represents the highest possible fusion of public and private interests: it can build a large middle class, solve the environmental crisis, and create interesting careers.

The purposes of this project are two-fold: (1) to apply the principals and programmatic approach of the Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council beginning in the East Bay region of the greater San Francisco Area; and, (2) to disseminate models of best practices as a means to encourage replication in other regional manufacturing economies across the nation.

The San Francisco region represents an important and diverse concentration of manufacturing in California and has over 300,000 manufacturing jobs. As in the rest of the country, Bay Area manufacturers are increasingly moving towards the production of high value-added products where we still enjoy a competitive advantage in the global economy. One of the greatest challenge of these companies is the recruitment of employees that have the competencies to do skilled and complex work. This challenge represents an enormous opportunity for us in education reform.

Post Secondary Education: Using national tools developed for initial deployment of this industry-driven skills certification system through community colleges, this project will focus on building educational pathways in both secondary and post-secondary programs of study.

Secondary Education: We are inspired by the design of Austin Polytech in Chicago that prepares students for leadership in all aspects of manufacturing including production, management, ownership, and the various careers that are essential for the success of manufacturing even if working outside the firm.

Additionally, since the availability of talent is key to companies' opportunities to explore and tap new markets, the BAMRC also will focus on the potential for market diversification, e.g., into expanding alternative energy and aerospace markets for area manufacturers.

The East Bay area has a diverse manufacturing base as well as a range of sophisticated organizations that could be partners in this effort. The highlights of our efforts include: (1) complete an analysis of the manufacturing sector in the East Bay, its educational infrastructure, as well as its level and quality of support from the public sector as the basis for specific recommendations for action; (2) explore opportunities to establish specialized programs as well as manufacturing career academies in secondary education reflecting the vision of the project; (3) Establish the NAM-Endorsed Skills Certification System as the frame of reference and action in post-secondary education in the East Bay; (4) explore opportunities for market diversification for East Bay manufacturing companies guided by a committee of manufacturers, their associations, and local development leaders; (5) support the initiatives of local organizations to strengthen the local manufacturing economy; and (6) develop a three year operating and financial plan to act on our findings in this first year.

We are confident that we can catalyze new and effective partnerships around an innovative vision of development for the Bay Area that deeply benefits and involves the public and private sectors.