

SkillWorksSM
PARTNERS FOR A PRODUCTIVE WORKFORCE

High Demand and High Pay:

A Profile of the Partnership for Automotive Career Education

MARCH 2007



Partnership for Automotive Career Education

Overview

The Partnership for Automotive Career Education helps low-income and low-skilled Boston residents earn family-sustaining wages and enter well-defined, lucrative career paths in automotive repair. Simultaneously, the partnership collaborates with employers to understand the skill needs of current auto technicians and develop courses to address those needs. By better preparing candidates for jobs and by training incumbent workers, PACE improves retention and career advancement and reduces high turnover.

PACE's broad collaboration brings together four automotive service employers, three community-based organizations, two educational institutions, and the Massachusetts Automobile Dealers Association. It began in December 2003, when the community organizations saw an opportunity to connect their constituents to good jobs in an industry with a high demand for skilled employees. All three CBOs were already providing pre-employment training in basic skills and job readiness in the biotechnology industry. SkillWorks enabled them to deepen an already strong relationship and launch a program of education, training, and career coaching for individuals seeking employment or advancement in auto repair.

After 10 months of SkillWorks planning, the program started in January 2005 with Introduction to Automotive Maintenance, a set of training courses for job seekers and current automotive workers in non-repair positions. It gradually phased into offering Intermediate Automotive Maintenance training for repair workers, who could advance in their careers with additional training.

In the first 18 months, 33 participants enrolled in the introductory training, and 27 completed it. Graduates placed in auto repair jobs were earning significantly higher wages than they did in their old jobs: \$11.07 per hour to start, compared to previous wages averaging \$9.50 for full-time workers and \$8.50 for part-timers. As of mid-2006, 80 percent of the graduates still worked with the firms that hired them after the training.

Seventeen incumbent workers have enrolled in the intermediate training sequence, and 14 have completed it. Several of these workers have received wage increases and promotions as a result.

PACE also has made significant progress in engaging its employer and educational partners in providing more opportunities for low-income individuals. Employers are much more committed to offering education opportunities and investing in

Future Teacher

Two years ago, Edward Nixon was asked if he would be interested in participating in an automotive training program. "It must have been divine intervention," says Mr. Nixon. "That was exactly what I needed." He called immediately to sign up and was told that PACE, the SkillWorks-funded Partnership for Automotive Career Education, would be starting in about a year. Sure enough, about a year later, he went down to the Urban League, filled out an application, interviewed, took tests, and entered the program.

Mr. Nixon had worked at an auto repair shop in Boston, but he felt he was going nowhere and learning no new skills. PACE appealed to him because he would be able to build up his skills and eventually get a better job. Over the next year, Mr. Nixon completed two semesters of automotive training at Benjamin

Franklin Institute of Technology, and he landed a job at Sullivan Tire even before he finished the training.

"PACE motivated me and helped me learn. [It] helped me make connections between the classroom and the workplace and apply what I was learning in class on the job. I got to be more skilled and more knowledgeable, and I developed the drive to learn more. At my old job, I never thought about becoming ASE-certified [Automotive Service Excellence] or continuing my education. My boss wouldn't support me to do those things either. At PACE and at Sullivan Tire, they really support and push me to go to class and help me think about an automotive career path.

"I want to go back to school and get my Associate's and my Bachelor's degrees in automotive technology. I want to earn all eight ASE certifications and become a Master Technician. Maybe I'll teach automotive classes one day."

their workers (e.g., offering paid release time for training, paying training fees). The education partners have collaborated closely with PACE to design and deliver the training, and they have changed an existing auto repair program to better fit these workers' schedules. And they now offer college credit for workers who complete the auto repair training course.

Program Design

PACE has developed two part-time training modules through SkillWorks: Introduction to Automotive Maintenance and Intermediate Automotive Maintenance. The Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology and Madison Park Technical Vocational High School designed the curricula and deliver the training. PACE participants earn college credit for the training through the Franklin Institute.

Module 1: Introduction to Automotive Maintenance—for Job Seekers and Current Workers in Non-repair Positions

Module 1 is designed for job seekers and current automotive employees in non-repair positions (e.g., valets). Each training cycle lasts four months, with classes offered on a part-time basis (six hours in the evening over two weeknights and two full Saturdays per month to help accommodate students who work).

Module 1 training includes:

Automotive Technical Training (177 hours): Safety, basic automotive mechanics, maintenance service, tire service and wheel balancing, introduction to brake service and alignment, steering and suspension, and electrical/electronic systems;

Automotive English (up to 55 hours): for participants (both native and non-native English speakers) who need reading support; training is customized to the auto repair industry; and

Workplace Skills (total 55 hours), including:

- *Computer Literacy Training*, in keyboarding, typing, invoicing, and using the Internet;
- *Workplace Etiquette Training*. Work ethic (reliability, punctuality, initiative), teamwork, communication, customer service, problem solving, and time management;
- *Job Readiness*: Resume writing, interview skills; and
- *Math*, as needed to support the technical training.

Module 1 participants also receive training in completing job applications, writing a resume, and interviewing, as well as a general overview of the industry. It is open to incumbent workers, but PACE did not actively recruit them the first year.

Module 2: Intermediate Automotive Maintenance—for Incumbent Workers

Incumbent workers with repair experience and graduates of the Module 1 program who are employed at a partner site may enroll in Intermediate Automotive Maintenance. It consists of two components:

Automotive Systems Maintenance and Electrical Systems (50 hours); and

Chassis, Brakes, and Suspension (60 hours).

Module 2 is four-months long; classes are held two evenings each week for three hours per evening and one Saturday per month for eight hours.

Additional PACE Services

PACE encourages all participants to meet monthly with a career counselor, and they can receive this support for up to one year after getting a job. The employers consider this counseling invaluable in helping workers adjust to new jobs. Participants also can avail themselves of financial counseling, including a financial needs analysis, as well as information on income management, asset management, debt management, and protection management.

A test preparation course helps workers prepare for Automotive Service Excellence tests. ASE certifications increase a technician's repertoire of competencies, and therefore his or her likelihood of earning more. The course helps students who have been out of school overcome any fear of exams and hone test-taking skills. Offered five times in 2005, it enrolled both incumbent workers and Module 1 job seekers. Employees at PACE partner companies can earn bonuses and pay raises based on the number of certifications they achieve.

The PACE partners also designed a four-hour course that informs supervisors about the program and the new skills their workers are learning. This training helps develop cultural awareness and competency, as well as skills in managing a diverse workforce. PACE staff conducted one session late in 2005, following several supervisor orientations earlier in the year that were shorter and covered similar information.

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Partners and Their Roles

Employers and Industry Association

PACE has three employer partners: Bridgestone Firestone; Sullivan Tire and Auto Service; and Village Automotive Group. In addition, the Massachusetts Automobile Dealers Association is a partner.

These employers are very supportive of PACE, and they have released senior staff to participate in meetings to plan, develop, and monitor the training. The partners hire most Module 1 graduates, pay fees to support the training, and offer paid release time for training. All employer partners award pay raises to incumbent workers who complete Module 2.

The employers have turned to their CBO partners for help on services that relate to training. For example, two employers have asked to have their human resources documents translated into other languages and to have interpreters for the ASE test, and they have paid PACE for both services. This both indicates that they understand how CBOs might assist them with broader workforce needs and suggests a potential source of revenue to help support PACE.

Community-based Organizations

The three community-based organizations collaborate in program management and service delivery. Each is responsible for some aspect of both, and each contributes staff to manage the agreed upon activities. Additionally, each participates in recruitment.

- *Asian American Civic Association*: ACCA is the fiscal agent for PACE, and it also is responsible for delivering Automotive English and Workplace Skills. AACA hosts all non-technical portions of Module 1 and 2.
- *Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts*: ULEM is responsible for managing the database and reporting to the funders and evaluators and for delivering the non-technical aspects of incumbent worker training.
- *La Alianza Hispana*: LAH delivers the financial literacy education and translation services.

This sharing and leveraging of specializations improves PACE's efficiency and helps to improve service, reduce costs, and support sustainability.

Educational Partners

The Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology is the lead training provider. It works in partnership with the Adult Education and Community Service Department of Boston Public Schools, based at Madison Park Technical Vocational High School, to develop the curriculum. The Franklin Institute hires and supervises all of the technical instructors and grants college credit to participants who complete either or both of the modules. Technical training is held at both the Franklin Institute and Madison Park.

Program Management and Governance

PACE is managed by a full-time project director. The Executive Operations Team meets monthly to review program progress and plan activities. It includes the project director, the CBO staff liaisons, and employer and educational representatives. A governing board meets quarterly to decide the direction of the project and plan for sustainability and program expansion. It is composed of the executive directors of each CBO, the principals of the employer partner companies, and the president of the Franklin Institute.

Outputs and Outcomes

Partners in Automotive Career Education

The data for 2004-2005, covering December 2003 through November 2005, has been validated by the SkillWorks evaluators. The data for 2006 is preliminary; it covers December 2005 through November 2006. The total participants served is a non-duplicated count of people receiving any of the following training or non-training services: occupational training, coaching, literacy, ESL, placement assistance, retention assistance, referrals, tutoring, mentoring, and mapping career pathways. The number of participants completing training includes multiple counts based on incumbent workers who participate in multiple training courses. The Partnership for Automotive Career Education began operations in 2005.

	2004-2005	2006
Pre-employment Participants to date	33	35
Completed Pre-employment Training (includes vocational and non-vocational skills)	14	26
Placements	7	20
Incumbent Workers Enrolled	58	50
Incumbent Workers Completed Training	36	43
Incumbent Workers Promoted	0	11

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In addition to its quantifiable outcomes for participants (see chart), PACE has accomplished several important “systems change” outcomes across and within participating partner organizations.

Helping educational institutions offer “working adult friendly” courses and schedules: The partnership has spurred educational institutions to work jointly on developing and delivering an automotive training program. Most important, the Franklin Institute provides up to 15 college credits for the training. This establishes a base from which participants can pursue further postsecondary education, leading to higher wages and further career advancement. Also, the Franklin Institute has worked with PACE to provide this training part-time during the evening and on weekends.

Increasing employer investment in education and training of workforce: The employer partners have made significant commitments to PACE. They have demonstrated this commitment by: sending new hires to PACE training even before they have completed the probationary period of employment; using their contacts to get tool kits for new hires at discounted prices (the start-up expense of tools is a significant barrier to entry into this industry); providing incentives for incumbent workers to take ASE preparation courses and the ASE tests; and financially supporting incumbent workers in Module 2 (paying training fees and providing partial paid release time). Partners also allow supervisors and managers to participate in planning and implementation meetings. In addition, supervisors have improved their understanding of how to manage a diverse workforce and the benefits of investing in training, both of which improve the culture of the workplace and reduce turnover.

Improving and strengthening CBO-employer relationships for workforce development education, training, and services: PACE has fostered closer relationships between automotive repair firms and CBOs, which is significant in several ways. First, CBOs can provide opportunities in a well-paying industry for their low-income constituents. Second, the CBOs learn a considerable amount about the employers, their culture, language, and expectations, which improves current and future partnerships. Third, the employers learn more about CBOs, grow to value their services and constituents, and view them as workforce partners. Finally, all this helps to sustain the program, providing ongoing benefits to workers and companies.

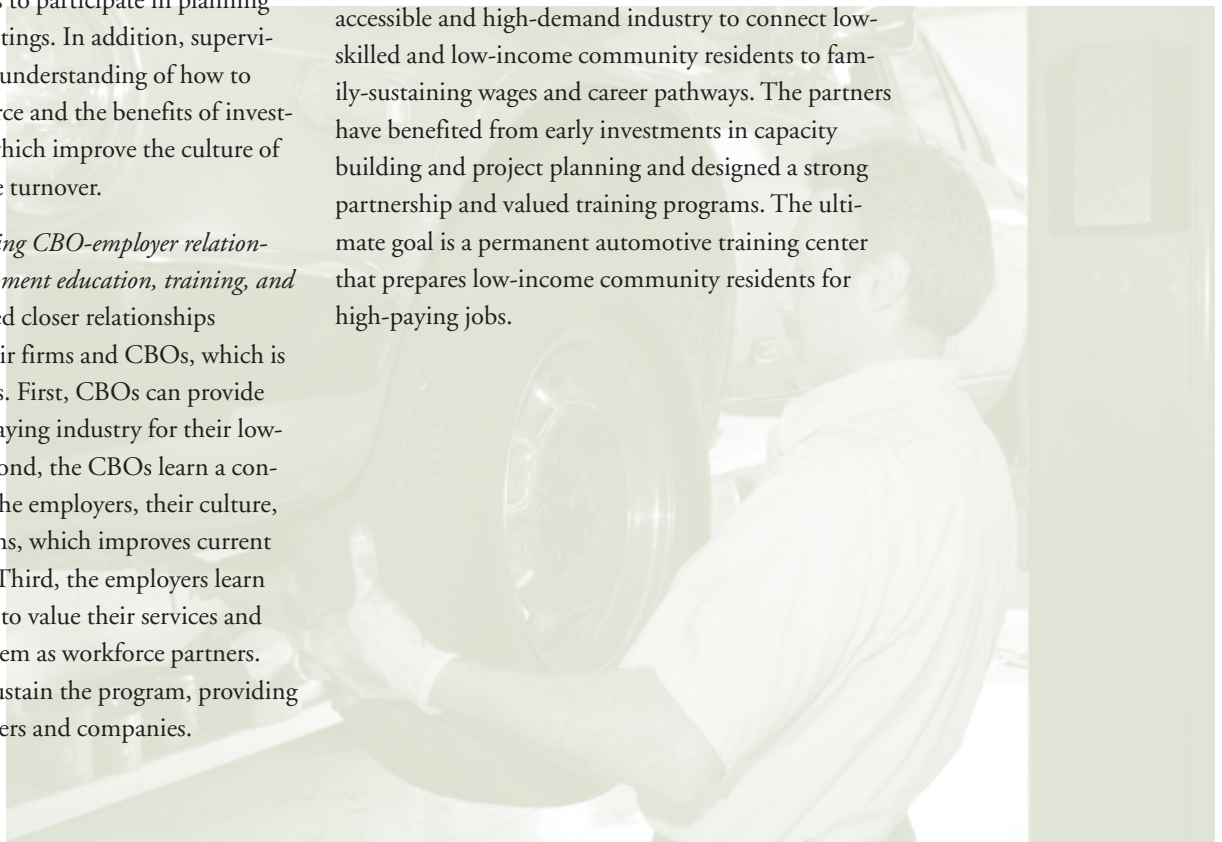
The Future: Planning for Sustainability

To focus on sustainability, PACE partners and staff have formed a committee of CBO and employer senior personnel. In addition, several program aspects, discussed above, will help with sustaining the partnership. For example, the Franklin Institute and Boston Public Schools Adult Education and Community Service Department plan to continue offering the training program part-time and during the evenings.

Several aspects of PACE help to finance training and promote sustainability. For example, employer partners pay a fee to send employees to Module 2 and ASE test-preparation courses. They also offer partial paid leave to workers in training. However, this does not cover significant training costs for either incumbent workers or pre-employment participants. To help cover these costs, PACE accesses Individual Training Account vouchers through the Workforce Investment Act, Massachusetts Department of Education Adult Education funds, and student financial aid awards to defray the cost of the training provided by the Franklin Institute. Together, these funds cover about 25 percent of the cost of the education or training, and PACE is exploring additional funding sources to support program staffing and coaching, both of which are crucial.

The Partnership for Automotive Career Education is a promising model of a close collaboration between community-based organizations and employers in an accessible and high-demand industry to connect low-skilled and low-income community residents to family-sustaining wages and career pathways. The partners have benefited from early investments in capacity building and project planning and designed a strong partnership and valued training programs. The ultimate goal is a permanent automotive training center that prepares low-income community residents for high-paying jobs.

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SEEING OPPORTUNITIES. CREATING SOLUTIONS.

SkillWorks, a five-year public/private partnership, is addressing the needs of employers for more skilled workers and of workers for more and better access to jobs that pay a family-supporting wage.

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