

## Lehigh Valley Manufacturing & Supply Chain Industry Partnership - Meeting Minutes

Meeting 4 | Monday, January 26, 2026 | 2:00PM-3:30PM

### Participants:

Organization	First Name	Last Name
B. Braun Medical Inc.	Vincent	Beller
Bracalente Manufacturing Group	Michelle	Laughlin
Bradley Pulverizer Enterprises	Felipe	Arango
C.F. Martin & Company	Steve	Hess
Century Promise	Yusuf	Dahl
Da Vinci Science Center	Trey	Yogeshwar
Da Vinci Science Center	Abby	Wertman
Dynalene	Jennifer	Pearage
EMD Electronics	Kelly	Hansbury
Evonik	Todd	McEvoy
Fanatics	Rebecca	Franklin
Freshpet Kitchens	Mindy	Deeds
Gemini (KB Systems)	Portia	Watkins
GeorgFischer	Kyle	Mohen
GeorgFischer	Elyse	Poulin
German American Chamber of Commerce	Matthew	Allen
German American Chamber of Commerce	Kevin	Hughes Jr
Hospital Central Services, Inc.	Eric	Yaekel
JULABO USA, Inc.	Kristi	Lane
Ledvance	Nancy	Williams
Lehigh Carbon Community College	Mike	Brody
Lehigh Carbon Community College	Kelly	Trahan
Lehigh Carbon Community College	Rachel	Miller
Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation	Trisha	Nardone
Lehigh Valley Planning Commission / WBLV	Minsoo	Park
LINC	Katelyn	Mack
Manufacturers Resource Center	Amber	Morris
Manufacturer's Resource Center	Karen	Buck
MosAL Consulting LLC	Dr. Andrea	Grannum-Mosley
Northampton Community College	Shelly	Mule
Northampton Community College	Michele	Salkin

Northampton Community College	Dr. Shawn	Thomas
Northampton Community College	Ken	Nasatka
PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley	Ryan	Knepp
PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley	Susan	Griffith
Penn College of Technology	Angelo	Fattore
Penn College of Technology	Sara	Hillis Ousby
Sharp Packaging Services	Kristine	Chimics
SHRM	Yde	Segura
SkillsUSA	Andrew	Hammer
Third Street Alliance	Evette	Quinones
Workforce Board Lehigh Valley	Alex	Miller
Workforce Board Lehigh Valley	Sarah	Lutz

**Location:**

Virtual Meeting due to inclement weather  
(scheduled location – Bracalente Manufacturing)

**Summary:**

**1. Welcome & Introductions**

**Matthew Allen**, Director of Careers & Education for the German American Chamber of Commerce and iTEC representative, welcomed attendees to the virtual meeting of the Industry Partnership, thanking everyone for joining despite the inclement weather and asking that everyone keep their cameras on and remain engaged for the active discussion. He announced that the meeting would be recorded, noting that Pennsylvania is a two-party consent state, and then began the recording.

**Sarah Lutz**, Assistant Executive Director of the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV), then welcomed attendees to the fourth Industry Partnership meeting, thanking the meeting hosts from Bracalente Manufacturing for offering their space and sharing that although it was not possible to meet in person for this session, Bracalente had agreed to host the following meeting on February 23rd. She also welcomed Alex Miller, the new Grants Management Specialist, joining the WBLV team.

## 2. Summary of 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting

**Sarah Lutz** reviewed the discussion points from the previous meeting, including:

1. Presentation of SkillUp™PA
2. Updates on upcoming events
3. Tour of Sharp Packaging

## 3. Industry Partnership Budget Update

**Sarah Lutz** reported that a budget modification request had been submitted for the Industry Partnership on time in December based on the input from the Partnership participants. She coordinated individually with companies, who had expressed specific needs and included those requests in the modification. The modification was approved, and she will be speaking with the individual companies over the coming weeks to discuss the structure of the funding available to them.

Additionally, based on the request from multiple companies for mentorship training support, modification also included funding for Train the Trainer seminars to be administered by the German American Chamber of Commerce. A schedule for those courses will be shared soon. All funds for the Industry Partnership must be utilized by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

## 4. Presentation: Mfg Dream Team – Empowering the Next Generation Workforce

**Amber Morris** of the Manufacturers Resource Center shared a presentation on their community-based manufacturing careers program, the Mfg Dream Team. The program seeks to address the workforce challenges in manufacturing of skills gaps, lack of student exposure to modern manufacturing, and employers' need for local work-ready talent. The Dream Team introduces students to young professionals in manufacturing, who share authentic career stories and lead hands-on classroom activities. Members commit to serving a 2-year term as a Dream Team ambassador with 2 classroom visits per semester. They complete 3 onboarding trainings and participate in professional development workshops throughout the year. Participation helps build a talent pipeline for the employers and build leadership and communication skills for the Ambassadors. Multiple Industry Partnership members were identified as already participating in the initiative.

Amber shared her contact information ([Amber.Morris@mrcpa.org](mailto:Amber.Morris@mrcpa.org)) and shared the project's website ([www.mfgdreamteam.org](http://www.mfgdreamteam.org)). She encouraged attendees to

nominate Dream Team members by visiting their online nomination page here:

<https://www.whatssocool.org/nominate-a-dream-team-member/>

## **5. Breakout Session: Training Strategies**

The attendees then separated into 3 breakout groups, each moderated by an Industry Partnership organizer. The groups considered the following questions regarding training strategies before returning to the main room to discuss their findings:

1. What training models do employers currently use for incumbent workers, and what skills are most in demand? For training providers, programs / custom training options do you have that employers could leverage for their incumbent workers?
2. Which training methods have delivered the strongest ROI for your organization?
3. Where do current training options fall short for employers, and/or what barriers prevent employees from participating in or completing training? For training providers, how quickly could you develop or adapt a program if an employer identifies a new skill requirement?
4. Are there opportunities to share training equipment, faculties, or costs across multiple employer or training partners?

Participants reported the following findings:

1. Current training providers being utilized include LCCC, NCC, MRC (and other regional MEPs), Dale Carnegie, Crucial Conversations, Eagle Mine Safety, JJ Keller, Fred Pryor, local police and firefighters, and internally utilized HRIS and LLM platforms. Safety training, supervisory training, conflict resolution, and job-specific skills like forklift operation were highlighted as actively trained. LCCC, NCC, Penn College and MRC noted their training resources, emphasizing tailored solutions, including management training such as NCC's Management and Leadership Training Certificates. Spanish and English as a second language training, specifically NCC's "Command Spanish" for manufacturing and nursing-specific competencies, was highlighted as a resource that is in demand from industry.
2. Hands-on training was noted to be more effective than virtual training. Mentorship programs were cited as having the clearest ROI, especially with an aging workforce and the need to document and transfer knowledge. MRC noted

- their model of incorporating hands-on training and theory for effective in-classroom programs. Vendor-led training was noted as being effective, especially with the example of forklift training.
3. Participants noted challenges balancing work and training schedules, especially taking time to have skilled workers off of their production lines. Some suggested that training offered on nights and weekends could be more effective, but that options for such programs are limited. On-site training at the worksite was noted as being more likely to work with scheduling. Employers also noted the higher need to train new employees and that assessments would be useful during new hire probationary periods to determine what training they will need to reach full engagement or whether they have the aptitude for long-term success. FreshPet shared their “FreshPet Academy” model, which gives employees the opportunity to skill up progressively. There are currently no more than 10 employees at the “Expert” level, and some deficiencies have been identified with participants, who are expected to serve as trainers. FreshPet is currently implementing changes to be more selective for trainers and experts. The training providers suggested that they could develop or adapt custom training for employer needs pretty quickly.
  4. Funding support options were shared, including WEDnet funds, CareerLink, DCED Apprenticeship related instruction funding, and the success of tuition reimbursement models. Regarding shared training equipment and facilities, employers cited issues with liability and insurance as prohibiting them from moving forward with such partnerships. Training providers emphasized the opportunity for employers to coordinate for shared training courses, and LCCC highlighted their mobile unit, which can be brought to employers for on-site training. An active partnership among LCCC, NCC, and Luzerne County Community College was noted as already having a model for shared instructors in a consortium with AWS working on digital infrastructure skills training.

## 6. Closing

**Sarah Lutz** announced that the next meeting would take place at Bracalente Manufacturing on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. The following meeting on March 23<sup>rd</sup> did not yet have a confirmed host. Participants were encouraged to reach out if they would be interested in hosting. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30PM.

**Next Meeting:**

**DATE:** Monday, February 23, 2026

**TIME:** 2:00PM – 3:15PM

*Optional Tour: 3:15PM – 4:00PM*

**LOCATION:**

**Bracalente Manufacturing**

20 W Creamery Rd

Trumbauersville, PA 18970