

# WORKSPAN



## TALENT PIPELINE MANAGEMENT ACADEMY HELPS EMPLOYERS, EMPLOYEES IMPROVE SKILLS

Employers would like to invest in their current employees, but they don't always know how to overcome hurdles such as cost and logistics.

Luckily, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Center for Education and Workforce (CEW) is helping lead the charge on solutions.

The CEW recently added an upskilling and reskilling component to its Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Academy, a training program for local and state chambers of commerce and workforce development groups.

The academies train such groups on how to lead local employers through the process of identifying their talent needs and then creating solutions around education, training and development.

The issue is particularly difficult for small- and mid-size employers, who struggle with how to upskill or reskill existing employees who already fill necessary functions, said Jaimie Francis, the CEW's senior director for programs and policy.

"What we hear firsthand from our practitioners is that employers are interested in different types of solutions because they are unable to find the talent that they need," Francis said. "For a lot of them, it's a natural starting point to look at the employees you have and see how you can keep them in your company. They just don't usually have the

understanding of how to do that while not sacrificing their current business needs."

Holly Kurtz, director of the Retail Sector Initiative at the Center for the Future of Arizona, attended the first TPM Upskill Academy, which kicked off with a two-day workshop in Phoenix in April. The training continues over eight months, with a mix of both in-person and online components.

Kurtz has been working with retailers in her community for two years. She has heard firsthand employers' struggles to not only attract quality employees and reduce turnover, but also provide training for employees who could move into lead and management roles. However, she also knows that retailers are often "in the moment businesses" that tend to focus their attention on today's staffing problems.

She hopes that the training will help guide her retail members toward analyzing their short-term and long-term employment needs and finding solutions that will ultimately benefit both employers and employees.

"When you invest in talent, you have higher engagement and higher employee satisfaction, and having happy, loyal employees leads to happy, loyal customers," Kurtz said. "You can take that lesson across hospitality, food service, call centers — any place where you

have high turnover and you're trying to create a great work environment so that employees can deliver a great customer experience."

The Vermont Business Roundtable has already put its TPM strategies into practice, after executive director Mary Anne Sheahan attended the TPM Academy two years ago. The construction industry identified an upcoming need: Many of its site supervisors, the most experienced people on a construction site, were approaching retirement age.

The industry agreed on common credentials and incentives to get current employees qualified to take those jobs, then worked with local educators to create the necessary training, Sheahan said. Employers also laid out a "map" that showed how employees could progress from one job to another, and what qualifications and training they would need to advance. The roundtable has undertaken similar efforts for Vermont's health care and manufacturing industries.

The process has created a learning opportunity for employers, too, Sheahan said.

"There's a lot of organizational development that's going on across industries with employers," she said. "They're learning from each other what the best practices are. It's not a competitive thing — it's about working together to make the industry better."