

## Panelist Q & A

### West Virginia Manufacture's Association



**Vision Shared:** How was the need for your program/partnership identified?

**Karen Price:** The need was identified through meetings and communications with our members who are looking at retirements and new jobs that are going to be created in the next few years, and understanding that they are having a difficult time in finding people to hire. They don't have the basic math skills, reading comprehension, and yes, they cannot pass a drug test.  
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**Vision Shared:** What obstacles did you encounter when developing the partnership/program?

**Karen Price:** I'm not sure there were many obstacles involved, just getting the state department of education to understand that there is a need for middle skilled individuals, and that to graduate students with these skills, we needed to add curriculum that addressed the needs of manufacturers. Once we got over that hurdle, the Department organized several meetings with not only manufacturers but other industries. They listened to our folks, and worked cooperatively to develop a curriculum that we think will be of benefit to students and manufacturers.  
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**Vision Shared:** What, in your view, is key in developing a successful collaboration?

**Karen Price:** Open and honest dialogue with all involved. And it is sometimes a challenge to identify all the organizations that you should be working with, sharing information with, etc. We are trying to be very inclusive so that organizations will know what we are doing, and they can help support us, or add to what we are doing.  
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**Vision Shared:** In your opinion what is the biggest challenge or organization faces in workforce development?

**Karen Price:** I think there are a few challenges. First, we have this curriculum developed, and now we have to get it in the school systems around the state, and have them understand the value it will bring to their students. Second, it is communicating about the jobs that are and will be available to students who chose a "manufacturing" curriculum and helping everyone understand you don't need a four year degree to be successful and make a good living. It seems we hear that if a student chooses a Technical or Vocational track, he/she is seen as not

as smart as the students who are choosing a 4 year college route. That is just not true. We want every student who wants to get a 4 year degree to do so. But that does not work for everyone, and manufacturing is a great alternative. We also need to market this approach to the students, parents, counselors and teachers. It isn't that we have done a "bad" job in marketing these opportunities, we really have not shared this information with our audience, and that is a huge challenge we will have to overcome.

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**Karen Price serves as President of the West Virginia Manufacturers Association.** Karen is a member of the board of trustees for the Charleston Area Medical Center, and is a board member of Bridgemont Community and Technical College. She is a former president of the Vandalia Rotary Club and serves on various boards and commissions representing the interests of the West Virginia Manufacturers Association. She is a graduate of Morris Harvey College (now the University of Charleston).