

NEWS/BUSINESS

New workshops aim to place dozens of Tampa Bay workers in manufacturing jobs

Organized by Tampa Bay Works and AmSkills, the events promise interviews with companies like Jabil and Lockheed Martin.

By **Jay Cridlin**

A workshop Saturday in Odessa could be the first stop for unemployed workers on the way to dozens of manufacturing jobs across Tampa Bay.



Sarah Livermore, left, and Taylor Fields participate in a manufacturing boot camp in Lealman in January 2020. The boot camp was organized by AmSkills and Tampa Bay Works. (TOM MUDANO | AmSkills)

Organized by Tampa Bay Works and the training agency AmSkills, the workshop promises to land up to 16 participants a job interview with manufacturing firms like Jabil, Lockheed Martin and Power Kleen. The entry-level positions will pay up to \$17 per hour.

Saturday’s workshop filled up early Friday. Organizers encourage interested workers to join a wait list for upcoming workshops.

“This is really meant to get your foot in the door with good companies,” said Byron Clayton, executive director of Tampa Bay Works, an arm of the Tampa Bay Partnership aimed at developing regional talent. “But the whole idea is to provide pathways for upskilling, so that you don’t have to stop with these jobs.”

Twenty applicants were selected for Saturday’s workshop. Of those, 16 will be invited to a two-week boot camp in July focused on hands-on projects and skills like soldering, blueprint reading and job site safety. Upon completion, they’ll receive a job interview.

This is the second manufacturing workshop organized by AmSkills and Tampa Bay Works this year. The first was held in Lealman in January. Of the 20 people who graduated from that boot camp, all were called in for second interviews, and 10 were placed in jobs — at least before the coronavirus changed companies’ hiring plans.

Now, though, the 10 companies participating in the workshop are ready to expand again, with a combined 43 open positions between them.

“It is so important to get in front of these companies, because even if they don’t hire you now, this boot camp, the way it’s structured, it’s kind of like a two-week interview. The employers actually get to know you,” Clayton said. “When things start to get better and they hire even more people, it puts you on the short path to getting hired.”

Tampa Bay Works and AmSkills are planning more manufacturing workshops and boot camps each month for the rest of the year, which could yield dozens more interview opportunities.

Register for a waitlist and future sessions at amskills.org or (727) 301-1282, ext. 126.

