

Nomination Entry for:
**21st Century Registered Apprenticeship
Search for Trailblazers and Innovators**

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The Vermont Department of Labor is privileged to nominate Vermont HITEC of Williston, Vermont, and its ITAR Model as a **Trailblazer and Innovator** in registered apprenticeships. Vermont HITEC's unique ITAR Model (Information Technology Apprenticeship Readiness) has been used consistently and effectively since 2000 and has been meeting the four goals set forth by the Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship.

At the foundation of the ITAR model is a tuition-free skills development opportunity for unemployed and underemployed individuals in a related instruction program that leads to registered apprenticeship and permanent employment. HITEC's programs begin with an employer sponsor's commitment to hire a specified number of people for a particular job. HITEC staff members then perform a business and workforce analysis of the position, which results in a complete curriculum and set of education materials designed to prepare an individual to perform the job. HITEC ensures that its curriculum delivery satisfies the related instruction component of apprenticeship. HITEC's assistance to sponsors includes a recruitment plan, aptitude assessment of applicants, performance standards and reviews. Industry certifications are included in the curriculum where appropriate and college credits may be offered, depending upon the program and the position.

Recruitment for an ITAR program is done through comprehensive outreach throughout the state, including direct involvement with the Vermont Department of Labor One Stop Career Centers. Recruitment is intended to reach people from all areas of the state of all ages and backgrounds. These efforts include use of media releases, direct mail, posters, paid radio and newspaper announcements, veteran job fairs, and other sources of advertising. Applicants are directed to an on-line application where they learn the details of the program.

Selection to a program is primarily based on attitude and aptitude for the basic competencies required by the position, along with observed behaviors throughout the selection process. At no point is previous experience a requirement for selection to a program; however and in many cases a high school degree or GED is a requirement. Numerous program graduates who did not or could not attend college have now earned college credits as a result of completing a Vermont HITEC ITAR program.

The ITAR education model relies on a total immersion, competency-based philosophy that begins with a customized curriculum. Classes run 8-9 hours per day, 5 days a week, with 4 hours of homework assigned each night and 8 hours on the weekend. Students are supported throughout the program by mentors and counselors as needed. The combination of a very intensive education program (front loaded into the apprenticeship), coaching and mentoring throughout the program and apprenticeship, and contextual training specific to the employer and job make for very well-trained and successful apprentices. An ITAR program prepares apprentices to be valuable, contributing employees from the first day of their apprenticeships. HITEC's goal is to make the transition from academics to apprenticeship a seamless one. The apprentices receive support throughout the apprenticeship from HITEC and employer mentors. Coaching and mentoring can be behavioral or technical in nature, resulting in employees who are ready for their jobs and their workplace.

The ITAR model can be duplicated in companies, regions or states and can be a 'train the trainer' model, enabling organizations to incorporate the model directly into existing hiring and training practices. The model has been successfully adopted by organizations such as *Dealer.com* and *Husky*. The model has proven to be a key success factor in these companies' ability to recruit and train significant numbers of employees and to consider candidates who previously may not have been considered because of a lack of experience. This ability to recruit and train effective employees has directly contributed to the successful growth and the resulting economic development regionally. For example, before adopting the ITAR model with Vermont HITEC, *Dealer.com* was prepared to move the organization of approximately 60 employees to California in an effort to hire more-qualified individuals. Today, *Dealer.com* remains in Vermont and has grown to more than 500 well paid employees after successfully using the ITAR model to build its workforce.

The ITAR model has been built on collaborative efforts between Vermont HITEC, Vermont's Department of Labor One Stop Career Centers, the Vermont Apprenticeship Division, Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, the US Department of Labor, Vermont employers, area community colleges, and many of the area media outlets. Employer sponsors have included Hazelett Strip-casting, Pre-Tech Precision, Husky, Flex-A-Seal, ITA-Aerospace, Preci Manufacturing, Latva Machine, Gear Works, Chamberlain Machine, Lucas Industries, Kiosko, Lovejoy Tool Company, North Hartland Tool, IVEK Corporation, NSA Industries, Weidmann Electrical Technology, North East Precision, Precision Composites of VT, and Vermont Mold & Tool. All of these organizations play key roles in the success of the ITAR programs.

Using this unique model, Vermont HITEC has trained and placed more than 600 people from all walks of life into registered apprenticeships and permanent employment with more than 30 different employers. Most of these apprenticeships have been in non-traditional fields and represent partnerships with employers seeking to develop their workforce, adopting the registered apprenticeship as a means to do so. The model has been repeatable, scalable, and effective through the many years and many programs. Over 90% of participants have successfully completed the academic and on the job learning requirements and have been issued completion of apprenticeship certificates.

Vermont HITEC has also been an early innovator in creating partnerships with community colleges to help support and accredit the classroom material, resulting in participants receiving college credits and certificates for some programs. Some of these participants are the first in their families to attend college.

Vermont HITEC was founded and incorporated by Gerry Ghazi and Julie Davis in 2000 as a non-profit with the mission to transform the lives of Vermonters through employment and education opportunities in the healthcare and information technology fields. Vermont HITEC has used the ITAR model to train participants for apprenticeships and positions in fields such as software developers, web developers, IT analysts, medical transcriptionists, medical coders, phlebotomists, practice support specialists, account managers, EHR data abstractors and go live support, CNC machinists, welder/fitters, and EHR interface analysts. The ITAR model can be effective in virtually any industry.

The Vermont HITEC ITAR model is a comprehensive model that meets ACA goals in the following ways:

Goal #1 – The model has proven success in many non-traditional industries and employers including healthcare (admin., IT, and clinical). As well, the fully accredited CNC Machining program has been run successfully for many programs and employers and has resulted in college credit and a certificate for participants. They continue to work with new employers and develop non-traditional apprenticeships, the most recent being a phlebotomy program and a program to train 29 EHR Interface Data Analysts.

Goal #2 – Vermont HITEC has partnered with One Stop Career Centers to recruit individuals with no specific background or experience and many programs have a minimum requirement of a GED to apply.

Goal #3 – The ITAR recruitment and selection process has demonstrated that people from all walks of life are recruited and become successful participants. The Chittenden County area of Vermont is an immigrant resettlement area and has often contributed members of this community to programs as successful participants.

Goal #4 – *Dealer.com* is a good example of how the ITAR model helped to fundamentally transform a growing company and address the hiring and training needs that the company faced. Dealer.com remained in Vermont and continues to grow and prosper. This, in turn, has had a dramatic affect on the economic conditions locally and regionally.