



## WIOA Sector Strategy for Advancing the Manufacturing Workforce (RFP #25287) – Award Recommendation to Symbol Training Institute

### **Background:**

The Lake County Workforce Development Board issued RFP #25287 – WIOA Sector Strategy for Advancing the Manufacturing Workforce in August 2025. The purpose of this solicitation was to expand training capacity, strengthen industry partnerships, and create sustainable pathways to employment in the manufacturing sector. The RFP sought a provider capable of delivering advanced, hands-on training and aligning career pathways with employer demand across precision manufacturing and industrial maintenance.

Following a competitive review and scoring process, Symbol Training Institute has been selected as the recommended awardee. Established in 2005, Symbol is a nationally recognized, employer-driven training provider accredited by the National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS) and the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Symbol partners with more than 360 manufacturing companies throughout the region and maintains an 85% job placement rate, having trained over 2,800 students since inception.

Through this initiative, Symbol will deliver two primary occupational training programs designed to upskill and prepare job seekers for high-demand positions:

- IMT 401: Industrial Maintenance Technician – 204 hours / 17 weeks
- CNC 205: CNC Technology with Quality Control – 192 hours / 16 weeks

Both programs lead to multiple industry-recognized NIMS credentials and prepare participants for roles such as Maintenance Technician, CNC Operator, Quality Control Technician, and Industrial Mechanic. Training will occur at Symbol's Skokie and Addison facilities, with instruction, career coaching, and job placement services offered in collaboration with regional manufacturing employers.

The proposed agreement will utilize \$340,000 in WIOA funding to support participant recruitment, training, career coaching, job placement, and program evaluation consistent with federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements.

### **Implementation Timeline:**

The initiative is anticipated to begin in January 2026 and continue through June 2027. Major milestones will include participant recruitment and enrollment (January–February 2026), training delivery (February 2026–December 2026), and placement, follow-up, and reporting (January–June 2027)

**Strategic Alignment:**

This initiative directly supports the LCWDB strategic imperatives:

- Create a culture of equitable prosperity – Expanding access to high-quality manufacturing training and employment opportunities.
- Strengthen employer-led partnerships – Engaging manufacturers to co-design training pipelines and support direct hiring.
- Expand workforce access for underrepresented communities – Providing entry points for individuals with limited experience into stable, high-wage careers.
- Prepare for emerging high-growth industries – Building the regional capacity needed to sustain and grow the advanced manufacturing workforce