



Business Roundtable Milwaukee Workforce Partnership Initiative

Rockwell Automation Academy of Advanced Manufacturing

At a Glance

The Academy of Advanced Manufacturing™ (AAM) is a 12-week residential program based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, that equips veterans with the technical and workplace skills to fill in-demand manufacturing jobs. AAM advances a Rockwell Automation (Rockwell) priority to employ more people with military backgrounds. Over the six years of the AAM program, which is conducted in partnership with ManpowerGroup, success includes:

- **More veterans employed:** 441 individuals have enrolled in the program, 348 have graduated and 280 are now employed with a Rockwell customer.
- **Diversity increased:** 38% of participants are people of color.

AAM is part of the Business Roundtable Workforce Partnership Initiative (WPI). Launched in 2018 and part of the Business Roundtable Corporate Initiatives Group, the WPI connects AAM to a network of industry-higher education partnerships in regions around the United States that are tackling skills development challenges and driving economic growth, with a focus on increasing workforce diversity.

Establishing the Academy of Advanced Manufacturing to Strengthen the Workforce Pipeline

Rockwell established AAM in 2017 to address the shortage of skilled workers for manufacturing jobs and to advance its desire to create a pipeline of workers with military backgrounds for those jobs. This initiative was an imperative for the company's senior leadership, whose involvement was critical to engaging external partners and garnering resources to get the project off the ground.

Rockwell based the AAM curriculum on internal training programs. To develop the program, Rockwell surveyed external business partners to identify the minimum competency levels workers would need to be successful in entry-level technician jobs. Those competencies were then matched against those of longer internal training programs, resulting in a 12-week training course focused exclusively on the necessary skills for an entry-level technician job.

With its primary partner, ManpowerGroup, AAM identifies veterans to enroll in the program, teaching them technical and essential workplace skills and providing connections to employers for interviews and subsequent job placement. During the program, Rockwell delivers technical instruction, and ManpowerGroup delivers professional skills instruction. Students are provided hotel accommodations in Milwaukee, which AAM arranges and financially supports. Students also receive an hourly wage and a stipend for meals not provided during the day.

Business Roundtable selected AAM to join the WPI in 2018, connecting the program to other regional partnerships between industry and higher education that are working to fill high-demand jobs in STEM-related fields and skilled trade positions. As part of the WPI, AAM representatives have had access to networking opportunities and best practices that have allowed them to scale more quickly.

Partnering with ManpowerGroup and Rockwell Customers to Create a Workforce Solution

The program would not be successful without the strong partnership between Rockwell and ManpowerGroup. Blake Moret, Chairman and CEO of Rockwell, and Jonas Prising, Chairman and CEO of ManpowerGroup, shared a commitment to providing a pathway for veterans into the workforce, and they recognized the need for a new generation of workers in advanced manufacturing. Rockwell leveraged its knowledge of the equipment used and skills needed to operate and maintain that equipment, while ManpowerGroup contributed its knowledge of workforce solutions, talent recruitment and support.

“ We started doing this [AAM] a couple of years ago, and I can tell you it’s the thing I am personally most proud of in my career for launching, with Rockwell, to provide a service to those manufacturers and to our service people.”¹

— **Blake Moret, Chairman and CEO, Rockwell Automation**

ManpowerGroup leads the talent identification and program recruitment process, working with Rockwell to assess potential participants and their ability to successfully engage in the program. Once students are enrolled, ManpowerGroup provides support to students on a day-to-day basis, which includes supervision as well as professional skills training to augment the technical skills training developed and delivered by Rockwell. In addition, students participate in ManpowerGroup-provided resume workshops, practice interviews and personal career coaching designed to help them prepare for the hiring process. A ManpowerGroup supervisor is on site at the training facility to ensure students can build positive relationships with their supervisor and have full access to program benefits and support.

Rockwell and ManpowerGroup contribute resources to the program through the investment of personnel, equipment and training space, as well as financially through stipends for participants and building out facilities to house the program. Customers who hire graduates also pay a fee that contributes to, but does not completely cover, program costs. Although this program operates at a financial loss for Rockwell, the company’s philosophy is that the benefits to customers who hire program graduates and the positive impact on veterans more than compensate for the company’s investment.

“The AAM program is a tremendous opportunity for veterans because the pathway has three key components that help them make the transition from military to civilian life. This program is unique because a veteran pays nothing out of pocket to become fully trained, they have a job at the end of the training and they are getting compensated during their time in the program.”

— **Phil Bush, Business Development Manager, Rockwell Automation**

Bridgestone Tire is a good example of a Rockwell business partner that used AAM to build its workforce. The Bridgestone Tire manufacturing facility in North Carolina was not finding qualified workers for open positions, and not enough incumbent workers could be trained to fill internal skills gaps. Corporate executives engaged with AAM program leadership to ensure the curriculum met the needs of their facility and that potential hires from the program would have the skills to become successful employees. Through the AAM program, Bridgestone Tire has hired 11 program graduates, and the AAM-trained hires account for almost 10% of the total employment of maintenance technicians at the North Carolina facility.

“We knew we had to make an effort to grow and diversify our hiring pipeline. After Rockwell presented the AAM curriculum and explained how the partnership would work, we liked what we saw. We knew we would get candidates who would be knowledgeable about our equipment and be able to perform in the job.”

— **Dennis Mancera, Fundamentals and Training Lead, Bridgestone Tire**

Capturing Success Through Measurable Outcomes and Creating Scale

Over the six years of the program, 441 individuals have enrolled in AAM. Of those, 348 graduated and 280 were placed in jobs with a Rockwell customer. In addition, 38% of participants are people of color. Rockwell has had 90 unique customers participate in the program, and about half of placements have been with repeat “customers” of the program.

Rockwell is looking at two models to increase scale and access to the AAM program. The first is to modify the curriculum into shorter content with a different class schedule to provide customers with a training program that allows incumbent employees to simultaneously train and continue to work. Customers would send their employees off site for three weeks of training; the employee would return home to their job for five weeks; and the cycle would repeat two more times until training is completed.

The second possible expansion model is to take the 12-week AAM curriculum and partner with community or technical colleges in different parts of the country for local delivery of the program. While in the early stages of development, targeted communities would already have a significant advanced manufacturing employer base and a population of veterans and other individuals with fundamental technical skills.

The Business Roundtable WPI provided tools and resources that enabled AAM to capture success metrics and plan for expansion, including customized technical assistance, action plan and metrics templates, a replication guide, an insights guide, case studies, and peer-to-peer convenings.

Recommendations for Businesses

- **Senior organizational leadership should endorse or engage in workforce development programming to ensure success.** As noted previously, AAM began as a collaboration between two CEOs, Blake Moret, Chairman and CEO of Rockwell, and Jonas Prising, Chairman and CEO of ManpowerGroup. This partnership at the highest organizational level demonstrated a commitment that impacted other organizational stakeholders who developed, organized and now execute the program. Organizational commitment at the most senior levels had a significant impact on program success.
- **Companies must be proactive in their workforce development strategies and engage in multiple tactics.** As demonstrated by Bridgestone Tire, not only must companies make the effort in seeking out new employees through traditional recruiting, apprenticeship programs and established training programs like those offered by AAM, but they must also invest in in-house training for incumbent workers. The investment in finding and nurturing skilled workers creates productivity and stability, and it provides employees with opportunities to improve their skills and advance within the company. Investing in employees' professional development also creates a culture that will encourage employees to stay at the company.
- **Companies should look at the skills and abilities needed for jobs and not arbitrarily limit their employment pools by requiring minimum requirements for employment such as degrees or years of work experience.** The AAM program is a clear example that targeted training, developed in collaboration with businesses, can produce skilled workers without prior experience.

Recommendations for Educators

- **Secondary and higher education systems should continue to invest in career technical education programs that match local employment needs so that a pipeline of skilled workers will be available to the community.** This effort is most effective when developed in collaboration with local businesses to ensure that the curriculum is centered on the knowledge, skills and abilities individuals need to be successful.

- ***Higher education should emphasize credit for prior learning to recognize the skills an individual has acquired in their job and how that experience can apply to a degree or credential.*** This practice would be especially beneficial to veterans who obtain many technical skills while in service.

Student Profile - Kyle Radley

Kyle Radley completed the Rockwell AAM program in 2022. Before enrolling in AAM, Kyle spent nine years in the United States Navy as an F-18 mechanic working on engines and fuel systems.

When Kyle decided to leave the Navy, he was unsure what to do next. He had heard about AAM through his girlfriend's brother, who had recently graduated from the program. The combination of technical and professional skills training, connection to employers and ability to immediately interview for jobs were all major selling points that encouraged him to enroll in the program. His Navy experience solving problems on the job also prepared him well since AAM heavily emphasizes learning through troubleshooting. It was an opportunity too good to pass up.

Kyle accessed the program by participating in [SkillBridge](#), which gives service members who are preparing to exit the armed forces the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge in a civilian industry. Once enrolled in AAM, Kyle felt supported by the staff regarding the administrative and operational components of the program. The instructors were also always willing to stay after class to provide extra assistance, demonstrating their commitment to the students.

Today, Kyle works for EOSYS Group, a systems integrator located in Ohio, building systems such as control panels, developing and managing complicated programming and conducting electrical drawing audits. AAM taught him the fundamentals of advanced manufacturing, which prepared him to be productive at his job from day one. A tremendous benefit of working at EOSYS is the company's culture of mentorship, so Kyle can continue to learn and grow his skills every day.

Kyle considers completing AAM as one of the best things that happened to him. Deciding to leave the structure of military life for an uncertain future is a stressful experience for many veterans, including Kyle. Enrolling in the AAM program gave Kyle a clear pathway to learning new skills with a direct connection to his future employer and career.

“ Everything that Rockwell taught me in the program is 100% applicable to the real world. It is relevant and stays current with the times. This gave me a leg up.”

— Kyle Radley, AAM Graduate

Program Websites

[Academy of Advanced Manufacturing | Rockwell Automation](#)

[Academy of Advanced Manufacturing Veterans Program | ManpowerGroup](#)

About the Business Roundtable Workforce Partnership Initiative

Business Roundtable launched the Workforce Partnership Initiative (WPI) in 2018 to tackle skills development challenges and drive economic growth in regions around the United States, with a focus on increasing workforce diversity. Part of the Business Roundtable Corporate Initiatives Group, the WPI aims to:

- Accelerate access to competitive, ready-to-work learners with in-demand skills;
- Foster high-performing, industry-higher education partnerships; and
- Expand business commitments to hiring and upskilling with a focus on diverse, traditionally underrepresented populations in the workforce.

Through the WPI, CEOs from leading U.S. companies are working with community colleges and four-year universities in these regions to fill high-demand jobs in STEM-related fields such as cybersecurity and data analytics, and in skilled trade positions such as technicians, machinists and welders. For more information, please visit www.businessroundtable.org/wpi.

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Endnotes

1. CNBC Television. (November 11, 2021). Mad Money: Rockwell Automation CEO on the labor crunch and the company's skills training for veterans [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=mad+money+rockwell+automation+you+tube&qvpt=mad+money+rockwell+automation+you+tube&view=detail&mid=31D38F7874E15D-4F6A9931D38F7874E15D4F6A99&&FORM=VRDGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Dmad%2Bmoney%2Brockwell%2Bautomation%2Byou%2Btube%26qvpt%3Dmad%2Bmoney%2Brockwell%2Bautomation%2Byou%2Btube%26FORM%3DVIDRE>