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A Team Effort.

"The voice of the customer creates a strong partnership".

In June 2013 GE Aviation announced plans to expand operations in its four North Carolina facilities to support its newest jet engine innovation called LEAP.   This would mean the addition of over 240 highly skilled employees across all facilities including Asheville, Durham, Wilmington and West Jefferson.

The West Jefferson facility initially needed an additional 105 new employees and nearly 100,000 square feet of manufacturing space, almost doubling the size of their existing facility. Located in Ashe County with a population of approximately 27,000, there was legitimate concern as to whether enough qualified individuals could be found.   Thus, a recruitment team was formed to conduct outreach to surrounding communities to recruit, not only the number needed, but the right individuals.

In October 2014 Wilkes Community College and other partners in the NCWorks Center (WCC, High Country Workforce Development Board, Ashe Chamber of Commerce, Ashe County, and Division of Workforce Solutions) began working with GE Aviation on recruiting new, qualified employees to the positions. The goal for the project was 10,000 "touches"—personal contact with 10,000 people across the region to let them know of the job possibilities with GE. The process to "Recruit, Screen, Educate" new employees was designed to be as seamless as possible for both the applicant and the company.

- Recruit
  - An outreach effort in the northwest NC High Country region that included billboards, direct mail, and a website highlighting the jobs.
  - A local campaign to better inform community leaders and local government on the jobs and the requirements.
  - Educating personnel at NCWorks Centers across the region on the job requirements and the unique application process for GE positions.
  - Supportive education through Wilkes Community College for potential applicants, providing assistance in completing the online application process and interviewing skills of behavioral-based interviews.
  - A culminating hiring event at the Ashe Campus of the college that resulted in nearly 300 people attending.

- Screen
  - EasyApp on-line application process
  - *Select Assessment for Manufacturing (SAM's) GE selects successful applicants to take the SAM's test, proctored by Wilkes Community College and NCWorks centers throughout the region. Successful participants are then invited to move on to the next phase.*

- Educate
  - Pre-hire Course—Applicants chosen by the company were invited to attend a 40-hour pre-hire course. This course includes company information, teamwork, print reading, metrology, basic math for machinists, and machining fundamentals. All who complete the pre-hire course are then invited for an interview with the company.

- Post-hire course—Applicants who are hired by GE Aviation then completed a 100-hour post-hire course, focusing on the GE work environment, safety, introductory machining processes, print reading, metrology and hands-on skills development. These were GE employees who were being educated through Wilkes Community College.
- Incumbent skills upgrade course—Employees of GE who transitioned to the new, more advanced production processes completed a two-phased skills assessment/upgrade process. The first phase was an online assessment process through Tooling U SME. Students are provided instruction on identified areas of weakness and are required to score at minimum levels or enter remediation. The second phase is a hands-on education process in machining techniques, focused on meeting the finishing standards required by GE for the LEAP engine.

Due to the effort put forth by various government organizations, educational institutions and individuals, GE Aviation achieved and even exceeded their goal of finding enough new employees. GE announced last spring of their intentions to add another 50 positions to the West Jefferson facility. The partnerships established are still in place will undoubtedly succeed once again.