RIVERS & ROADS CONSULTING



Feasibility Study for Marine Trades Training

In Rock Hall, Maryland

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Susan O'Neill

Executive Director

At the Upper Shore Regional Council, we are proud to support initiatives that strengthen the economic vitality of our region, and this workforce feasibility study is a prime example of the kind of work we exist to do. The marine trades have been a cornerstone of Rock Hall's economy for generations, and by investing in workforce development, we are ensuring that this industry remains a source of opportunity for years to come.

This report, made possible through our partnership with Mayor James Cook and the Town of Rock Hall, provides a thoughtful analysis of the workforce challenges and opportunities facing the local marine trades sector. More importantly, it offers a clear, actionable path forward to build a stronger pipeline of skilled workers, support local businesses, and grow this essential industry.

We are excited to work alongside Mayor Cook, the Town of Rock Hall, and the broader marine trades community to advance these efforts. By leveraging strategic partnerships, engaging with industry leaders, and investing in the next generation of marine trades professionals, we are building a stronger, more resilient workforce for Rock Hall and the Upper Shore as a whole.

On behalf of the Upper Shore Regional Council, thank you to all who contributed to this effort. We look forward to continuing this important work and seeing the impact it will have on the region's economy and future.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rock Hall's marine trades sector lies at the core of the town's maritime identity, rooted in its long history as a working waterfront on the Chesapeake Bay. Today, this vital industry includes marinas, repair shops, charter operations, and other marine-related businesses that form a key pillar of the local economy. However, significant challenges threaten its sustainability, including workforce shortages, skill gaps, and limited training resources. While businesses struggle to find skilled labor for high-demand roles, stakeholders broadly agree that targeted workforce development efforts are critical for the industry's survival and growth.

The urgent need for skilled workers and training programs to support workforce development is confirmed by stakeholders who expressed their concerns and interests during conversations and surveys that frame this feasibility study. These insights underscore the need for a phased approach to workforce development, beginning with the hiring of a Program Coordinator for Marine Trades Workforce Development. This role provides an immediate, cost-effective solution to address local workforce challenges while laying the groundwork for a potential full-scale training center.

Attempting to launch a full-scale training center now would be premature given immediate needs and substantial financial and logistical barriers. By contrast, a Program Coordinator can begin addressing these skill gaps immediately by leveraging existing resources, connecting local businesses with regional training opportunities, expanding programs like youth apprenticeships and short-term certifications, and engaging the regional community to amplify awareness about the marine trades career path. Drawing from national and regional examples, such as the New England Marine Trades Association and the Marine Industries Association of South Florida, this approach emphasizes hands-on training, industry-aligned curricula, and community engagement.

The implementation roadmap presented in this study outlines clear, actionable steps to launch this initiative. The long-term vision is to transition from a single coordinator to a fully operational training center. This will establish Rock Hall as a regional hub for marine trades education and innovation, and secure its maritime legacy for future generations. Success will ensure the town's economic vitality and cultural heritage are preserved and strengthened through its maritime workforce.

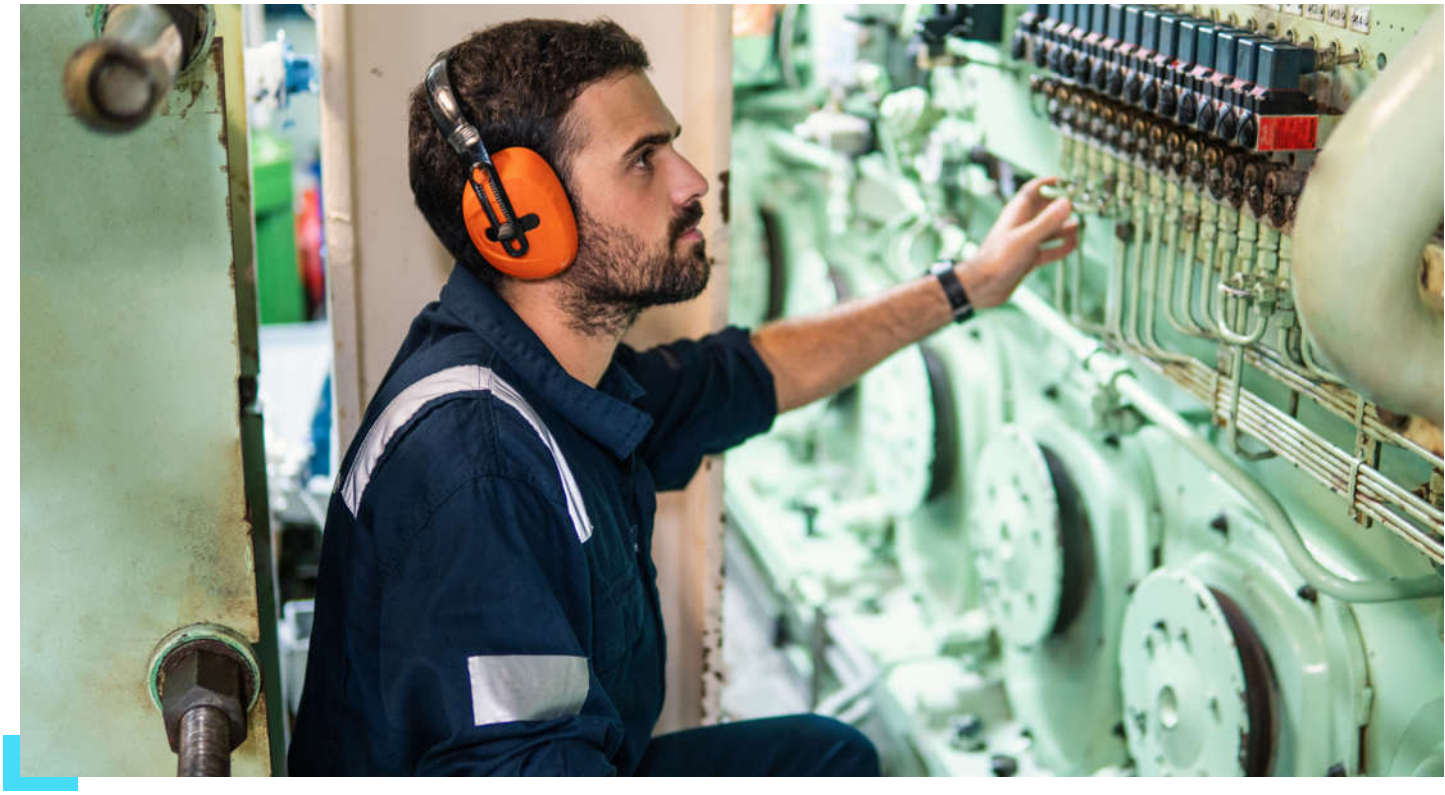


TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	**2**
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	**3**
TABLE OF CONTENTS	**4-5**
BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT	**6**
BIG-PICTURE WORKFORCE CHALLENGES & STRATEGY	6
OVERVIEW OF ROCK HALL'S MARINE TRADES INDUSTRY	7
STAKEHOLDER CONVERSATIONS	8
LOCAL INDUSTRY SURVEY INSIGHTS	9
WORKFORCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT	**11**
CURRENT WORKFORCE LANDSCAPE	11
KEY INDUSTRY GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES	14
PROGRAM DESIGN	14
RECRUITING	14
SEASONALITY	15
HERITAGE CONNECTION	15
PROJECTED WORKFORCE NEEDS	15
BARRIERS TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	16
NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EXAMPLES	**17**
EVALUATION OF THE FULL TRAINING CENTER CONCEPT	**19**
TRAINING CENTER CASE STUDIES	19
CASE STUDY: GREAT LAKES BOAT BUILDING SCHOOL	19
CASE STUDY: RICHARDSON MARITIME MUSEUM	20
CASE STUDY CONSIDERATIONS	21
FINANCIAL	20
LOGISTICAL	20
OPERATIONAL	21
INITIAL FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT	22
ASSESSING LOCAL DEMAND	22
INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS	22
COSTS AND FUNDING	23

ONGOING COSTS 23
FUNDING SOURCES AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY 24
THE VERDICT TRAINING CENTER FOR ROCK HALL 24
RECOMMENDATION: START WITH A PROGRAM COORDINATOR POSITION 25
JUSTIFICATION FOR THE COORDINATOR ROLE 25
BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY 25
ADDRESSING IMMEDIATE WORKFORCE NEEDS 27
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR 28
SHORT-TERM GOALS AND MILESTONES 30
LONG-TERM VISION AND SUSTAINABILITY 30
EVALUATING SUCCESS 31
NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PRECEDENT FOR LOCAL WORKFORCE COORDINATOR 32
FUNDRAISING STRATEGY FOR THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR 33
IDENTIFY FUNDING SOURCES 33
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 34
BUILD A SUPPORT NETWORK 34
ESTABLISH A DONATION PLATFORM 34
MONITOR AND EVALUATE 34
IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP FOR THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR 35
STEP-BY-STEP ACTION PLAN 35
STEP 1: SECURE FUNDING AND RESOURCES (MONTH 1-3) 35
STEP 2: RECRUIT PROGRAM COORDINATOR (MONTH 2-4) 35
STEP 3: ONBOARD PROGRAM COORDINATOR AND SET INITIAL PRIORITIES (MONTH 4-5) 35
STEP 4: BUILD STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS AND FORM INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE (MONTH 5-7) 35
STEP 5: DEVELOP TRAINING PROGRAMS AND APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES (MONTH 6-9) 35
STEP 6: INCREASE COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT (MONTH 6-12) 36
STEP 7: EVALUATE EARLY SUCCESS AND ADJUST STRATEGY (MONTH 9-12) 36
STEP 8: BEGIN BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FULL TRAINING CENTER (YEAR 2 AND BEYOND) 36
TIMELINE OVERVIEW 37
RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR IMPLEMENTATION 38
MEASURING SUCCESS 38
CONCLUSION 39

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

BIG-PICTURE WORKFORCE CHALLENGES & STRATEGY

The maritime industry is at a critical juncture, both nationally and regionally. Across the U.S., workforce shortages undermine growth and sustainability of the businesses that rely on maritime economies. As highlighted in "10+1 Strategy: A Marine Industry Guide to Growing the Workforce," this guide–endorsed by 25 national, regional, and state trade associations–provides a roadmap for empowering employers to tackle workforce challenges through strategic, actionable steps.[1] It underscores the need for a collaborative approach that involves national organizations, regional programs, and local businesses working together to foster sustainable workforce solutions.

For communities like Rock Hall—defined by maritime heritage and a reliance on water-dependent industries—the "10+1 Strategy" offers valuable insights. The guide's key recommendations include:

10 + 1 Strategy:
A Marine Industry Guide to Growing the Workforce.

Train-the-Trainer Programming to ensure instructors are equipped to deliver high-quality education.

Increase Career Awareness through targeted outreach to students, parents, and job seekers.

Align with Industries Seeking Workers with Similar Competencies, such as construction or automotive trades.

Aggregate Industry Data to identify trends and inform strategies.

Advocate for Funding to support workforce initiatives at all levels.

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06
07
08
09
10

Professional Development Series for Employers and Marine Trades Associations (MTAs) to enhance recruitment and retention strategies.

Support Initiatives in K-12 Schools to introduce younger generations to marine trades.

Generate a Library of Effective Program Models that can be replicated and adapted locally.

Aggregate Industry Data to identify trends and inform strategies.

Cultivate Regional Employer Collaboratives to pool resources and address common challenges

[1] Published by the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas (MRAA), National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), and Rhode Island Marine Trades Association (RIMTA)

Plus 1:
Hire a National Workforce Coordinator to guide and unify these efforts across the industry.

For Rock Hall, each of these points hold significance for the future of the maritime workforce. In particular, the creation of a local workforce coordinator position could serve as a pivotal first step in adapting and implementing these strategies. A dedicated coordinator would focus on addressing the specific needs of the region's marine trades sector while fostering collaboration among existing programs and stakeholders. They would work to bridge the silos that currently characterize workforce development efforts in the region, such as those offered by Chesapeake College and Haven Harbour Marina. By aligning and enhancing these resources, the coordinator can help lay the groundwork for a comprehensive workforce development strategy that meets the needs of both employers and potential workers.

OVERVIEW OF ROCK HALL'S MARINE TRADES INDUSTRY

Rock Hall's marine trades industry sits at the heart of a storied waterfront community that has evolved over the centuries in response to the Chesapeake Bay's dynamic environment. Since the town's establishment in 1707, Rock Hall's economy and culture have been intricately linked to its waterways. In earlier eras, local fisheries and seafood processing sustained the community, while commerce flowed from shipping points along the shore. Over time, as economic forces shifted, the town's focus broadened, and maritime recreation—boat charters, sailing, and tourism—rose to prominence. Today, Rock Hall's marine trades encompass a network of marinas, repair and fabrication shops, suppliers, charter operations, and related service providers that together form a critical economic engine for the town and a vital link in maintaining its working waterfront.[2]

The challenges and opportunities faced by Rock Hall today reflect broader historical shifts in the maritime industry at-large. From its roots in informal apprenticeships during the colonial era to the modern emphasis on certification and specialized training, the maritime trades have continually adapted to technological, economic, and social changes. For Rock Hall, this evolution underscores the urgency of addressing skill gaps and workforce shortages in a way that preserves its maritime heritage while preparing for the future.

This maritime heritage is mirrored in the Town's 2040 Comprehensive Plan, which emphasizes a commitment to sustaining water-dependent industries and preserving a working harbor. Although Rock Hall's population has declined to levels not seen since the 1970s, new residents from outside the area are bringing fresh perspectives, and the local economy is poised to benefit from renewed attention to marine-related businesses. At the same time, the plan acknowledges challenges such as sea level rise and environmental concerns—factors that underscore the need for thoughtful economic and land-use strategies.[3] These guiding principles, backed by the Town's waterfront master plan and the State's Working Waterfronts Program, encourage initiatives that will keep local maritime skills alive, create jobs, and sustain the community's character in the face of ongoing change.[4]

[2] "Rock Hall Waterfront Master Plan," Rock Hall, Maryland, December 20, 2016, https://www.rockhallmd.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif3736/f/news/rhwmasterplan011817_public_draftx.pdf.
[3] "Comprehensive Plan: 2040 - Town of Rock Hall." Rock Hall, Maryland, August 11, 2023. https://www.rockhallmd.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif3736/f/uploads/townofrockhall_zoningmap_11x17_req10162019.pdf, 10-12.
[4] "Rock Hall Waterfront Master Plan." Rock Hall, Maryland, December 20, 2016. https://www.rockhallmd.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif3736/f/news/rhwmasterplan011817_public_draftx.pdf.

STAKEHOLDER CONVERSATIONS

Consultations with key stakeholders—such as the Mayor of Rock Hall, maritime industry business owners, Kent County Economic & Tourism Development representatives, and Chesapeake College faculty—have highlighted both pressing challenges and exciting opportunities. Employers report difficulties finding skilled and dependable labor in technical trades, and there is an urgent need to train and retain a new generation of workers in mechanical, fiberglass, paint, electrical, rigging, and other marine-specific skills. These workforce hurdles are further compounded by seasonal demand fluctuations. Stakeholders broadly agree that strengthening the local talent pipeline, enhancing education and training offerings, and improving infrastructure would help stabilize the workforce and position Rock Hall as a regionally recognized center for marine trades excellence.

The Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board's Dan Schneckenburger, familiar with past discussions about this topic, emphasized that Rock Hall is naturally suited for a marine trades initiative. He pointed to Chesapeake College's emerging capabilities, such as an inventory of real boats for hands-on training and a mobile welding trailer, as assets that could anchor partnerships. His optimism about leveraging existing resources was shared by other stakeholders, who agreed that sustainable funding and collaboration would be crucial.

Chesapeake College representatives including David Harper, VP for Workforce and Academic Programs, and Jason Mullen, Dean of Workforce and Skilled Trades, stressed the importance of flexible program delivery models, citing logistical challenges such as transporting heavy equipment and the need for dedicated power infrastructure at training sites. They are already exploring partnerships with Haven Harbour Marina to offer entry-level marine service technician classes but face obstacles, such as limited daytime availability at the active marina. Mayor James Cook echoed this sentiment, advocating for practical solutions like a satellite campus at the Clam House or another Rock Hall site. Both groups underscored the importance of industry buy-in, with Jason recalling conversations with the Mayor about the need for marine trades programs that align closely with local businesses' immediate needs.

Kristen Greenaway of the **Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum** (CBMM) offered a perspective on existing successful models, describing their four-year shipwright apprenticeship program as a unique strength. However, she noted CBMM's inability to expand to Rock Hall in the near term, recommending instead that Rock Hall focus on skills not covered in CBMM's program, such as fiberglass construction and marine electronics. Kristen, along with other stakeholders like Melissa Scarborough of Maryland Natural Resources Police, highlighted opportunities to address critical safety and basic boating skills gaps through public training facilities.

This shared vision for leveraging existing expertise, creating accessible training programs, and aligning with industry needs reinforces the importance of partnerships and stakeholder engagement in Rock Hall's workforce development strategy. To advance these ideas, actionable conversations should continue with these and other stakeholders in a roundtable setting, creating a platform for collaboration, alignment, and ongoing engagement.

LOCAL INDUSTRY SURVEY INSIGHTS

Understanding the needs and perspectives of Rock Hall's marine trades industry is essential to shaping effective workforce development strategies. The survey of local industry reflects a collaborative effort to engage directly with local business owners, whose insights offer a nuanced understanding of the sector's challenges and opportunities. By involving these industry stakeholders, the assessment gains credibility and ensures that its recommendations are grounded in the realities of those most affected. This approach not only fosters trust and buy-in but also lays the foundation for a workforce development plan that aligns with the community's unique needs and aspirations.

Based on the survey responses gathered, it appears that the majority of businesses represented come from the marine fabrication, construction, and repair sector, with a few outliers in restaurants, lodging, and event hosting. While several respondents diversify their offerings—one combining marine trades, events, and restaurants, and another combining marine trades and lodging—most appear to operate within a relatively narrow focus. This lack of diversification could pose a vulnerability to shifting market demands and seasonal fluctuations, potentially impacting their year-round stability.

In terms of longevity, the businesses vary widely, from an established operator with 74 years of experience to a newcomer with just 3 years in operation, averaging about 32 years overall. The total combined years of operation amount to 194, indicating a substantial degree of industry presence and know-how in the region. Seasonality is a defining factor: only a few businesses operate in spring and fall, and most activity takes place in the summer months. This seasonality heavily influences employment numbers, as one business spikes to a peak of 40 employees during its busy period but skews the overall average. Excluding that outlier, marine trade businesses typically employ around three to four people at peak season and possibly no one during the off-season.

When it comes to staffing and skill demands, a common theme emerges: marine businesses are struggling to find reliable and skilled labor in areas such as mechanical and fiberglass repair, marine technical work, engine and rigging, carpentry, composites, and even sewing or sailmaking. Beyond technical skills, soft skills like dependability, communication, and customer service are also in high demand.

Many respondents noted difficulty in recruiting employees who are both willing to enter the trade and remain in it, citing a lack of interest among younger people and a sense that training investments may not pay off if workers do not stay long-term.

Training and development efforts are generally piecemeal and ad hoc. While some businesses rely solely on on-the-job training and internal skill transfer from senior to junior employees, others make use of associations like American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) or American Boat Builders & Repairers Association (ABBRA) for specialized courses. Still, there is a sense that more formalized, locally accessible training could help attract and retain talent. Multiple respondents expressed at least some openness to a dedicated training center, although a few were unsure, indicating that more information would be needed on curriculum, cost, and time commitments. Specific training topics mentioned include electrical, mechanical, fiberglass, marine electronics, refrigeration, project management, and vessel handling.



Partnerships with local educational institutions, such as Chesapeake College, appear to be of particular interest. These collaborations could bring manufacturer seminars and dealer training sessions directly into the community, allowing businesses to upskill existing employees while attracting new talent. The right mix of formal coursework, industry certifications, and practical, hands-on learning could make Rock Hall a recognized hub for marine-oriented education. Improving infrastructure—both in terms of shoreline resilience and local transportation—would further support this growth, making the area more appealing for trainers, trainees, and visiting experts.

Given stakeholder feedback via survey and direct conversations, exploring a workforce development strategy in Rock Hall is a necessary response to the pressing skill-based challenges facing the town's marine trades industry. Businesses consistently report difficulty finding skilled workers in high-demand, technical areas of expertise, alongside a critical need for soft skills like dependability and customer service. Seasonal demand fluctuations further complicate workforce stability, with many businesses struggling to retain employees year-round. These challenges pose a direct threat to the sustainability of an industry that serves as both an economic engine and a defining feature of Rock Hall's identity. Addressing these gaps now with an immediate and practical solution is critical, creating connections between local businesses, training providers, and educational institutions to establish accessible, structured programs tailored to the industry's needs.

In the longer term, these immediate and practical solutions can integrate Rock Hall into a larger regional workforce development strategy, complementing existing efforts such as Chesapeake College's mobile training programs and the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's shipwright apprenticeship. By leveraging regional partnerships, the Rock Hall program can fill gaps in training offerings—particularly in areas like modern materials and technologies—that align with local industry demands. This collaborative approach will not only support the growth of the marine trades sector but also foster economic resilience across the Chesapeake Bay region. A well-implemented workforce development strategy in Rock Hall would serve as a model for other small waterfront communities, driving regional workforce innovation while preserving the maritime heritage central to the area's identity and economy.



WORKFORCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

CURRENT WORKFORCE LANDSCAPE

Rock Hall's marine trades industry plays a vital role in sustaining the town's economy and maintaining its maritime heritage. Despite its importance, the current workforce faces several challenges, including skill gaps, seasonal instability, and demographic shifts. Based on survey data and stakeholder input, the sector employs a small yet critical workforce concentrated in roles such as marine mechanics, fiberglass repair technicians, and riggers. These positions require technical expertise, which is increasingly difficult to find locally. Many businesses also report demand for soft skills like dependability, customer service, and communication, further highlighting the need for comprehensive workforce development strategies.

The seasonal nature of the industry exacerbates these challenges. With activity peaking during summer months, businesses often scale down their operations in the off-season, leading to workforce instability. This trend affects employee retention and limits opportunities for year-round training and development. Moreover, the workforce is aging, with few younger workers entering the field to replace those nearing retirement.

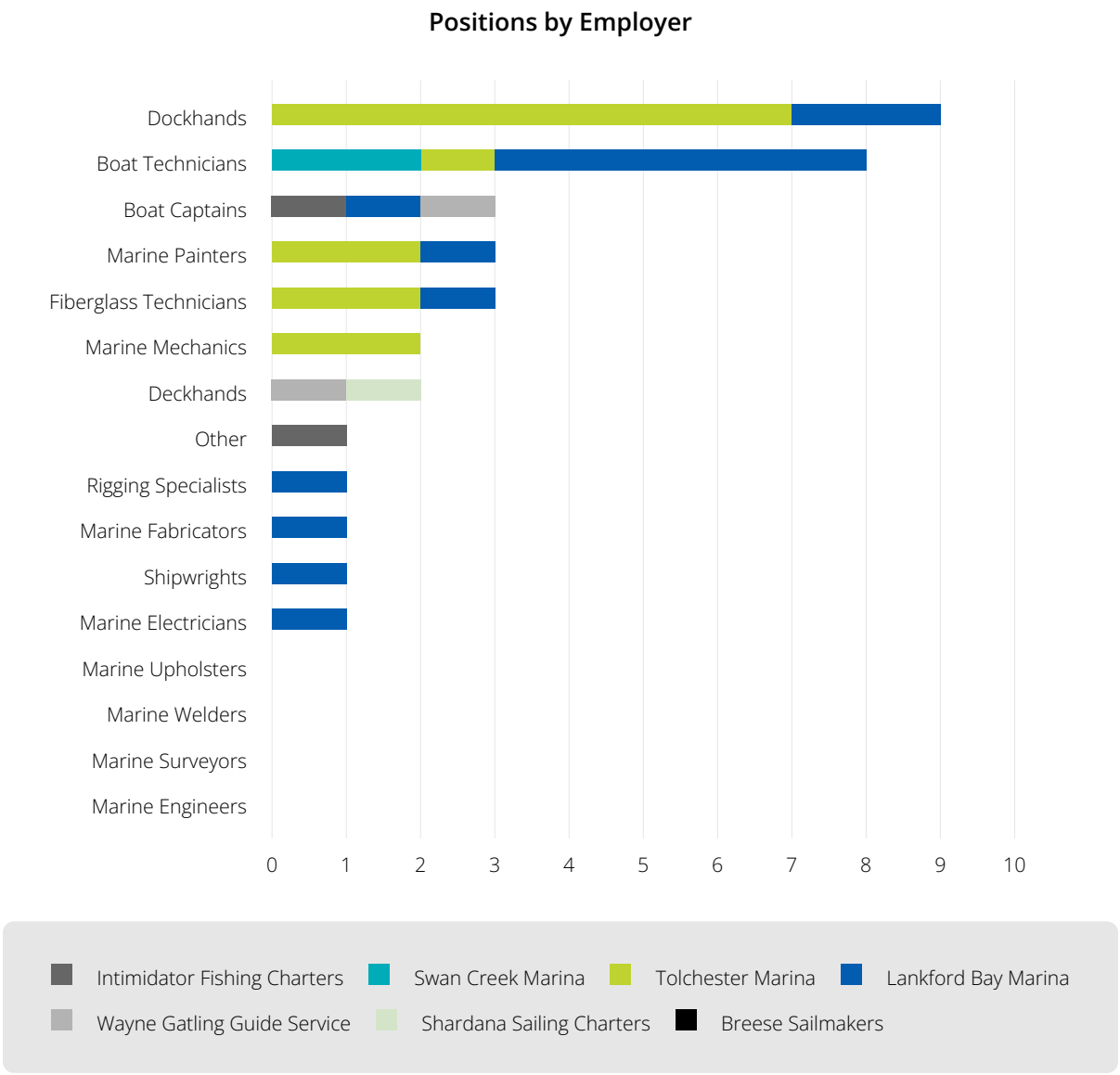
The workforce data for Rock Hall's marine trades sector, collected via stakeholder survey, reveals a diverse array of positions, totaling 40 roles across seven businesses. These roles range from technical positions like Marine Mechanics (3 positions) and Boat Technicians (8 positions) to specialized trades such as Shipwrights (9 positions), Marine Electricians (1 position), and Rigging Specialists (1 position). The distribution highlights areas of concentration and critical gaps in the current workforce.

Certain roles, like Boat Captains (7 positions), are widely represented, reflecting the strong demand for skilled operators in Rock Hall's recreational and commercial boating industries. Dockhands (3 positions) and Shipwrights (9 positions) are also prominent, emphasizing the importance of hands-on labor and craftsmanship in maintaining the region's maritime infrastructure. However, other roles, such as Marine Welders, Fiberglass Technicians, and Marine Upholsterers, are either minimally represented or entirely absent. These gaps indicate a lack of skilled labor in specialized areas, which could pose challenges for businesses requiring advanced materials or custom finishes to remain competitive.

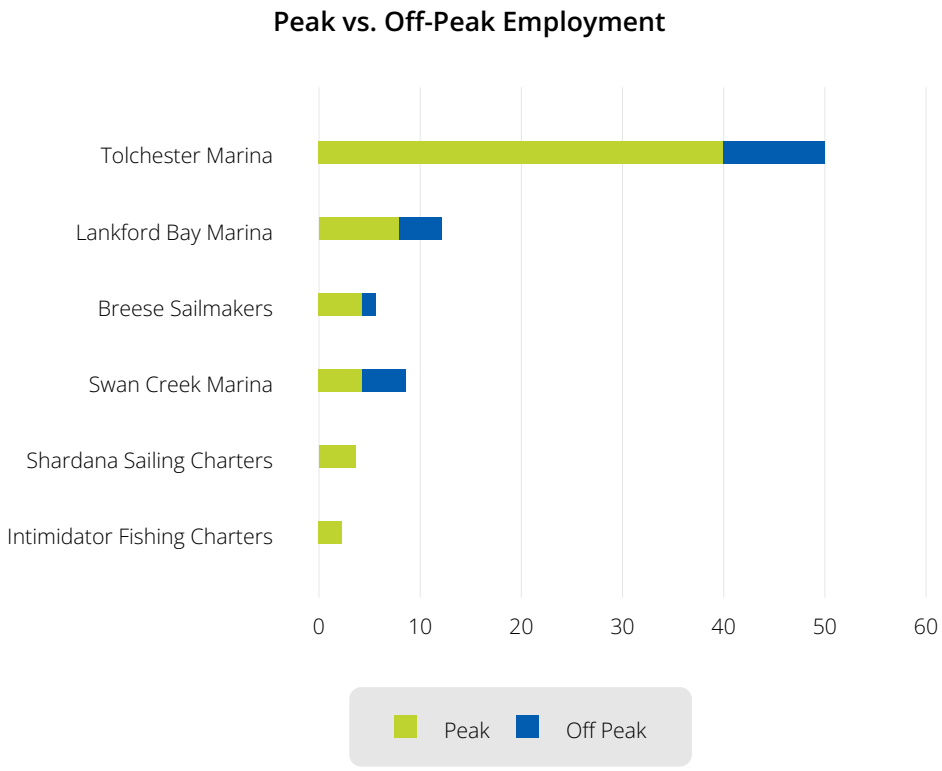
The workforce distribution also highlights specialization among businesses. For example, Lankford Bay Marina employs seven Shipwrights, making it a local hub for craftsmanship, while Wayne Gatling Guide Service focuses heavily on Boat Technicians (5 positions) and Marine Mechanics (2 positions). Despite these concentrations, most businesses employ only a small number of workers, with an average of approximately 3-4 employees per business, indicating the fragmented nature of the local workforce.



(c) Haven Harbour Marina



Seasonal fluctuations add another layer of complexity to workforce stability. Many of these roles likely experience higher demand during peak boating seasons, leaving businesses to manage with smaller teams or underutilized positions in the off-season. Addressing these fluctuations, along with the gaps in specialized skills, will be critical for sustaining and growing the marine trades workforce in Rock Hall.



This assessment underscores the need for targeted workforce development initiatives. By addressing gaps in roles like Marine Electricians, Fiberglass Technicians, and Marine Welders while supporting specialized training for in-demand positions during off-peak seasons, Rock Hall can build a more balanced and sustainable workforce to meet the demands of its growing marine trades sector.



KEY INDUSTRY GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Stakeholders and workforce data have revealed significant gaps in Rock Hall's marine trades industry, particularly in technical roles such as marine mechanics, welding, electrical systems, and fiberglass repair. According to the workforce analysis, there are critical shortages that limit local businesses' ability to meet demand and remain competitive. Additionally, soft skills such as communication, customer service, and problem-solving are highly sought after, as they are essential for maintaining strong client relationships in a service-oriented industry. Barriers to addressing these gaps include limited localized training opportunities, a lack of awareness about marine trades as viable career paths, and seasonal employment trends that make workforce stability challenging.

PROGRAM DESIGN

Opportunities to address these gaps include targeted training programs designed to meet the immediate needs of the local marine trades sector. Programs such as apprenticeships, industry-recognized certifications, and hands-on safety training could be developed in partnership with organizations like ABYC, Yamaha Marine, and Chesapeake College. Training that addresses specific workforce needs—such as the demand for additional marine mechanics, electricians, and fiberglass technicians—would provide businesses with the skilled labor they require. Flexible delivery formats, such as mobile training units or short courses, could accommodate the seasonality of the industry by focusing on upskilling workers during slower months.

RECRUITING

Opportunities for workforce engagement and recruiting include targeting entry-level workers and career changers, who often seek stable, fulfilling work and can transition into the field with basic industry-specific training. Structured, short-term training programs, on-the-job training (OJT), and apprenticeships are particularly effective for developing their competencies. Employers can offset training costs through regional and federal funding options such as Individual Training Accounts or train-to-hire programs.[5]

High school graduates represent another key demographic, particularly those seeking cost-effective career pathways with opportunities to "earn while they learn." Entry-level marine trades roles, supported by apprenticeships and OJT, can appeal to this group by emphasizing long-term growth and advancement. Military veterans, with their transferable skills and discipline, are also a strong fit for the marine trades, particularly through initiatives like the Heroes MAKE America program, which offers industry-specific credentials.

Finally, investing in incumbent workers by providing advanced training, certifications, and upskilling opportunities can enhance retention, boost productivity, and ensure long-term workforce sustainability. This approach also leverages existing talent to meet evolving industry demands. Together, these strategies present a comprehensive opportunity to build a resilient and diverse workforce for the marine trades sector.



[5] Training services for eligible individuals are typically provided by training providers who receive payment for their services through an ITA. The ITA is a payment agreement established on behalf of a participant with a training provider. WIOA title I adult and dislocated workers purchase training services from State eligible training providers they select in consultation with the career planner, which includes discussion of program quality and performance information on the available eligible training providers.

SEASONALITY

The seasonality of Rock Hall's workforce also presents an opportunity to schedule training during off-peak periods, ensuring businesses and workers have the bandwidth for professional development. Workforce data suggest that roles such as deckhands, dockhands, and rigging specialists—currently employed in small numbers—could benefit from additional training to build a multi-skilled workforce. Additionally, identifying individuals with transferable skills in carpentry, metalworking, or other related trades and encouraging them to apply their expertise in the marine industry could help address critical labor shortages.

HERITAGE CONNECTION

Leveraging Rock Hall's maritime heritage and tourism events as tools for workforce development is another key opportunity. Community events such as Waterman's Day and the annual boat docking contest could be used to showcase careers in marine trades, engage residents, and inspire younger generations to explore these fields. By connecting workforce development with the community's maritime identity, Rock Hall can address current labor shortages while building a sustainable talent pipeline for the future. These strategies not only align with the unique demands of the local industry but also position Rock Hall as a leader in regional marine workforce development.

PROJECTED WORKFORCE NEEDS

Over the next 3-5 years, Rock Hall's marine trades sector is expected to face increasing demand due to the growth of the recreational boating industry and advancements in boating technology. This demand will require a workforce skilled in emerging technologies, such as electric propulsion systems, advanced composites, and environmentally friendly boating practices.[6] Local businesses will also need to adapt to shifts in consumer preferences and tourism patterns, further emphasizing the importance of upskilling the workforce.

The projected workforce needs in Rock Hall's marine trades sector can be expected to align with broader trends in Maryland and the national marine economy, signaling substantial growth and opportunity. According to Maryland's 2024 Marine Economy Report, the state experienced a 38% increase in marine-related jobs from 2011 to 2021, adding nearly 29,000 positions. During the same period, wages in the industry rose by 23%, reflecting increasing demand for skilled labor.[7] According to the National Marine Manufacturers Association, recreational boating, a key driver of economic activity, contributed $2.41 billion to Maryland's economy in 2021, supporting 19,000 jobs statewide. Within Maryland's 1st Congressional District, which includes Rock Hall, recreational boating alone generated $679 million in economic impact and supported nearly 4,000 jobs.[8] Nationally, the recreational boating industry grew by 35% between 2018 and 2023, with its economic impact increasing from $170 billion to $230 billion and supporting over 812,000 jobs.[9] Programs like Maryland's EARN initiative, which categorizes marine trades under the "Construction" sector projected to grow by over 13,000 jobs between 2020 and 2030, highlight the importance of preparing for sustained industry expansion.[10] Ultimately, these trends underscore the urgency of developing a local workforce strategy to meet growing demand.

By aligning with national and regional trends, Rock Hall can position itself as a hub for marine trades education and innovation within an evolving and increasingly prosperous marine economy. Stakeholders anticipate that investments in workforce development will not only meet immediate needs but also provide a foundation for long-term economic resilience. Proactively addressing these challenges now will help local businesses remain competitive while ensuring the sustainability of the town's maritime economy.

[6] According to Composites Manufacturing, "the marine industry has experienced a steady rise in the use of composites, especially high-performance materials. In addition to helping hulls be lighter and more damage-resistant, composites can be found in many more components of boats —from interior moldings to furniture on superyachts."
[7] Notes from Maryland's 2024 Marine Economy Report - 2021 data
[8] https://www.nmma.org/advocacy/economic-impact/recreational-boating/MD
[9] https://dnr.maryland.gov/boating/Documents/MDBoatingEconomicImpact.pdf
[10] https://www.labor.maryland.gov/earn/earnannrep2023.pdf



BARRIERS TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Despite these opportunities, several barriers must be addressed to realize a robust workforce development strategy. Financial constraints are a recurring challenge, with businesses often lacking the resources to invest in training or offer competitive wages. Infrastructure limitations, such as inadequate facilities and equipment for hands-on learning, further hinder progress. Compounding these issues is an aging workforce, as many experienced professionals near retirement, creating an urgent need to recruit and train younger workers to fill the gap.

Additionally, Rock Hall's geographic isolation from major transportation and population hubs presents unique challenges in attracting new talent. Without easy access to larger labor markets, the town must rely on creative solutions to both retain local workers and draw in skilled individuals from outside the region. The marine trades industry also faces a perception problem: younger people often view these careers as outdated or less lucrative compared to other industries. The fact that marine trades are classified under construction in Maryland EARN's labor research and programming only adds to the confusion and diminishes visibility. Overcoming these stereotypes will require strategic advocacy, targeted marketing, and community engagement to highlight the economic, lifestyle, and growth opportunities available in the marine trades sector.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EXAMPLES

Developing a workforce training initiative in Rock Hall requires careful consideration of successful programs across the country. National and regional models, particularly those based in New England and South Florida, offer valuable insights into how communities have addressed labor shortages, fostered partnerships, and prepared workers for sustainable careers in the marine industry. These programs highlight the importance of regional collaboration, manufacturer-driven certifications, and targeted skill-based training—all of which can inform Rock Hall's strategy.

In New England, the New England Marine Trades Association (NEMTA) demonstrates how a regional approach can strengthen the marine trades workforce. Representing six states, NEMTA facilitates collaboration between businesses, schools, and policymakers to address workforce challenges and promote the recreational boating industry, which employs nearly 80,000 people in the region.[11] A key component of this effort is a network of high schools and post-secondary institutions offering tailored programs. For example, the Chariho Career & Technical Center in Rhode Island integrates classroom learning with internships, job development, and mentorship opportunities. This approach helps students connect their education to real-world opportunities in the marine industry. At the post-secondary level, institutions like Massachusetts Maritime Academy and Maine Maritime Academy provide advanced training in marine technology, engineering, and business management. These programs exemplify how a regional approach can align training efforts with industry needs, creating a sustainable pipeline of skilled workers.

A similar model can be found in South Florida through the Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF) and its Yacht Service Technician Apprenticeship Program.[12] This two-year program, developed in partnership with Atlantic Technical College and the Florida Department of Education, provides apprentices with a comprehensive set of shipyard skills. Participants receive both classroom instruction and on-the-job training in areas such as welding, hydraulics, plumbing, and carpentry. The program addresses the marine industry's need for skilled labor while offering apprentices nationally recognized credentials. By collaborating with local employers and educational institutions, MIASF demonstrates how regional partnerships can effectively meet workforce demands and promote long-term career opportunities in the marine trades.



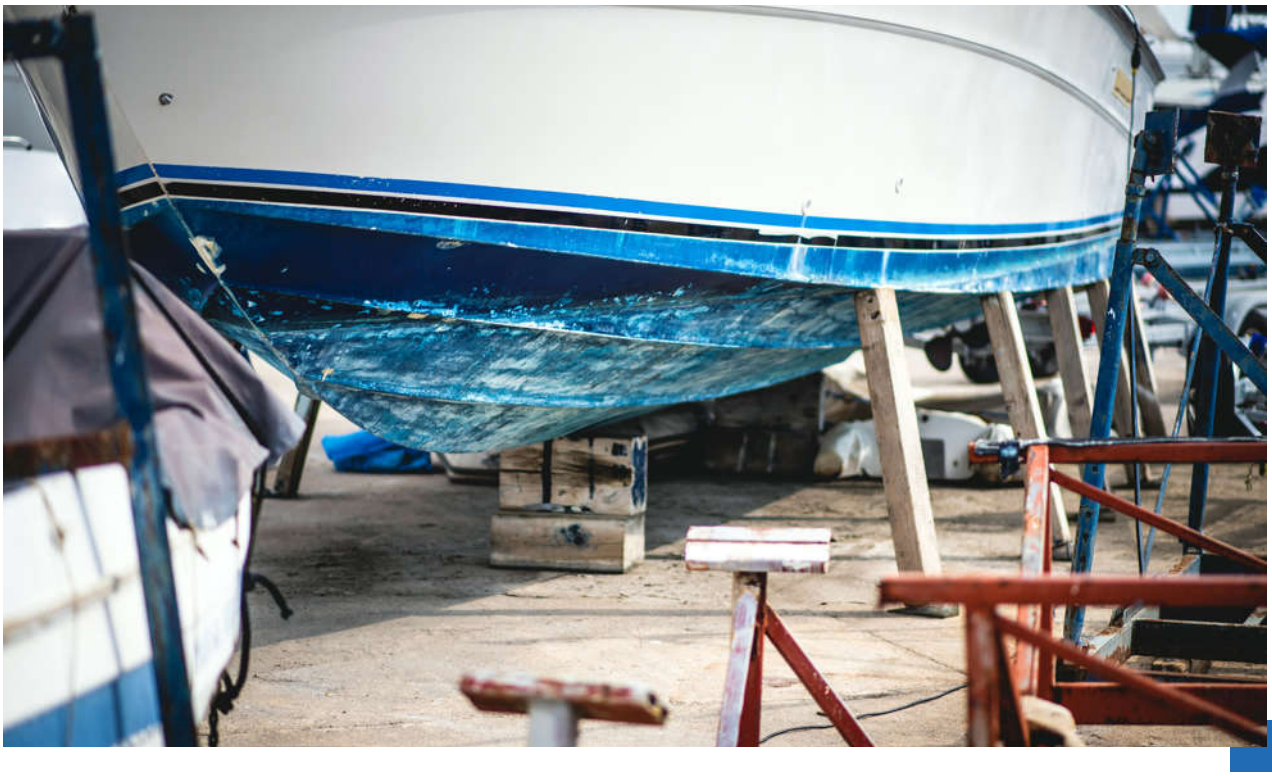
[11] https://www.neboating.com/
[12] https://www.miasf.org/apprentice-program

Another important contributor to workforce development is the role of manufacturer-based training programs like those offered by the American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC). ABYC provides certifications in critical areas such as marine systems, electrical technology, and diesel engines. These programs are designed and taught by certified professionals and are available both in-person and online, offering flexibility for regional hubs. ABYC also powers the Marine Trades Accreditation Program (MTAP), which supports secondary and post-secondary schools in aligning their curricula with industry standards. By enhancing the quality of marine service training and connecting students with employers, ABYC plays a critical role in developing a skilled and certified workforce.

Skill-based programs further illustrate the importance of targeted training in addressing workforce needs. The MIASF apprenticeship program includes hands-on training in areas such as shipyard safety, woodworking, and yacht painting, ensuring that graduates are equipped with versatile, industry-relevant skills. Similarly, ABYC certifications provide workers with the qualifications needed to meet rigorous industry standards. These certifications emphasize continuous education and adaptability to new technologies, ensuring workers remain competitive in a rapidly evolving field.

The success of these programs underscores the value of partnerships, sustainability, and accessibility. Organizations like ABYC and MIASF also provide scholarships and funding opportunities to ensure that training is equitable and accessible. For example, MTAP offers scholarships to high school and post-secondary students pursuing marine service careers, helping to attract diverse talent to the industry.[13] Manufacturer-driven initiatives, such as those offered by Yamaha Marine and Mercury Marine, demonstrate how businesses can collaborate with community colleges and local employers to deliver targeted training that meets regional workforce needs.

For Rock Hall, these national and regional models provide a roadmap for addressing workforce challenges in the marine trades. By leveraging partnerships with Chesapeake College, Kent County High School, and local marinas, Rock Hall can emulate successful programs like those in New England and South Florida. High school internships, post-secondary certifications, and apprenticeship programs can be scaled to align with local needs and resources. Establishing a workforce coordinator to connect these efforts and build momentum will allow Rock Hall to take immediate action while laying the groundwork for a comprehensive training center in the future.



[13] https://www.teachboats.org/mtap-schools; https://www.teachboats.org/apply-1

EVALUATION OF THE FULL TRAINING CENTER CONCEPT

Rock Hall's workforce development strategy in marine trades is emerging as a timely and necessary initiative, informed by a combination of market demand, financial constraints, and stakeholder feedback. The marine trades sector, both locally and nationally, is experiencing heightened demand due to the growing recreational boating industry and advancements in marine technologies. However, Rock Hall's workforce struggles with significant skill gaps, particularly in technical roles. Financial constraints, limited training infrastructure, and an aging workforce compound these challenges, making it increasingly difficult for businesses to remain competitive and meet demand.

Stakeholders have voiced both enthusiasm and caution, underscoring the need for realistic, phased approaches that address immediate gaps while building momentum for long-term growth. Lessons from comparable initiatives with physical footprints, like the Great Lakes Boat Building School in Maine and the Richardson Maritime Museum in Cambridge, Maryland, highlight the importance of aligning financial strategies, community support, and training programs with industry needs. The stakeholder emphasis on creating localized, accessible opportunities—whether through apprenticeships, certifications, or partnerships with organizations like Chesapeake College, Yamaha, and other industry retailers—reflects the necessity of tailoring solutions to Rock Hall's unique geographic and economic landscape. This collaborative, incremental approach lays the groundwork for a sustainable workforce development strategy that aligns with broader regional and national trends while addressing Rock Hall's immediate needs.

TRAINING CENTER CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY:

GREAT LAKES BOAT BUILDING SCHOOL

The Great Lakes Boat Building School (GLBBS) offers a blueprint for success with its recent $3.8 million Marine Technology Center expansion in Cedarville, Michigan. The 10,000-square-foot facility, funded by a combination of a $2.7 million EDA grant, a Mass Timber Grant, and a $1.1 million capital campaign, demonstrates how diverse funding sources can support large-scale projects. This expansion enabled the school to increase enrollment capacity to 48 students annually and introduce a groundbreaking Marine Electronic Technology program. Additionally, GLBBS boasts a 100% job placement rate for graduates, emphasizing the effectiveness of its Comprehensive Career Boat Building and Marine Service Technology programs in addressing the skilled labor shortage in the marine industry. The GLBBS model underscores the importance of securing robust funding, leveraging partnerships, and tailoring programming to meet industry demands

CASE STUDY:

RICHARDSON MARITIME MUSEUM

The Richardson Maritime Museum in Cambridge, Maryland, offers valuable lessons that are closer to home. The museum consolidated its operations into a renovated 100-year-old building with 4,800 SF of usable space for a total cost of $400,000.

According to a 2019 Bond Initiative request, they described their plans to consolidate their existing museum and administrative office as "an integral step in our ongoing plans to create a significant project in the City of Cambridge that will benefit the area in a multitude of ways." The museum previously focused on "expanding youth programs and developing a trade school to promote both historic and traditional craft indigenous to the Chesapeake Bay, as well as contemporary construction and repair of boats and pleasure craft." The chosen site was "pivotally located on the Cambridge Creek between the historic downtown and the State supported Sailwinds waterfront project, our four-acre site at 103 Hayward Street is the optimum location for the growth of the organization which will generate economic and cultural growth in the community."

Renovations included a new roof, interior repairs, new windows and doors, electrical upgrades, HVAC installation, and site improvements.[14] The museum planned to increase the number of employees from 1 to 4, with annual operating costs increasing from **$175,000 to $275,000**.



CASE STUDY CONSIDERATIONS

Each example highlights the importance of realistic financial planning, consistent funding sources, and community support when undertaking projects of this nature. Rock Hall can learn from both experiences by ensuring strong financial backing and aligning the project's scope with available resources via state and federal funding and partnerships. Furthermore, like Cambridge, Maryland, Rock Hall can leverage heritage tourism as a means to support the costs of running a marine trades training facility.



FINANCIAL

Both GLBBS and the Richardson Maritime Museum highlight the critical importance of securing diverse and reliable funding sources. GLBBS successfully raised $3.8 million for its Marine Technology Center through a combination of grants, private donations, and partnerships, reflecting a well-coordinated effort that drew on public and private support. However, this approach requires extensive planning, grant-writing expertise, and community engagement. Richardson Maritime Museum took a phased approach to construction as it was able to secure state and private funding; and uniquely, this project was centered around an effort to consolidate operations into a retrofitted space. Ultimately, it offers context on retrofit financing if Rock Hall chose that route opposed to new construction. For Rock Hall, while ambitious goals may be inspiring, realistic and incremental funding strategies are essential to avoid setbacks.



LOGISTICAL

Managing the logistics of establishing and running a training center involves coordinating facilities, equipment, and partnerships. GLBBS faced significant logistical hurdles in planning its 10,000-square-foot expansion, which required new docking, waterfront improvements, and specialized spaces for hands-on training. These infrastructure needs demanded substantial upfront planning and coordination with stakeholders, including local authorities, educational institutions, and industry partners

Rock Hall faces similar logistical complexities. Existing facilities such as community centers, schools, or marina spaces may require retrofitting to accommodate marine trades training, involving challenges like updating electrical systems, installing ventilation for welding, and ensuring compliance with safety standards. In cases where new construction is necessary, as with GLBBS, the project's timeline and costs could escalate, potentially delaying benefits to the local workforce.



OPERATIONAL

The operational demands of a training center are substantial, requiring ongoing investments in staffing, equipment, and program delivery. GLBBS's ability to maintain a 100% placement rate for graduates reflects careful alignment between its curriculum and industry needs. This success is underpinned by strong partnerships with employers and a focus on high-demand skills like marine electronics. However, achieving this level of alignment requires continuous industry engagement, a well-developed curriculum, and experienced instructors—elements that may take significant time to develop in Rock Hall. Furthermore, the Richardson Maritime Museum's decision to consolidate operations offers a scenario of caution about spreading too thin. For Rock Hall, this underscores the importance of securing long-term operational funding and building a scalable program that can grow with demand. A phased approach, beginning with smaller-scale programs or leveraging existing facilities, may mitigate these risks and allow Rock Hall to build momentum before expanding into a full-scale center.

INITIAL FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT

ASSESSING LOCAL DEMAND

The survey responses reveal both opportunities and challenges in establishing a local marine trades training center in Rock Hall. While businesses consistently highlighted the need for skilled labor, interest in sending employees to a local training center was mixed. Of the seven respondents, three were unsure, and one explicitly stated "no," leaving only three businesses expressing clear interest. This indicates that the majority of participants were not definitively in favor of the idea, suggesting the need for targeted outreach and clearer communication about the center's value.

Local businesses reported significant challenges in finding skilled workers for roles such as mechanical and fiberglass repair, marine electronics, engine rigging, and carpentry. These high-demand skills align closely with industry needs, making a training center a potentially vital resource. However, the hesitancy among survey participants suggests concerns about how the center would address their specific needs. Businesses may require more details on program costs, scheduling, and how training would directly benefit their operations.

Seasonality further complicates workforce dynamics. Most businesses ramp up operations in the summer and scale back during the off-season, creating challenges in retaining skilled staff year-round. A training center could address this issue by offering flexible, off-season training programs to upskill existing employees or prepare seasonal workers for peak demands. Additionally, a focus on developing soft skills such as communication, dependability, and customer service—cited as essential by respondents—could provide well-rounded workforce solutions.

While the mixed interest in a training center indicates that its value must be clearly demonstrated, the survey responses also highlight opportunities for partnerships and phased implementation. Chesapeake College and Haven Harbour Marina already host training sessions, which could serve as a foundation for expanding workforce development efforts. Engaging businesses early through pilot programs or informational sessions might convert some of the "unsure" responses into commitments. Furthermore, businesses expressed openness to resource-sharing and mentorship programs, provided the training aligns with their immediate needs.

Ultimately, the survey underscores the need for a comprehensive training strategy that not only addresses technical skills gaps but also fits seamlessly into the unique economic and operational landscape of Rock Hall. By focusing on high-demand skills, leveraging existing partnerships, and building trust through phased implementation, Rock Hall can position itself as a leader in workforce development for the marine trades. However, gaining local buy-in and demonstrating tangible benefits will be critical to the initiative's success.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS

The physical infrastructure for the training center could range from repurposing an existing building, as envisioned by the Richardson Maritime Museum, to constructing a new facility, as demonstrated by GLBBS. Based on the GLBBS and Richardson Maritime Museum examples, cost per square foot may range between $83 and $380.[15] Furthermore, the required equipment—boats, engines, welding stations, safety gear, digital simulators and diagnostic tools—could add an initial investment of $200,000–$500,000.

[15] Another example includes: Rhode Island's IYRS School of Technology and Trades' Brooks Building - $6M at 20,000 SF and $300 per SF https://www.newportri.com/story/news/local/2017/10/17/iyrs-school-technology-trades-celebrates/12773646007/

RIVERS & ROADS

COSTS AND FUNDING

ONGOING COSTS

Based on industry data and comparable initiatives, the estimated annual operating costs for a marine trades training center in Rock Hall may range from **$175,000 to $355,000.**

These costs include:

Staffing

$50,000–$200,000

for 1–4 full-time employees (instructors, coordinators).

Facility Costs

$30,000–$50,000

for rent, utilities, and maintenance.

Equipment and Supplies

$20,000–$50,000

for tools, safety gear, and training materials.

Insurance and Licensing

$10,000–$20,000

Marketing and Recruitment

$30,000–$50,000

Miscellaneous Expenses

$10,000–$20,000

These figures are contingent upon the scale of the program, the availability of partnerships, grant funded offsets, and geography.



FUNDING SOURCES AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Securing diverse funding sources is critical for the feasibility and sustainability of the project. Like GLBBS, Rock Hall could explore federal and state grants, such as those provided by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) or Maryland's Workforce Investment Board. Rural Maryland Council recently funded Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Shipwright Apprentice Program with a $30,000-plus grant, demonstrating that funding sources are available for direct program costs.[16] The Hampton Roads Maritime Industrial Base Ecosystem hosted by Old Dominion University received $1.1 million in 2023 to provide maritime trades training thanks to support from Virginia's Department of Housing and Community Development.[17] Private capital campaigns and partnerships with local businesses, such as marinas and marine service providers, could supplement public funding. Industry sponsorships from organizations like ABYC, Yamaha Marine, or Mercury Marine may also provide funding or in-kind donations of equipment. For example, GLBBS received a $75,000 grant from Tiara Yachts, a luxury watercraft manufacturer, to support student tuition, which directly supports operational needs.[18] Additionally, tuition revenue, though modest, could contribute to operational costs.

THE VERDICT TRAINING CENTER FOR ROCK HALL

Rock Hall's location on the Chesapeake Bay and its rich maritime heritage make it a compelling candidate for marine trades workforce development initiatives. However, establishing a full-scale maritime training center would require significant investment and robust local employer buy-in—both of which appear limited at this time. Without clear, unified support from businesses and stakeholders, the feasibility of such a center remains uncertain.



[16] https://www.chesapeakebaymagazine.com/maritime-museum-apprentice-program-awarded-big-grant/
[17] https://www.odu.edu/article/odu-awarded-11-million-for-maritime-trades-training-project
[18] https://glbbs.edu/tiara/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

RECOMMENDATION: START WITH A PROGRAM COORDINATOR POSITION

Based on findings from the workforce needs assessment and stakeholder feedback, hiring a Program Coordinator for Marine Trades Workforce Development is the most strategic and feasible first step in addressing Rock Hall's workforce challenges. This role offers an immediate, focused response to critical industry needs, while laying the groundwork for broader, long-term workforce development initiatives, including the potential for a full-scale marine trades training center.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE COORDINATOR ROLE

Launching a full-scale training center in Rock Hall involves significant financial and logistical hurdles, as highlighted in the case studies and cost analyses from similar initiatives. Hiring a Program Coordinator is a more practical, cost-effective solution that allows work to begin immediately while leveraging existing resources and partnerships.

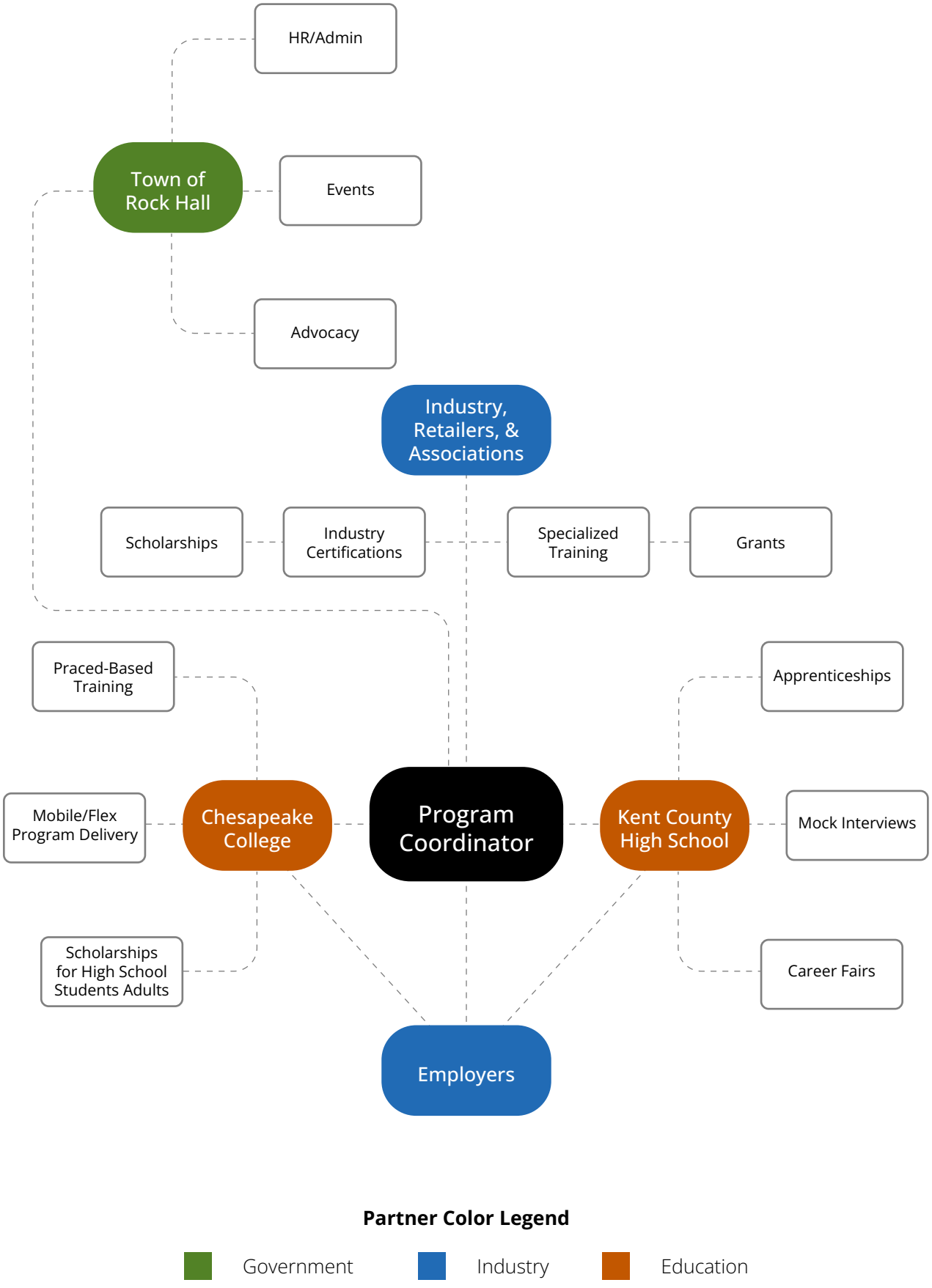
The need for a dedicated Program Coordinator aligns with industry best practices and successful precedents in workforce development. The "10+1 Strategy: A Marine Industry Guide to Growing the Workforce" underscores the importance of a workforce development professional at both national and regional levels to focus on three key areas: data aggregation and communication, coalition building, and apprenticeship development. While these roles are often established at broader scales, local municipalities like Rock Hall can adopt the same philosophy to address workforce challenges at a hyper-local level. Hiring a Program Coordinator who understands Rock Hall's unique place-based challenges and opportunities will provide the critical capacity to implement key strategies tailored to the town's specific needs.

National examples show the value of this approach. In 2022, the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas hired Wendy Mackie as Director of Workforce and Foundation Development to lead its educational foundation and advance training and professional development in the recreational marine industry. Closer to Rock Hall, the Marine Trades Association of Maryland hired Emily Decker in 2023 to manage its workforce development program. These roles exemplify the impact that dedicated workforce professionals can have in bridging gaps, building coalitions, and expanding opportunities for the marine trades sector. Similarly, other industries, such as construction and manufacturing, frequently employ workforce coordinators to design and execute development strategies. These examples provide clear precedent for hiring a coordinator to launch and sustain Rock Hall's marine trades workforce development efforts.

At a hyper-local level, a Program Coordinator would provide the capacity to leverage existing resources while creating new opportunities. Unlike national or regional professionals, a local coordinator would benefit from on-the-ground knowledge of Rock Hall's unique community dynamics, industry challenges, and stakeholder relationships. This position would be integral in uniting local businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies under a cohesive workforce development strategy. By focusing on coalition building, developing apprenticeships, and facilitating communication between stakeholders, the coordinator would act as the linchpin in addressing immediate workforce challenges and building the foundation for long-term success.

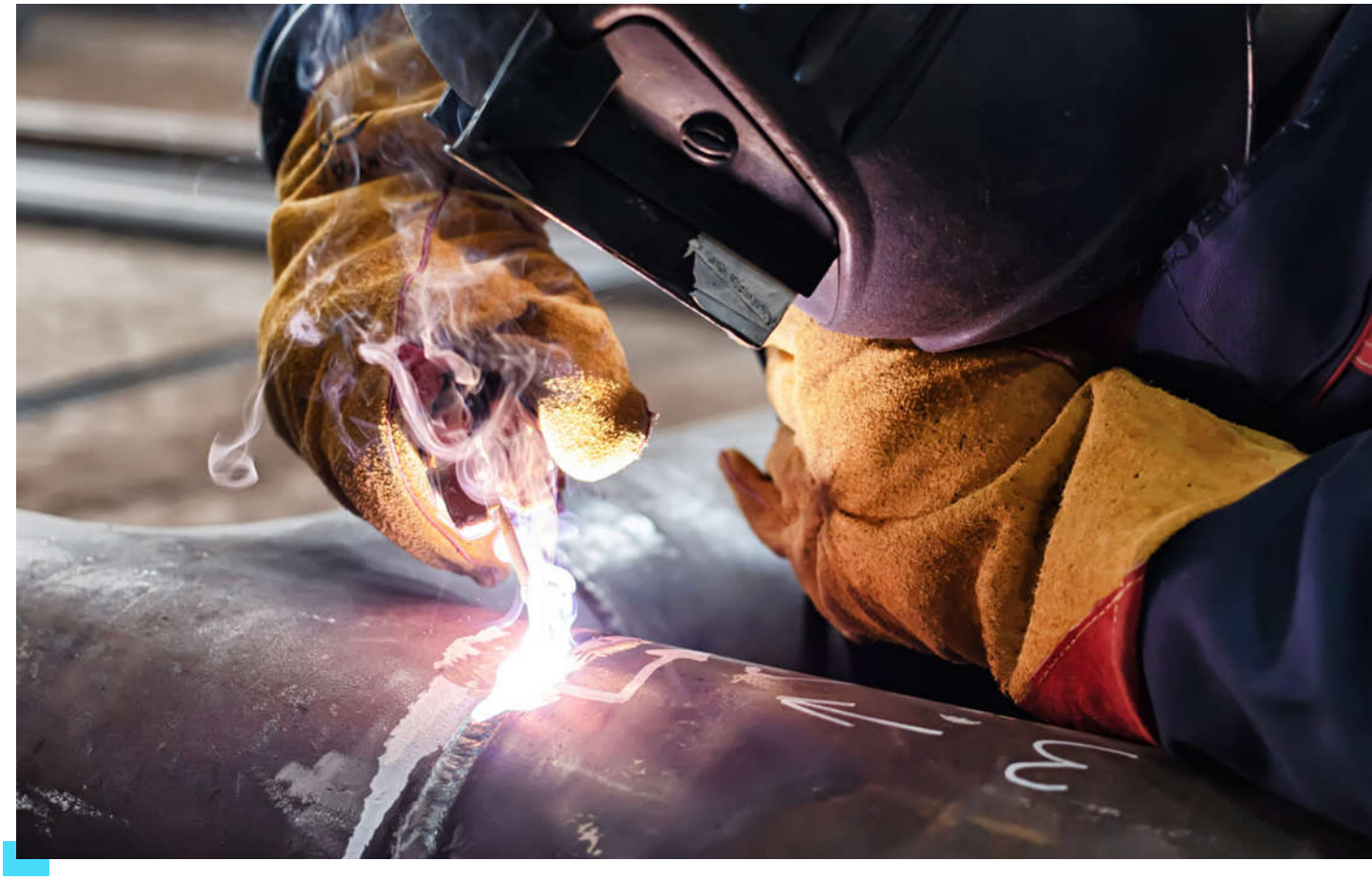
BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY

The Program Coordinator will serve as the primary point of contact and advocate for workforce development in Rock Hall. This individual will forge relationships with local marine businesses, educational institutions, government agencies, and industry organizations to create a unified strategy for addressing workforce challenges. Establishing a marine trades industry roundtable or association will formalize these partnerships, ensuring alignment and collaboration among stakeholders. In Rock Hall's small-town environment, having a recognizable and approachable coordinator will foster trust and credibility, both of which are critical for community buy-in. See the network map below for an example of how the Program Coordinator can engage with various partners.



Partner Color Legend

Government Industry Education



ADDRESSING IMMEDIATE WORKFORCE NEEDS

The survey and stakeholder feedback clearly identified a pressing need for skilled labor in roles such as marine mechanics, fiberglass repair, and boat maintenance. The coordinator can address these needs by organizing local training sessions, coordinating with existing programs (e.g., Chesapeake College and Haven Harbour Marina), and bringing in external training providers, such as Yamaha or Mercury Marine. This approach allows the community to begin addressing its skills gap without waiting for the long-term development of a full training center.

Effective workforce development in Rock Hall requires tailored, local coordination to bridge the gap between existing regional and national training opportunities and the specific needs of the town's marine trades businesses. As one stakeholder emphasized,

"I do not think Rock Hall should or could support a standalone marine trades workforce training center. I believe the answer is a balance between local businesses aggressively investing in and supporting their younger workforce development through the existing factory training centers such as Yamaha University, Mercury University, Yanmar factory training, ABYC, etc. Any and all local efforts should be in partnership with Chesapeake College."

This perspective highlights the need for a Program Coordinator who can integrate Rock Hall's workforce needs with these larger, established training programs. By acting as a local advocate and organizer, the coordinator would ensure that Rock Hall's businesses can access and benefit from programs like Yamaha University and ABYC certifications. Additionally, the coordinator can foster critical partnerships with Chesapeake College, leveraging its existing infrastructure and expertise to deliver targeted, place-based training opportunities that align with industry needs. Local coordination ensures that Rock Hall's marine trades sector remains competitive and sustainable without the financial and logistical burdens of a standalone training center.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

01

Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination

- Convene local businesses, schools, and government agencies into a marine trades roundtable or association.
- Facilitate regular meetings to align workforce development efforts and prioritize industry needs.
- Act as a liaison between Rock Hall and regional, state, and national organizations to bring resources and training opportunities to the community.

02

Youth Apprenticeships and Training Expansion

- Collaborate with Kent County High School and Chesapeake College to expand youth apprenticeships and create clear career pathways in marine trades.
- Develop internships, job shadowing programs, and apprenticeships in partnership with local businesses.
- Promote marine trades careers to students and parents, addressing perceptions about the industry and highlighting career growth opportunities.

03

Training Program Development and Delivery

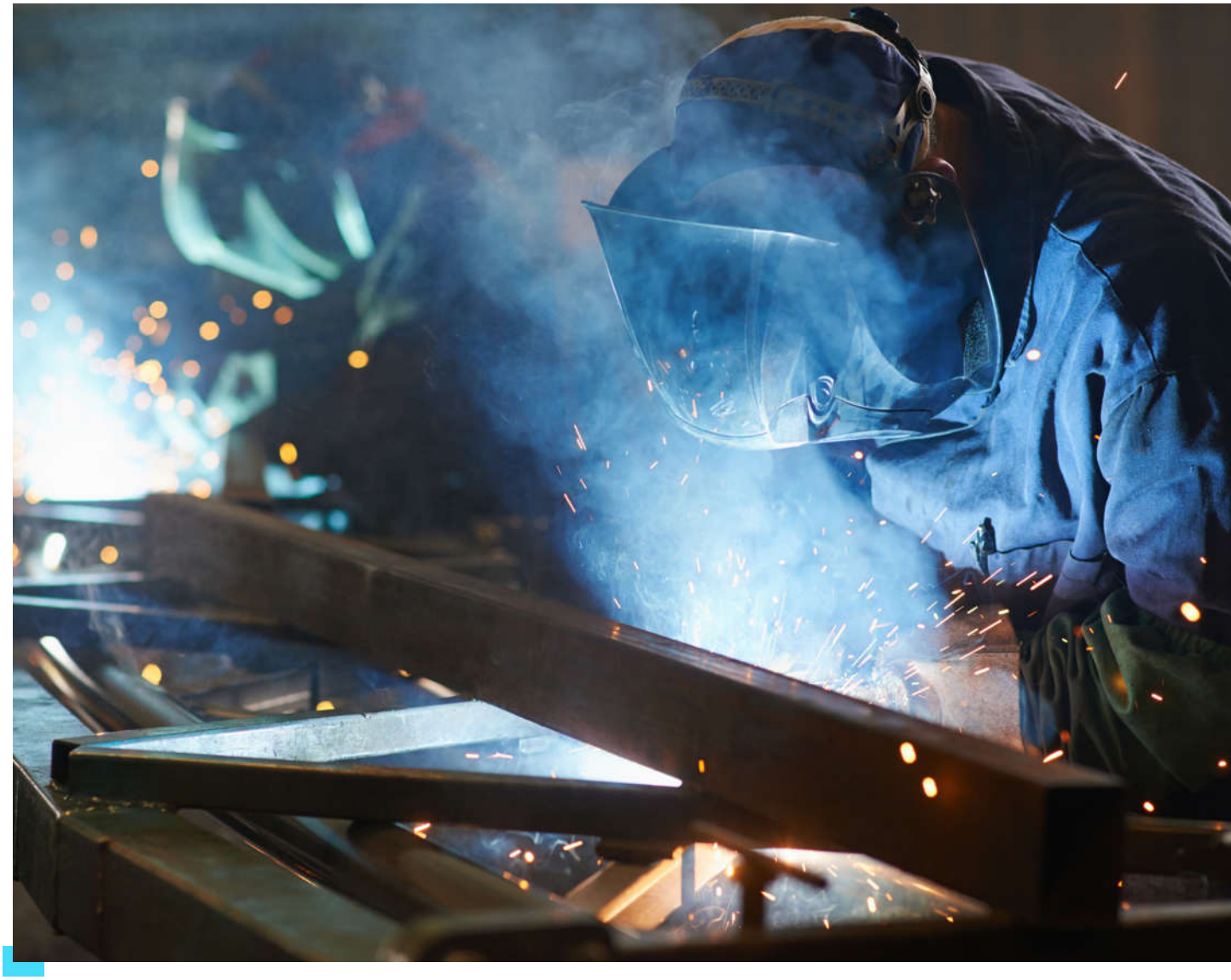
- Secure partnerships with external training organizations to provide certifications and specialized courses in marine skills such as engine repair, safety protocols, and fiberglass work.
- Coordinate with businesses to identify specific training needs and organize workshops or short courses to meet those demands.
- Facilitate access to ABYC certifications or similar programs, ensuring local workers gain industry-recognized qualifications.

04

Community and Career Awareness

- Raise awareness of marine trades careers through outreach efforts, including job fairs, presentations, and community workshops.
- Highlight the economic and lifestyle benefits of working in the marine industry, especially to younger generations and career changers.

These responsibilities are modeled after successful workforce coordination efforts in other regions. For example, the Marine Trades Association of Maryland's (MTAM) Workforce Development Coordinator actively participates in high school and college career fairs, promoting marine trades as viable and rewarding career options. Similarly, coordinators at the Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies (MITAGS) assist in matching apprentices with partner companies and provide job placement support upon program completion. A particularly impactful example is Virginia's Community College Workforce Cooperative (CCWC), which created a centralized point of contact through the hire of an Executive Director. This role facilitates access to the workforce training resources of Camp, Thomas Nelson, and Tidewater Community Colleges, collectively serving 11 cities and four counties through 10 college locations. The CCWC effectively coordinates training resources, leveraging facilities, labs, and specialized programs across all three colleges to address the significant workforce demands of industries such as shipbuilding and ship repair. The program has achieved a job placement rate of over 90% over the past five years, with more than 2,600 students completing the program, earning credentials, and securing employment in ship repair and building. These examples underscore the potential impact and value of a dedicated coordinator role in achieving similar outcomes for Rock Hall's marine trades sector.[19]



[19] https://www.mitags.org/maritime-apprenticeship-programs/;
https://www.vccs.edu/news/ccwc-announces-first-executive-director/;
https://fastforwardva.org/exploring-the-virginia-ship-repair-associations-marine-trade-training-program/

SHORT-TERM GOALS AND MILESTONES

1. **Year 1 Priorities:**

- Secure funding for the Program Coordinator position through grants (e.g., Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act), industry sponsorships, and county contributions.
- Establish the marine trades industry roundtable and host its first meeting. Partner with local schools and businesses to expand youth apprenticeships and internships.
- Engage national training organizations, such as Yamaha and Mercury Marine, to deliver initial training sessions in Rock Hall.

2. **Year 2 and Beyond:**

- Increase the number of businesses participating in training initiatives.
- Expand training programs to include additional certifications and skill areas.
- Begin planning for a full-scale training center by assessing infrastructure needs, securing funding, and gauging community interest.

LONG-TERM VISION AND SUSTAINABILITY

The long-term vision for the Program Coordinator is to establish a self-sustaining workforce development ecosystem that supports Rock Hall's marine trades sector while fostering economic growth and preserving the town's maritime heritage. Over time, the coordinator will evolve from a facilitator of immediate workforce initiatives into a leader of a robust training network that meets both local and regional demands.

By year three, the coordinator should aim to expand the range of training opportunities available locally, incorporating flexible learning formats such as online modules, evening classes, and hands-on workshops. Emphasis should be placed on emerging technologies to ensure that trainees stay competitive in a rapidly evolving industry. Programs like those offered by MarineMax University or the Virginia Ship Repair Association's MTT program can serve as benchmarks for blending practical experience with cutting-edge skills development.

To achieve long-term sustainability, the coordinator will work to establish permanent partnerships with educational institutions, government agencies, and industry leaders. This includes aligning training programs with recognized standards from ABYC and similar organizations to provide certifications that are both valuable to workers and essential to businesses. Additionally, the coordinator will focus on developing community engagement initiatives, such as mentorship programs, career days, and public workshops, to ensure a steady pipeline of talent for the marine trades.

Ultimately, the Program Coordinator's success will be measured by the creation of clear career pathways, increased employment opportunities in the marine industry, and a significant boost in local workforce readiness. The long-term goal is to transition the coordinator's efforts into a fully operational, self-sustaining training center that serves as a regional hub for marine trades education, training, and innovation. By doing so, Rock Hall will not only address its current workforce challenges but also position itself as a leader in the Chesapeake Bay's maritime economy.

EVALUATING SUCCESS

To measure the Program Coordinator's impact, key performance indicators (KPIs) will be used, including:

- Number of new apprenticeship and internship opportunities created.
- Number of local businesses actively engaged in training initiatives.
- Number of individuals trained or certified in marine trades skills.
- Growth in community awareness and participation in marine trades career pathways.
- Successful partnerships with external training providers.

Regular progress reports will be shared with stakeholders, such as the Greater Rock Hall Business Association, County Commissioners, and funding partners. These reports will ensure transparency, track progress against goals, and allow for adjustments to the strategy based on real-time feedback.

Furthermore, to ensure the success and relevance of the Program Coordinator's efforts, key performance indicators (KPIs) should be co-created with industry employers, current workers, and program alumni. By involving these stakeholders in the development of KPIs, the initiative can align its goals with real-world industry needs, ensuring that metrics reflect what matters most to the marine trades sector. This collaborative approach will foster much-needed industry buy-in, as employers and workers will see their priorities and insights directly influencing program outcomes. Additionally, engaging alumni and current workers in the process will provide practical perspectives on the skills and opportunities most valued in the field, strengthening the program's overall impact and credibility.



(c) Haven Harbour Marina

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PRECEDENT FOR LOCAL WORKFORCE COORDINATOR

In the "10+1 Strategy: A Marine Industry Guide to Growing the Workforce" document, the plus one is hiring a Workforce Development Coordinator to provide capacity to Rock Hall maritime industry's need to begin implementation of key strategies within the plan. The position would focus on three key areas: data aggregation and communication, regional employer coalition building, and apprenticeship development.

The report also recommends "Though it is recommended that the industry invest in this position on the national level, a similar position at the regional level is highly recommended if a Marine Trades Association is seeking to implement a selection of workforce services for its members. Workforce development is its own industry, so a workforce development professional should be sought to fill the position."[20] Along these lines of thinking, local municipalities should strive to adopt the same philosophy to find someone who can work at hyper local levels and leverage key place-based knowledge and relationships that a national or regional professional cannot provide. Other skill-based industries regularly employ coordinating staff to build coalitions, programs, and advocacy on behalf of their respective industries (i.e. building trades, manufacturing, etc.). There's enough precedent to hire a Program Coordinator to kick off Rock Hall's marine trades workforce development needs and coordinate programming that already exists while applying new capacity to create new opportunities.



(c) Haven Harbour Marina

[20] P. 25 10+1 report

FUNDRAISING STRATEGY FOR THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

IDENTIFY FUNDING SOURCES

Grants:

- **Research Potential Grants:** Explore federal, state, and private grant opportunities targeting workforce development, education, and marine trades. Focus on organizations such as the Maryland Department of Labor, Maryland Department of Commerce, Rural Maryland Council, and maritime-related foundations.
- **Grant Writing:** Develop persuasive grant proposals emphasizing the initiative's objectives, anticipated outcomes, and community benefits. Highlight partnerships with local businesses, schools, and government agencies to strengthen the case for funding.

Sponsorships from the Marine Trades Industry:

- **Target Local Businesses:** Engage marine-oriented businesses in Rock Hall and nearby areas, showcasing how their support can enhance community goodwill, workforce quality, and visibility.
- **Create Sponsorship Packages:** Develop tiered packages offering benefits like branding at events, recognition in promotional materials, and opportunities to participate in training programs.

Contributions from Kent County Commissioners:

- **Formal Proposal:** Craft a proposal detailing the Program Coordinator's expected impact on Kent County's economy and workforce. Request funding for the Coordinator's salary and associated costs, emphasizing a high return on investment for the county.
- **Presentations and Meetings:** Arrange discussions with Commissioners to present the proposal, using data and success stories to illustrate potential community benefits.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **Organize Community Events:** Host events to promote the workforce training initiative, inviting local businesses and residents. Use these events to engage the community, raise awareness, and attract donations or sponsorships.
- **Leverage Local Media:** Share updates, success stories, and fundraising appeals through local newspapers, radio, and social media platforms. This ensures broad community awareness and support.

BUILD A SUPPORT NETWORK

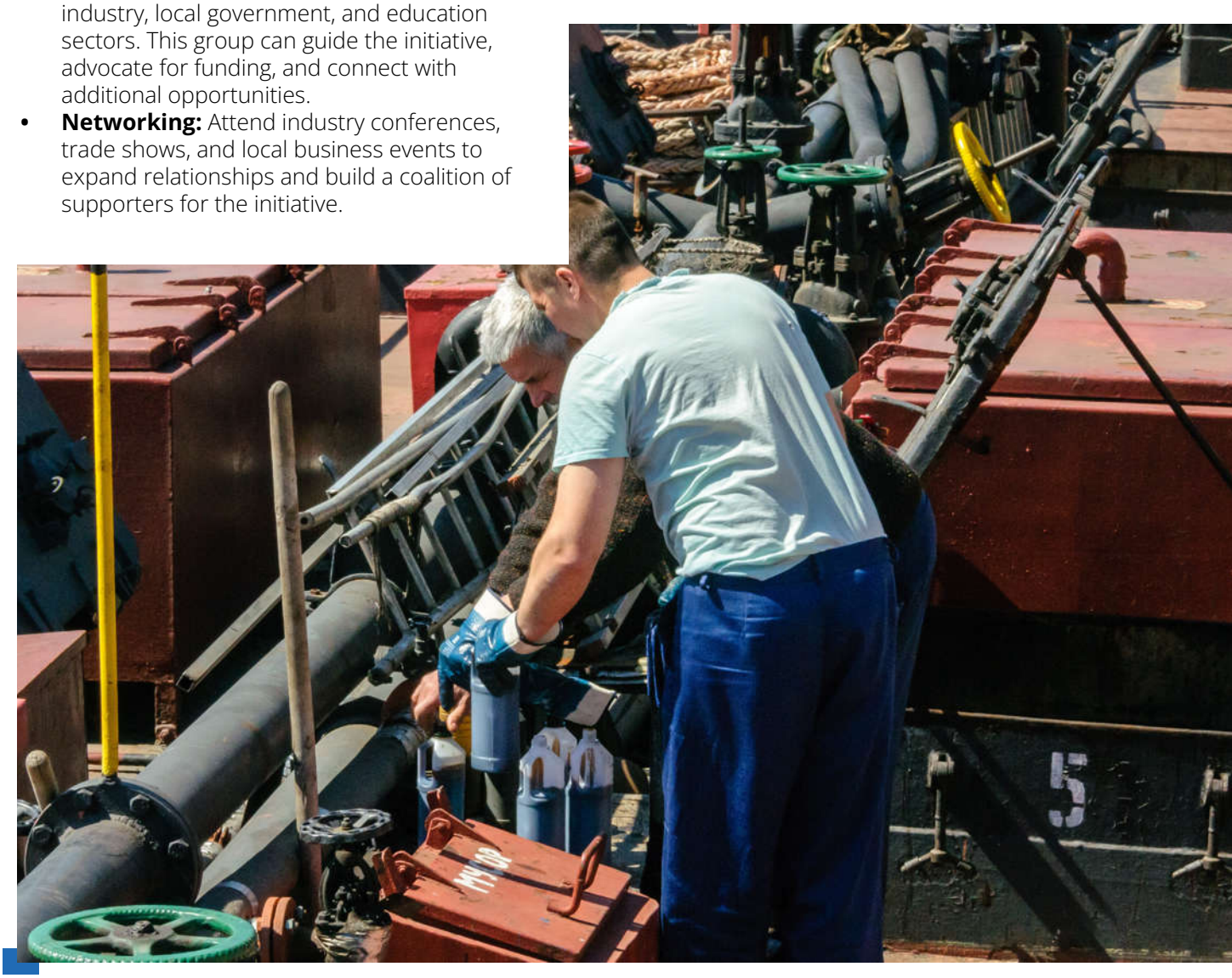
- **Form an Advisory Board:** Assemble a board of stakeholders from the marine trades industry, local government, and education sectors. This group can guide the initiative, advocate for funding, and connect with additional opportunities.
- **Networking:** Attend industry conferences, trade shows, and local business events to expand relationships and build a coalition of supporters for the initiative.

ESTABLISH A DONATION PLATFORM

- **Online Giving:** Set up an online donation portal to enable contributions from individuals and businesses. Promote this platform through newsletters, social media, and community outreach efforts.

MONITOR AND EVALUATE

- **Track Progress:** Regularly review fundraising outcomes and adjust strategies as needed. Maintain open communication with stakeholders about progress and successes.
- **Reporting:** Provide detailed reports to donors and sponsors, showing how their contributions directly support workforce development efforts and strengthen the marine trades sector.



IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP FOR THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

STEP-BY-STEP ACTION PLAN

STEP 1:
SECURE FUNDING AND RESOURCES (MONTH 1-3)

- **Action:** Identify and secure funding for the Program Coordinator position, focusing on grants, sponsorships from local marine businesses, and contributions from Kent County Commissioners.
- **Action:** Finalize the job description and begin the recruitment process for the Program Coordinator role.
- **Resources Required:** Grant applications, sponsorship outreach materials, job posting platforms.

STEP 2:
RECRUIT PROGRAM COORDINATOR (MONTH 2-4)

- **Action:** Post job openings, conduct interviews, and hire the Program Coordinator. Ensure the person hired has a strong background in workforce development, partnership building, and familiarity with the marine trades industry.
- **Resources Required:** Job boards, hiring process materials, interview panel.

STEP 3:
ONBOARD PROGRAM COORDINATOR AND SET INITIAL PRIORITIES (MONTH 4-5)

- **Action:** Onboard the Program Coordinator, introducing them to key stakeholders and establishing initial goals for the first six months, including forming the marine trades roundtable and identifying early opportunities for workforce development.
- **Action:** Review survey results and stakeholder feedback to prioritize immediate actions, such as expanding youth apprenticeships and securing external training providers.
- **Resources Required:** Onboarding materials, stakeholder contact lists, initial meeting schedules.

STEP 4:
BUILD STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS AND FORM INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE (MONTH 5-7)

- **Action:** The Program Coordinator should engage local businesses, government agencies, educational institutions, and potential funding bodies to form the marine trades industry roundtable or association.
- **Action:** Hold initial roundtable meetings to align on workforce development needs, training priorities, and potential collaboration opportunities.
- **Resources Required:** Meeting logistics, stakeholder engagement materials, roundtable agenda.

STEP 5:
DEVELOP TRAINING PROGRAMS AND APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES (MONTH 6-9)

- **Action:** The Program Coordinator will work to expand youth apprenticeship opportunities by liaising with local schools and businesses. Additionally, the coordinator will begin identifying training providers such as Mercury or Yamaha to offer relevant certifications and skills training in Rock Hall.
- **Action:** Organize initial training sessions or workshops for local marine businesses and technicians, focusing on skills like boat handling, maintenance, and safety.
- **Resources Required:** Partnerships with local employers, training organizations, marketing materials for apprenticeship programs, training space and materials.

STEP 6:
INCREASE COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT (MONTH 6-12)

- **Action:** The Program Coordinator should lead initiatives to raise awareness of marine trades careers in the local community, focusing on high school students, job seekers, and residents. This could include career fairs, job shadowing opportunities, and community workshops.
- **Action:** Develop a marketing plan to promote marine trades as a viable and lucrative career path, emphasizing local job opportunities and industry growth.
- **Resources Required:** Marketing materials, community event coordination, local media outreach.

STEP 7:
EVALUATE EARLY SUCCESS AND ADJUST STRATEGY (MONTH 9-12)

- **Action:** Co-create KPIs with industry employers, current workers, and program alumni to ensure alignment with industry needs and build trust in the program. Use focus groups and surveys to gather actionable feedback.
- **Action:** Assess early success based on metrics such as the number of apprenticeships established, businesses engaged, and training programs delivered. Refine the strategy based on stakeholder input and adjust goals for the following year.
- **Resources Required:** Feedback surveys, program evaluation tools, progress reports.

STEP 8:
BEGIN BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FULL TRAINING CENTER (YEAR 2 AND BEYOND)

- **Action:** Based on the progress made in the first year, begin exploring the detailed feasibility of establishing a full training center. This could involve securing additional funding, identifying a physical location, and assessing the viability of expanding training programs to meet demand.
- **Action:** Continue to strengthen industry partnerships and refine the training curriculum to ensure it meets the evolving needs of the marine trades sector.
- **Resources Required:** Funding proposals, real estate options for training space, long-term strategic planning.



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TIMELINE OVERVIEW

Month 1-3 — Secure funding and recruit Program Coordinator.

Month 2-5 — Onboard and set initial priorities.

Month 5-7 — Build partnerships and form industry roundtable.

Month 6-9 — Develop apprenticeship and training programs.

Month 6-12 — Increase community engagement and awareness.

Month 9-12 — Evaluate early success and adjust strategy.

Year 2 and Beyond — Begin building infrastructure for the full training center, based on progress and demand.

RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- **Human Resources:** Program Coordinator, stakeholder liaisons, industry experts, and training providers.
- **Financial Resources:** Initial funding for the Program Coordinator's salary, program development, event planning, and outreach efforts.
- **Partnerships:** Collaboration with local businesses, government agencies, educational institutions, and industry organizations for training and funding support.
- **Facilities:** Initial office or workspace for the Program Coordinator and potential venues for training programs and community events.

MEASURING SUCCESS

To ensure measurable progress and build buy-in from the local marine trades sector, KPIs will be co-created with industry employers, current workers, and program alumni. These stakeholders will help define priorities and success indicators, ensuring that the program aligns with industry needs and gains widespread support. Suggested KPIs include:



Number of youth apprenticeships created.



Number of businesses engaged in workforce development programs.



Number of training sessions or certifications offered.



Level of community engagement (e.g., attendance at events, interest in marine trades careers).



Stakeholder satisfaction with the Program Coordinator's efforts.

Regular progress reports will be provided every six months to key stakeholders, such as the Greater Rock Hall Business Association, County Commissioners, and funding partners. These updates will highlight achievements, challenges, and adjustments, ensuring transparency and accountability while fostering ongoing collaboration.

The implementation roadmap provides a structured, actionable plan for hiring a Program Coordinator and launching workforce development efforts in Rock Hall. By focusing on immediate workforce needs, building strong partnerships, and engaging the community, this plan ensures tangible outcomes in the first year while laying the foundation for long-term success. Through regular evaluation and incremental progress, Rock Hall can position itself as a leader in marine trades workforce development, preserving its maritime heritage and supporting economic growth. Over time, the coordinator's work will evolve into a broader, more sustainable workforce ecosystem, potentially leading to a full-scale training center if demand and resources align.

CONCLUSION

Rock Hall is at a critical crossroads—its maritime legacy depends on addressing urgent workforce challenges threatening the sustainability of its marine trades sector. Local businesses face severe shortages in skilled labor for roles like marine mechanics, fiberglass repair, and carpentry, compounded by seasonal workforce fluctuations and limited training resources. High infrastructure costs, inconsistent funding, and limited immediate demand make launching a full-scale training center impractical at this stage.

The solution is clear: appointing a Program Coordinator for Marine Trades Workforce Development is a strategic, cost-effective first step. This role will immediately begin closing skill gaps, strengthening partnerships, and expanding training opportunities. By leveraging existing relationships with Chesapeake College, Kent County High School, and local marinas, the coordinator can deliver quick, impactful solutions while building momentum for a future training center.

Acting now ensures Rock Hall doesn't miss immediate opportunities to develop its workforce, attract younger generations, and sustain its maritime economy. A dedicated coordinator will forge alliances, connect local talent with industry leaders, and implement proven workforce strategies tailored to the town's needs. This phased approach not only addresses urgent workforce shortages but also lays the foundation for a future training center built on solid partnerships and community trust.

Through collaboration with regional institutions and industry partners, Rock Hall can secure its place as a leader in Chesapeake Bay's marine trades industry. Regular evaluation and measurable goals—such as apprenticeships created and workers trained—will track progress and ensure long-term success. This initiative will revitalize the local economy, create career opportunities, and safeguard Rock Hall's maritime heritage. By acting decisively now, the community can build a resilient future rooted in tradition and driven by innovation.



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