

NATIONAL WELDING CENTER AND WELDING SOCIETY STUDY SHOWS INDUSTRY IS ALIVE AND WELL

A common perception of the welding industry is that it holds little promise for students and young jobseekers. But in nearly every corner of the country, employment projections tell a different story, one that several national welding groups are actively promoting.

WELD-ED, AMERICAN WELDING SOCIETY TEAM UP

For Robert Vidos, president of Workforce Institute Inc., the problem facing the nation's welding workforce couldn't be any clearer: "People don't think there's great demand for welders; the industry knows there is. And we need quantitative data to prove it."

Vidos has spent the last several years trying to tackle the welding workforce shortage as a consultant for the [National Center for Welding Education and Training](#) (Weld-Ed), a partnership between business and industry, workforce development groups, colleges, and universities based at Lorain County Community College in Ohio. The goal of the Center, funded through the National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education program, is to increase the number of welding technicians across the nation. In 2008 it joined with the [American Welding Society](#)¹ to establish a national skills panel to address the major workforce needs of the welding industry.

Part of the panel's recently completed work over two years, thanks to the NSF ATE grant, involved analyzing EMSI data on several of the industry's main occupations—welders, welding technicians, and welding engineers—to identify emerging trends and key focus areas. The results gave education and industry leaders just what they needed: substantive data that documents the future need for welders, particularly given the heavy amount of turnover.

"The story of the industry is the need for replacement workers," Vidos said.

EXHAUSTIVE REPORT GIVES PRACTITIONERS A COMMON FOOTING

The panel's research and discussions culminated in the National State of Welding Industry report, the most comprehensive study of the industry that has ever been compiled, according to Vidos. It includes an historical

¹ The collaborative effort spearheaded by Weld-Ed and the American Welding Society also includes 10 academic partners and a business partner.

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**-- MONICA PFARR,
AMERICAN WELDING SOCIETY**

perspective of welding, state-by-state and regional industry trends, projections and much more. The 100-plus page main report is supported by 1,500 pages of data-filled appendices.

As prevailing wisdom suggests, the panel discovered that the welding industry experienced major job losses nationwide from 2002-2009. But the panel's researchers used EMSI's historical data and projections to show the need for more than 238,000 new and replacement workers from 2009-19 in the five occupations that drive the industry. According to the report, "The number may indeed be significantly higher when one considers the need for trained technicians and others who need hands on welding-related job training to successfully function in their respective jobs that do not roll-up into the statistical data for the five key SOC Code welding occupations."

Monica Pfarr, a Corporate Director for AWS and the Principal Investigator for Weld-Ed, summarized the value of the report this way: "AWS and Weld-Ed are focused on recruiting young people, dislocated workers, returning veterans, etc. into the welding industry. This report provides us with quantitative data that proves industry's need over the next 10 years."

REPORT TO HELP INFORM STUDENTS, EDUCATORS OF PROMISING OPPORTUNITIES

Looking back at the process, Visdos said EMSI helped "produce a product that really—along with other things—is going to enable our partners to enter into a dialogue with industries, education, workforce boards, and other agencies."

He continued, "The general public thinks that welding, along with all other manufacturing, is dead. But manufacturing, along with hospitality, is leading the way with the recovery right now. Part of what we have to do is make sure not only college administrators and high school superintendents know that, in addition we need to get parents and guidance counselors to know that there are good jobs out there that pay a lot of money and have long-term career opportunities."

ABOUT EMSI

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