MI-BEST Internship Program
Providing Bozzuto Management Company a Dedicated Pipeline of Technical Workers

MODEL SUMMARY
The Maryland Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (MI-BEST) Certificate for Apartment Maintenance Technicians (CAMT) program connects apartment maintenance technician students to employers in the residential property management industry. The program is designed to provide low-income workers the necessary skills to obtain full-time jobs within the industry.

BACKGROUND
In 2012, Maryland’s Montgomery College received a $105,000 grant from the Greater Washington Workforce Development Collaborative, an initiative of The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region. The goal was to develop a contextualized instructional model using the National Apartment Association Education Institute (NAAEI) CAMT curriculum and the college’s existing CAMT program and facilities. The program was designed to train low-income workers with diverse backgrounds, many of whom needed assistance with speaking English and other basic skills. The college applied the MI-BEST model to provide students the additional support needed to succeed in the program and in the workforce. Today, the program is known as the MI-BEST CAMT program.

When designing the program, the staff at Montgomery College wanted to select a field of study that would lead to immediate full-time jobs with benefits for the students. Feedback from local apartment management companies indicated high demand for apartment maintenance technicians and opportunities for future advancement. Despite the demand, the college found many companies were interested in hiring only technicians with prior experience.

To address this challenge, NAAEI and college staff reached out to local business partners to determine their interest in creating internship opportunities for MI-BEST students. Bozzuto Management Company, a property management company with more than 50,000 residences, was highly interested in developing an internship program. The program would provide Bozzuto with dedicated, entry-level employees that the company could develop into skilled, seasoned employees.

A Bozzuto maintenance intern presents building recommendations to Bozzuto senior staff.

KEY ELEMENTS OF MODEL
- Mentorship
- Paid internship
- Industry-driven and industry-recognized credential
- English language and basic skills
- Computer skills
- Workplace skills
- Technical skills
- Pathway to full-time jobs with benefits
**PARTNERSHIP**

The MI-BEST CAMT internship program is administered as a partnership of Montgomery College, Bozzuto Management Company and NAAEI.

**NUTS AND BOLTS**

MI-BEST CAMT is a seven-week program that combines English language instruction, basic skills and employment skills with basic technical training to produce work-ready apartment maintenance technicians. The model uses two instructors, an English for speakers of a second language (ESOL)/basic skills instructor and a CAMT content instructor, who co-teach the course. During the program, students complete coursework five days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The course is offered twice a year and is free to qualifying students. After completing the coursework, highly successful students are selected by Bozzuto to complete an internship, during which they have the opportunity to apply skills taught in the classroom in the workplace.

Key elements of the program include:

- **English as a Second Language:** Students learn basic skills in reading and communicating in English that are necessary to securing employment in apartment maintenance.

- **Apartment Maintenance Basic Technical Training:** Students learn how to maintain and repair the interiors and exteriors of apartment buildings, electrical systems, plumbing, appliances, and HVAC systems.

- **Interview Preparation and Ongoing Job Placement Support:** Through the program, students receive workplace readiness training, which includes tips on how to prepare for and succeed in an interview. For the first Bozzuto internship, 16 students were interviewed, and six were selected to participate by Bozzuto staff. Montgomery College works with NAAEI to recruit apartment companies to participate in career fairs and provides ongoing support to students regarding any issues that might affect their ability to succeed in a job (e.g., transportation or child care).

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“We were delighted with the dedication, motivation and enthusiasm these individuals displayed over the course of the internship, not to mention their capacity to demonstrate their ability to be contributing members of our maintenance teams in just a short time.”

— Kristen Reese, Vice President of Talent Management, Diversity & Inclusion, Bozzuto

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**Paid Internship with On-the-Job Training:** Bozzuto designed the hands-on internship. The kickoff took place in the summer of 2015 with a group of six interns. Each intern was paired with Bozzuto communities to complete an eight-week internship. The interns were assigned host managers, who served as mentors and helped to enhance the technical skills taught through the MI-BEST CAMT program. To expose them to different facilities and job functions, interns were provided with a list of tasks to learn and perform (learning milestones) at two Bozzuto communities and were invited to company events. The milestones included learning how to respond to a service ticket and perform preventative property maintenance. Interns also completed Bozzuto plumbing, electrical and new employee training. Through check-in points, mentors provided feedback regarding each intern’s performance and his or her ability to hit established learning milestones. The check-in points also allowed the Bozzuto learning and development team to identify and address any challenges early in the internship.

**Presentation Skills:** At the completion of the internship, interns conducted two building inspections and presented their findings to Bozzuto senior staff.
The MI-BEST CAMT program has successfully provided low-income workers with the knowledge and skills needed to land a full-time job as an apartment maintenance technician. Since implementation, more than 90 students have completed the program.

MI-BEST CAMT student benefits and outcomes include:

- **Industry-Recognized Credentials**: The CAMT credential was developed by the NAAEI and is accredited by the American National Standards Institute. It is recognized by the industry and certifies that individuals are proficient in the skills needed to be apartment maintenance technicians.

- **Paid Internships**: The internships provide students with hands-on instruction and the experience needed to secure full-time employment as an entry-level apartment maintenance technician.

- **Access to Full-Time, In-Demand Jobs**: Graduates of the MI-BEST CAMT program have moved from unemployment or minimum wage jobs to full-time jobs earning competitive wages. Upon successful completion of the Bozzuto maintenance internship program, graduates were offered full-time maintenance technician positions with the company at a competitive salary and with full company benefits.

- **Communication and Technical Skills**: Through classroom instruction, students learn valuable English, math, reading, technical and listening skills needed to succeed in the apartment management industry.

- **Professional Development and Career Readiness Skills**: The internship program includes job-interviewing skills to help students secure full-time positions with benefits.

Program benefits and outcomes for Bozzuto include:

- **Alignment with Bozzuto Talent Strategy**: The program complements the Bozzuto strategy to build a pipeline for entry-level workers to join the company.

- **Recruiting Tool for Loyal Employees**: The first Bozzuto interns were excited to participate in the program. The company’s goal is to reduce turnover among maintenance technicians, thus reducing downtime (when positions are vacant), hiring and training costs.

- **Dedicated and Engaged Employees**: Of the six interns in the first Bozzuto class, four were given full-time offers, and one received an internship extension.

The program is supported by grants from the Greater Washington Workforce Development Collaborative (an initiative of The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region), the Bank of America Charitable Foundation and The Community Foundation for Montgomery County. Montgomery College provides in-kind support.

At Bozzuto, feedback was positive, and the company plans to continue running the apartment maintenance technician internship program. Future internship classes will include a mid-point skills test. This test will allow fast learners, or students with prior maintenance experience, to move from the internship to full-time employment in four weeks.

An unanticipated challenge the program faced was interns’ ability to secure reliable transportation. The staff at Montgomery College is currently investigating partnerships with local companies to help support the transportation process. This support includes helping students obtain a driver’s license and secure budget-friendly and reliable cars.
Bozzuto recommendations to fellow employers considering a similar partnership include:

- **Invest in Training Entry-Level Workers:** Companies should invest in training people who really demonstrate a desire to secure a full-time job. These individuals are more inclined to stay at your company than a seasoned employee, who might be taking the job simply to increase his or her salary.

- **Be Flexible:** In the Bozzuto internship initiating class, one student had previous maintenance technician experience and demonstrated a higher skill level. The Bozzuto team provided him the opportunity to test out of the internship at the mid-point and be placed into a full-time position.

- **Structure the Program for Success:** The Bozzuto team structured the program to provide interns with the resources and learning milestones needed to succeed and obtain full-time positions with the company.

**INFORMATION, TOOLS AND RESOURCES**


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Following are descriptions of the most common and effective work-and-learn models that are a part of business and industry programs nationwide.

**Apprenticeship**
An apprenticeship is a unique, flexible training system that combines job-related technical instruction with structured on-the-job learning experiences. It provides a unique combination of structured learning with on-the-job training from an assigned mentor. Related instruction, technical training or other certified training is provided by apprenticeship training centers, technical schools, community colleges, and/or institutions employing distance and computer-based learning approaches. The goal is to provide workers with advanced skill sets that meet the specific needs of employers. In many cases, these programs provide apprentices the opportunity to simultaneously obtain secondary and postsecondary degrees, as well as credentials issued by third-party industry organizations. (Source: U.S. Department of Labor)

**Career Fair, Career Expo, Job Fair**
A career fair, also called a career expo or job fair, is an event held for employers and recruiters to meet with potential job candidates. Industry representatives set up exhibition booths — usually at a secondary or postsecondary institution — where students and job seekers can find information about different career fields, training opportunities and jobs currently available. Career fairs give employers an opportunity to interact with future job candidates and make direct contact with students who are making decisions about what education, training and career to pursue. Quality career fairs offer hands-on activities to participants, allowing them to see firsthand what a job in the industry entails.

**Clinical Training/Practicum**
Clinical training combines classroom learning with supervised hands-on immersion experiences in specific fields, mostly in industries that involve human services. In health fields, clinical training is founded on actual observation and lab instruction and/or treatment of patients, as distinguished from theoretical or experimental training. The training is usually highly specialized and includes coursework specific to performing functions and tasks in an actual workplace. (Sources: Siemens Clinical Training & Continuing Education; Clinical Training Institute)

**Cooperative Education/Co-Op**
Cooperative education is the integration of classroom theory with practical work experience, through which students alternate attendance at school with periods of professional employment. At the high school level, the periods of classroom and work-based experience are usually half-days. In higher education, the alternation is most often on a longer time scale. Cooperative education programs enable students to apply technical skills already acquired through the education institution in a real-world workplace setting. Traditionally, cooperative education has been used to aid a student’s transition from school to work, while providing participating employers an opportunity to attract, evaluate, train and ultimately employ a ready source of educated and skilled employees. (Sources: Center for Manufacturing Excellence, University of Mississippi; University of Cincinnati)
**Externship**
An externship is typically a training program offered by educational institutions and private businesses that gives students brief practical experiences in their field of study and insight and knowledge in a particular career field. Often shorter term than internships, externships are intensive career learning experiences that typically range from two days to two weeks. Although more immersive and structured than job shadowing, these experiences provide the opportunity for students to see firsthand the work activities and responsibilities in various professions and industries. The experience should provide the learner a greater sense of the knowledge, skills and attributes of people who thrive within that given career pathway and industry sector and a complete experience of day-to-day work life.

**Hands-On Training**
Hands-on training provides student learners an opportunity to use their hands to perform tasks. This training aims to simulate conditions that are as close as possible to real work conditions while avoiding the risks commonly associated with a new employee. In hands-on training, participants typically have the opportunity for repeated practice.

**Industry Tour**
Companies offer guided tours of their facilities to let students, parents and the general public witness firsthand the day-to-day operations of the business. Typically lasting up to two hours, tours are led by knowledgeable staff members who show and describe the companies’ processes, products and protocols, as well as point out the skills and training needed for different jobs. Quality industry tours typically result in greater awareness of the company and the industry and increased engagement with the local community, schools and future employees.

**Internship**
An internship is a formal program that provides practical experience for learners in an occupation or profession, during which the learner is immersed in a work situation for a limited period of time. Internships can be paid or unpaid and usually accompany or relate to academic coursework or training. A quality internship provides the learner an increasingly thorough grasp of the career field, extensive experience in specific job functions, application of education and training to specific duties, and a feel for what it is like to work on a daily basis in the industry. While not always intended to result in employment at the sponsoring company, internships help employers expose potential workers to their workplace and industry and recruit, screen and test-fit future job candidates before they are hired full time.

**Job Shadowing**
Job shadowing is a work experience option through which students learn about a job by walking through the working day as a shadow to a competent worker. The job shadowing work experience is a temporary, unpaid exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of interest to the student. Students witness firsthand the work environment, employability and occupational skills in practice, the value of professional training, and potential career options. Job shadowing is designed to increase career awareness, help model student behavior through examples, and reinforce for the student the link between classroom learning and work requirements. Almost any workplace is a potential job-shadowing site. (Source: Paris, K., and Mason, S. (1995). Planning and Implementing Youth Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Center on Education and Work)

**Mentorship**
Mentorship is the coupling of a novice with an older, more experienced professional wherein the expert shares knowledge and experience with the novice over the course of time. Mentorship can be either formal or informal and can happen face to face; online; or in conjunction with other work-and-learn opportunities, such as internships and job shadowing. Mentorships help mentored youth improve their overall academic achievement and develop the necessary skills to enter or continue on a career path. They also provide guidance for decision making. Quality mentorships usually involve mentee training and alignment to the company’s culture and goals.
On-the-Job Training (OJT)
OJT is training by an employer that is provided to a paid participant (either an incoming or incumbent employee) while engaged in productive work in a job that provides knowledge or skills essential to the adequate performance of the job. OJT is usually limited in duration, as appropriate to the occupation for which the participant is being trained, taking into account the content of the training, the prior work experience of the participant and the service strategy of the participant, as appropriate. (Source: Workforce Investment Act)

Pre-Apprenticeship
Pre-apprenticeship is defined by the Employment and Training Administration as “a program or set of strategies [that is] designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship program and has a documented partnership with at least one, if not more, Registered Apprenticeship program(s).” Since the pre-apprenticeship model is meant to prepare learners to enter a registered apprenticeship, a quality model provides sufficient applied academic training, as well as industry-based technical skills training and practice, to ensure that students transition successfully into an apprenticeship.

Registered Apprenticeship
A registered apprenticeship encompasses the details and benefits listed in the “Apprenticeship” definition. Additionally, it meets national apprenticeship standards outlined by the registration process with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship or through a state apprenticeship agency. Upon completion of a registered apprenticeship program, participants receive a portable credential (provided by DOL or the state apprenticeship agency) that certifies occupational proficiency as a journey worker for the selected occupation. For more information on the DOL registered apprenticeship program, please visit: www.dol.gov/apprenticeship. (Source: U.S. Department of Labor)

Returnship
A returnship is an internship specifically designed for older professionals who have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time to re-enter a career. In many cases, they are designed to help these individuals refresh their skill sets and learn new technologies before returning as full-time employees. Often lasting around 10 weeks, a returnship provides individuals with an opportunity to sharpen their skills in a given career path or pursue new areas of expertise in a work environment that may have changed significantly since their last experience as an employee. Returnships also give employers the opportunity to screen returning experienced applicants before hiring them full time. (Sources: Goldman Sachs; CareerBuilder)

RESOURCES
- 21st Century Competency-Based Apprenticeship Resources http://bit.ly/1RcO4Uh
- U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship www.dol.gov/apprenticeship
Contributors

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[Logos of various companies and organizations]