

gener8tor to host third northeast Upskilling Program in March

Posted on Tuesday, Feb 2, 2021

Madison-based startup incubator gener8tor plans to host its third Upskilling Program in northeast Wisconsin in mid-March after two successful cohorts last year.

Director Cole Shearer said the program will be eight or 10 weeks and will result in information technology certification for 20-30 participants chosen from about 200 expected applicants. Shearer hopes to see the selected cohort grow in the future.

The gener8tor and Microsoft Upskilling Program aims to develop a skilled workforce for area businesses. Participants learn technical skills of the program theme. This year's Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) certification will hone IT skills. Previous cohorts were based on customer service and sales certifications.

Program participants will also sharpen their soft skills through virtual LinkedIn Learning modules, a lunch hour lecture series and career coach meetings to prepare for the hiring process. The final phase of the program is a job fair featuring local and national companies in search of program grads.

gener8tor is opening the lunch hour series up to the public this time around.

Between the summer 2020 and winter 2020 cohorts, the gener8tor-Microsoft partnership saw almost 300 applicants and had 33 graduates. The grads had been hired by Wisconsin companies, such as American Family Insurance, Schneider

Trucking and EatStreet.

The program is free and self-paced. Applicants range from people in their early 20s to those older than 65. Those interested can apply on gener8tor's website.

gener8tor has focused its efforts on under- and unemployed individuals, especially when their circumstances have been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Shearer said.

"But definitely have a focus on diverse candidates, making sure that we're giving opportunities to people that typically don't have that opportunity," he said.

The program is a way for startup incubator gener8tor to connect the dots of its mission — investing in the community's best and brightest — which is not limited to early-stage businesses.

"Startups, they ultimately need some talented workforce. We've actually had some of our graduates get hired at some of our startups in our portfolio," Shearer said. "We see it as kind of a big picture to round out our program initiatives in each community that we work in."

He explained that gener8tor piloted the program in northeastern Wisconsin because of Microsoft's presence in the region with the TechSpark program, which aims to use technology to build economic opportunities in rural and small metro areas. gener8tor also partnered with New North, American Family Insurance and Thrivent in that area.

Since its northeast Wisconsin winter cohort, the generator program expanded to six markets nationwide.

“We definitely have interest of expanding across the state... but stay tuned for that as we finalize some contracts,” Shearer said.

-By Stephanie Hoff

WisBusiness.com