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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Fremont Economic Development Department Establishes the Earn and Learn Fremont Pilot Program

FREMONT, Calif. – March 5, 2021 — Today, the City of Fremont Economic Development Department announced the Earn and Learn Fremont (ELF) Pilot Program that provides participants affected by COVID-19 layoffs the opportunity to jumpstart a new career in advanced manufacturing. Participants will receive paid work experience at Fremont-based medical device company [Evolve Manufacturing Technologies, Inc.](#) and an industry-recognized Certificate of Competency after completion of a short-term, customized occupational skills training program developed by [Ohlone College](#), a local community college that offers innovative STEM programs.

Local workforce development boards, [Alameda County Workforce Development Board \(ACWDB\)](#) and [work2future](#), are providing federal funding and offering case management and supportive services for participants. The City of Fremont Human Services Department's Family Resource Center has marketed the program to eligible participants and will look for opportunities to provide wrap-around services to help their clients make a career shift. Additionally, [Ohlone College Tri-Cities Career Center](#) provided marketing and coordination around job-seeker recruitment.

The ELF Pilot Program bridges Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)-eligible adult job seekers who have been impacted by COVID-19 with manufacturers who need local, skilled talent. The initial pilot program will include 25 participants receiving eight weeks of paid work experience at Evolve Manufacturing and six weeks of concurrent virtual skills development training via Ohlone College's [Smart Manufacturing Technology Program](#). Those participating will have access to laptops for the duration of the program to ensure that technology needs are not a deterrent in the customized digital learning experience.

"With this first-of-its-kind pilot program, Fremont is developing a concerted and sustainable strategy to build a much-needed skilled talent pipeline for the advanced manufacturing sector while helping low-income workers who have been economically impacted by COVID-19 quickly pivot to a stable, promising new career," Fremont Mayor Lily Mei said. "We are excited about the long-term impact this program will make in this first cohort's lives and hope to expand this program in the future."

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive layoffs in the hospitality, travel, retail trade, and transportation industries, resulting in high unemployment rates especially in minority groups such as people of color, women, and low-income families.

In fact, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Employment of low-wage workers (those earning less than \$30,000 a year) is 14% below pre-crisis levels according to researchers at the New York Fed. In November and December 2020 alone, the San Francisco Bay Area lost 20,900 jobs in hotels and restaurants according to the State of California Employment Development Department.

At the same time, advanced industries continue to bring thousands of middle-income jobs to parts of Silicon Valley (including to Fremont's over 900 manufacturing companies), proving to be an important source of economic resilience and equity for the region. Many of these new jobs have been created to support biomedical manufacturers who have ramped up their operations in the past year to join the fight against COVID-19.

"We are excited to be an integral part of this program in giving local community members the tools and skills they need to transition back into the workforce while building a more inclusive and diverse labor force," said Dr. Eric Bishop, Superintendent/President of the Ohlone Community College district. "This program also bridges a path to higher-skilled opportunities in Smart Manufacturing."

Upon successful completion of the program, participants may be offered a full-time job at Evolve Manufacturing or will be able to transfer the valuable skills they learned to another manufacturing company. If participants choose to continue their education at Ohlone College, they will also be able to apply the three credits earned through the ELF Pilot Program toward the Smart Manufacturing Technology Program at Ohlone College.

"As the founder of a woman-owned business in the STEM field, I am personally passionate about this program and its goal of cultivating a more diverse advanced manufacturing workforce," Evolve Manufacturing, Inc. CEO and Founder Noreen King said. "Our company is quickly expanding, and we are thrilled to be offering opportunities to those looking to begin a new career and learn valuable skills that will help them succeed down the road."

Last spring, Evolve Manufacturing began producing test kits and ventilators at a high volume, as well as equipment that is used in developing COVID-19 treatments. In the past year, Evolve Manufacturing has onboarded approximately 100 new employees.

Employers who would like to learn more about the ELF Pilot Program and other Economic Development programs can email econdev@fremont.gov. To learn more about Fremont Family Resource Center, please visit <https://www.fremont.gov/228/Family-Resource-Center>.

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