



INTERIM REPORT

Digital Skills for Small Manufacturers • Interim report

Submitted to	Alderbrook Foundation
Project	Digital Skills for Small Manufacturers
Period covered	January 1, 2026 to June 30, 2026
Submitted by	Meridian Advisory Group
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Subject: Digital Skills for Small Manufacturers · Interim report

This interim report covers the first six months of Digital Skills for Small Manufacturers, for January to June 2026, under the \$180,000 grant awarded by the Alderbrook Foundation through the Digital Futures Fund 2026.

Two of the four training cohorts are complete, and 118 workers have been certified on the digital tools module. Spending for the period stands at \$92,750 against \$100,000 received. The financial report explains the two lines that differ from plan by more than 10%.

We are available to present these results to your program team at a date that suits you.

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1. Summary

Between January and June 2026, Meridian Advisory Group and its two community college partners trained the first two cohorts of the project. According to the colleges' certification records, 118 of the 120 workers enrolled completed the digital tools module and were certified. They work at 15 firms, 11 of which began using production tracking every day during the period. Twenty-two supervisors were certified as in-house coaches, close to half of the target of 45.

Spending reached \$92,750, or 51.5% of the grant, against \$100,000 received from the foundation. Coaching visits cost less than planned because cohort 2 was coached online in June; those visits move to July and August. Licenses for three cohort 3 firms were bought ahead of plan, so that their workers start training in September with the software already installed.

The employment indicator will first be measured in December 2026, six months after cohort 1 finished.

2. Progress against objectives

By the end of June, 118 workers from 15 firms had completed the digital tools module and been certified, against a target of 240 by December. Twenty-two supervisors are now certified as in-house coaches.

3. Activities carried out

In January and February, the colleges adapted the digital tools module to the production software used by the participating firms. Meridian recruited the first 15 firms, and the external evaluator ran the baseline survey with all 30 firms in February.

Cohorts 1 and 2 ran in parallel from March to June, one at each college, with 60 workers each. Training alternates classroom sessions with sessions on the production lines of each worker's own firm. The 20 laptops bought in January rotate between the two colleges.

Supervisors followed a separate coaching track, and 22 of them were certified by the end of June. From April to June, the trainers made 18 coaching visits to help supervisors set up production tracking on their lines.

4. Results against targets

RESULT	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TARGET	THIS PERIOD	TO DATE	COMMENT OR REASON FOR A GAP
Small manufacturers keep and grow skilled jobs as production goes digital	Trained workers still employed six months after training		90%			First measure in December 2026, six months after cohort 1.
Workers use digital tools on the shop floor	Workers certified on the digital tools module	0	240	118	118	Cohorts 1 and 2 completed; cohorts 3 and 4 start in September.
Firms adopt digital production tracking	Firms using production tracking every day	4	30	11	15	
Supervisors trained as in-house coaches	Supervisors certified as coaches	0	45	22	22	

5. People reached

During the period, the project reached 120 workers enrolled in cohorts 1 and 2, of whom 118 were certified, and 22 supervisors. They work at 15 small manufacturers in metal fabrication, plastics and food processing.

Two workers left the program before certification, one after changing employer and one for family reasons.

6. Testimonies and examples

A metal fabrication firm with 45 employees in cohort 1 tracked production on paper job sheets. After the training, its two certified supervisors moved the three main lines to digital tracking in May. The plant manager now reviews each shift's output the following morning; she previously waited for the weekly paper summary.

At a plastics molder in cohort 2, the certified workers trained colleagues from the night shift, who were not enrolled. The firm has asked for four places in cohort 3.

7. Difficulties and changes to the plan

In June, cohort 2 firms asked to postpone coaching visits during their peak order season. The trainers coached the supervisors online, and the 12 remaining visits are scheduled for July and August. This accounts for the lower spending on coaching visits for the period.

Three firms enrolled in cohort 3 asked to start using the tracking software before their workers' training. Their licenses were bought in June, ahead of plan, which accounts for the higher spending on licenses. The total for this line stays within the budget.

The targets and the total budget remain as approved in the grant agreement.

8. Financial report

BUDGET LINE	BUDGET	PLANNED TO DATE	SPENT THIS PERIOD	SPENT TO DATE	VARIANCE	EXPLANATION
Trainers	USD 84,000	USD 42,000	USD 41,500	USD 41,500	-USD 500 (-1%)	
Program coordinator	USD 28,000	USD 14,000	USD 14,000	USD 14,000	USD 0 (0%)	
Coaching visits	USD 21,000	USD 10,500	USD 6,300	USD 6,300	-USD 4,200 (-40%)	Coaching moved online in June.
Training laptops	USD 18,000	USD 18,000	USD 18,450	USD 18,450	+USD 450 (+3%)	
Software licenses	USD 15,000	USD 7,500	USD 9,000	USD 9,000	+USD 1,500 (+20%)	Licenses for 3 cohort 3 firms bought in June, ahead of plan.
External evaluation	USD 14,000	USD 4,000	USD 3,500	USD 3,500	-USD 500 (-12%)	Baseline survey cost less.
					Total • Budget	USD 180,000
					Total • Spent to date	USD 92,750

BUDGET LINE	BUDGET	PLANNED TO DATE	SPENT THIS PERIOD	SPENT TO DATE	VARIANCE	EXPLANATION
					Received from the funder	USD 100,000

9. Lessons learned

Running the two cohorts in parallel at two colleges made scheduling easier for the firms, which chose the college closest to their plant. Sessions on the firms' production lines took more trainer time than planned. Supervisors who joined those sessions were certified sooner. For cohorts 3 and 4, each firm will name its coaching supervisor before the cohort starts.

10. Next period

From July to December 2026, the project will:

- complete the 12 coaching visits postponed from June, in July and August;
- run cohorts 3 and 4 from September to December, with 120 workers from the remaining 15 firms;
- certify the remaining 23 supervisors;
- measure in December how many cohort 1 workers are still employed six months after training.

The final report will present the results of cohorts 3 and 4 and this first employment measure.