

## INNOVATION BEAT

# Electric plane startup Beta looks to train its future workforce

Beta Technologies sees ‘an awful lot of talent out there’ for manufacturing

By [Aaron Pressman](#) Globe Staff, Updated May 28, 2024, 1 minute ago



Vermont electric aircraft startup Beta Technologies brought its Alia plane to Logan Airport for a career fair for high school and middle school students. BETA TECHNOLOGIES

Kyle Clark, founder of electric aviation startup Beta Technologies, grew up near Burlington, Vermont, and he’s committed to building his futuristic airplanes in the

region, creating potentially hundreds of well-paying, skilled jobs.

But the challenge facing Beta and other companies trying to expand manufacturing around New England is a shortage of skilled workers.

So the seven-year-old company is doing more than just hiring for manufacturing jobs at its facilities in Burlington and Plattsburgh, N.Y. It's also diving into the vocational education system to help attract and train the future workers it will need.

At a career fair and technology expo at Logan Airport last week for high school and middle school kids interested in aviation, Beta showcased one of its electric planes, called Alia, as well as a couple of demonstrations of its manufacturing techniques. (It marked the first electric plane to visit Logan, the airport noted on its Facebook account.)

The startup's bright white carbon-fiber plane stood out on the tarmac at the Delta Hanger, far from the regular passenger terminals, alongside about 20 aircraft of various sizes and ages — ranging from a massive FedEx cargo jet to a relatively tiny yellow Piper Cub J3 built in 1946. The Alia, which can fly more than 300 miles on a single charge of its batteries, was among the larger craft on display with its 50-foot wingspan.

Beta has orders in hand from cargo giant United Parcel Service, upstart airline Blade, and Air New Zealand, among others, and the first aircraft for customers will be rolling off the assembly line later this year. Beta is also [building a network of chargers for electric aircraft](#) at airports around the country.

“We get asked all the time about how are you going to build an aerospace company in Vermont,” chief operating officer Blain Newton said in an interview. But as Beta has started recruiting in New England and upstate New York, “there’s an awful lot of talent out there that is eager and ready to work.... We think we can grow our own talent.”

At the expo, kids from 40 vocational and STEM-oriented schools in the region got to see one of Beta's electric motors in action, learn how the company molds carbon fiber to

make body panels, and — drawing the most interest — sit inside the Alia and check out the experimental airplane's controls.

Sarah DeShaw, Beta's head of workforce development, greeted kids checking out the demos. "Some of the jobs they're going to have in the next five years probably don't even exist yet," she said. "So it's exciting to showcase the past, present, and future of aviation all in one hangar."

In addition to attending job fairs and offering typical internship programs, Beta also helped design a new program for a vocational school in New York near its headquarters.

Engineer Morgan Knapton developed the process to paint Beta's planes, a delicate task in aviation where every gram of extra weight matters. But Knapton discovered the industry faced a shortage of qualified aerospace painters.

So last year, Beta approached the CV-TEC vocational school in Plattsburgh, which already taught automotive painting skills, about developing an aviation painting program. Students who complete the 10-week add-on work towards a professional certification from the Federal Aviation Administration as an aerospace coatings applicator specialist.

The school was eager to participate. "Training kids for a high paying, highly technical, highly respected position at 18 years old? That set our hair on fire," said Michele Friedman, director of career and technical education at Champlain Valley Educational Services, which oversees the school. "This is what we are all about."

So far, 11 kids have completed the painting program at CV-TEC.

"Those students have an opportunity with that certification to go anywhere they want to," DeShaw said. "But we hope they stay local."

Aaron Pressman can be reached at [aaron.pressman@globe.com](mailto:aaron.pressman@globe.com). Follow him [@ampressman](#).

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