

Creating Community Advancement Initiatives

A “HOW TO” MANUAL

WINS 

Workforce Innovation Networks

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Taking Care of Business:

A Series of How To Manuals on Creating and Sustaining Employer-based Workforce Development Intermediaries

As WINs worked with selected employer-based intermediaries, the partner organizations captured exemplary practices, lessons learned, and “how to” approaches of those that successfully fulfilled this role. Presented here and in related publications are these experiences in the form of four manuals. Each explains in detail how to replicate a successful intermediary strategy and tailor it to your needs. These manuals are designed for workforce professionals and employer intermediaries that wish to use the public workforce system to address the dual demands of employers and job seekers. The WINs partners present these manuals as tools to help solve our nation’s most pressing workforce challenges.

The manuals cover four topics:

Creating Community Advancement Intermediaries: Implementing a model that enables employers to move entry-level, low-skilled workers up career ladders, at the same time creating vacancies for new workers entering the job market.

Partnering with One-Stop Career Centers: Advice for businesses on collaborating with One-Stop Career Centers in strong public-private partnerships to train both incumbent workers and new entrants to the labor force.

Providing Business Services: Positioning employer intermediaries to provide business services through the local workforce system—and using this new position as a tool to grow both association membership and the number of employers who use and benefit from that system.

Building Employer-Responsive Workforce Systems at the State Level: State-level employer intermediaries organize and facilitate task forces of key stakeholders to make state workforce systems more effective and responsive to employer needs and to better align state economic and workforce development policies and programs.

In addition, WINs has prepared a guide, *Organizing and Supporting the Employer Role in Workforce Development*, that has two purposes. One is to help employer organizations to understand why it is important to better organize and support the employer side of the employment equation and to engage employers more effectively in workforce development. The second is to show the leaders of employer and employer-serving organizations why and how they should become “workforce development intermediaries.”

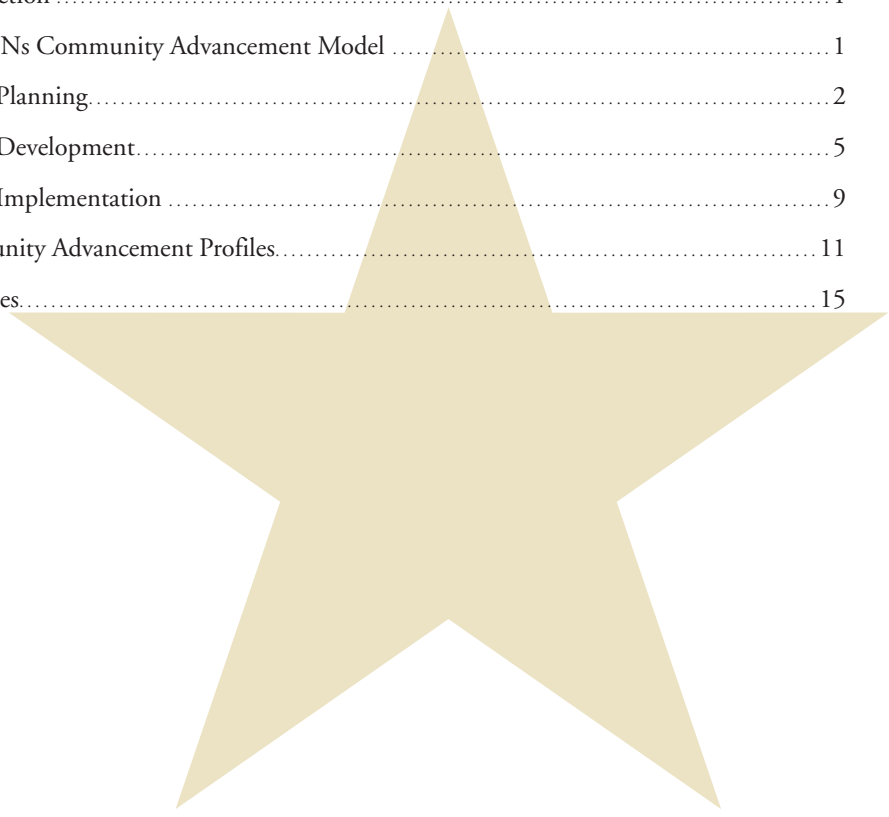
These manuals and *The Guide* may be especially useful to organizations involved in the U.S. Department of Labor’s WIRED Initiative. The WIRED Initiative focuses on labor market areas that comprise multiple jurisdictions within states or across state borders. It supports innovative approaches to education and workforce and economic development that prepare workers to succeed in a globalizing economy. Through the WIRED initiative, governors have a unique opportunity to design and implement strategic approaches to regional economic development and job growth. These manuals provide critical lessons from WINs’ on-the-ground experience.

These manuals and the guide will help you understand what to do and how to create and sustain employer-based workforce development intermediaries. The state and local Workforce Investment Boards and employer intermediaries described in these manuals did it, and so can you!

Creating Community Advancement Initiatives

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Creating Community Advancement Initiatives

Introduction

This guide shows how to design and implement a “community advancement initiative” to help employers meet their need for skilled workers and, at the same time, help low-income workers and job seekers advance to family-supporting jobs within a firm, among a group of firms within an industry, across industries in a sector, or across sectors. The model for the initiative begins by collaborating with employers to identify their workforce and skill needs, along with advancement pathways (also referred to as career pathways) for their employees. It then provides low-income workers and job seekers with the services, career pathways, and supports needed to move along these pathways.

This guide is geared to employer-based and industry-based workforce intermediaries and others interested in planning, developing, and implementing community advancement initiatives with needed tools and resources. It identifies key features of the community advancement model developed by Workforce Innovation Networks—WINs—a collaboration of Jobs for the Future, the Center for Workforce Preparation of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the Center for Workforce Success of the National Association of Manufacturers.

The WINs Community Advancement Model

The WINs community advancement model helps employers meet their workforce and skill needs and, at the same time, helps low-income workers and job seekers advance to family-supporting jobs.

The model has five key features:

- *Responsive to employers*, and sometimes to employers across an industry: The WINs community advancement model is based on employer demand for skilled employees.
- *Centered on workforce intermediaries*: Workforce intermediaries help plan and organize the effort, and they provide or broker workforce services to employers, low-income workers, and job seekers.

- *Built on partnerships:* Key partners include workforce intermediaries, employers, unions (where workers are represented), frontline workers, education and training providers such as community colleges, community-based organizations, and other support service providers. The public workforce development system is another critical partner—the local Workforce Investment Board and One-Stop Career Centers.
- *Advancement pathways:* Clearly articulated advancement pathways are essential. These pathways can exist within a single firm, among a group of firms within a single industry, as part of a broader sectoral initiative, or across industries. Workforce services—including training, career coaching, and wraparound supports—are geared to help low-income workers and job seekers move along these pathways, as are changes in employers' human resources and workplace practices.
- *Resources:* The community advancement model leverages public and private resources. It also aligns various public sources of funding to better meet the needs of employers and low-income workers and job seekers.

This guide covers the three basic steps to creating a community advancement initiative: *planning; development; and implementation.*

Step 1: Planning

The planning stage focuses on identifying who the initiative will serve and starting to build partnerships that will move it forward.

Select a Target Employer, Multiple Employers, or an Industry

In building the community advancement initiative, there are two key criteria in selecting a target industry and employers: an unmet employer need for skilled workers; and advancement and wage progression opportunities for low-income workers and job seekers, leading eventually to family-supporting jobs that require an Associate's degree or less.

There are many possible sources of information useful in making targeting decisions. These include: regional labor market data (state workforce agencies are one good source); interviews, surveys, and focus groups with employers; and interviews with other industry experts. Topics of inquiry include: industry outlook; workforce needs (e.g., entry-level and skilled, high-demand jobs, projected hiring, factors affecting demand, difficulty finding qualified applicants); job specifics and hiring practices (e.g., skill requirements, wage rates, advancement opportunities); and training (e.g., training requirements, employer-provided or funded training, connections to the public workforce development system).

Responding to the Needs of Employers

Community advancement initiatives must respond to key employer workforce or skill needs. The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, a labor-management partnership, launched its Center of Excellence in response to the needs of Milwaukee's construction industry, which was experiencing a boom and, as a result, a shortage of skilled workers. The center provides the construction industry a single point of contact and streamlined services.

WorkSource Partners' Regional Advancement Centers, located in several New England communities, respond to the need of the long-term care industry for licensed practical nurses. The centers work with employers and community colleges to develop and offer comprehensive career ladder programs that advance Certified Nurse Assistants to Licensed Practical Nurses.

Both of these community advancement efforts, by responding to employer and industry needs, create opportunities for low-income workers and job seekers to advance to family-supporting jobs.

Identify Advancement Opportunities

What advancement opportunities will the initiative focus on? Two examples of such opportunities are pathways that certified nursing assistants can climb to become licensed practical nurses in the long-term care industry and advancement pathways from entry-level construction jobs to apprenticeships to journey worker standing in the skilled trades (see box, "Responding to the Needs of Employers").

Some advancement pathways may already exist; in other cases, the initiative may need to develop them through conducting occupation and skill analyses, providing worker training and supports, and promoting changes in employer practices.

Identify Low-income Workers and/or Job Seekers to Be Served

Will the initiative focus on incumbent workers in entry-level jobs? Will it target job seekers? Both? Decisions about the target population will affect the workforce development services and supports to be provided as part of the initiative, as well as the roles and responsibilities of partners.

Build the Partnership

The partnership will plan, develop, and then implement the community advancement initiative. Central to the success of these activities is identifying a workforce intermediary to take the lead in planning and organizing the effort and bringing together the other partners.

The intermediary must be trusted by the targeted employers, and it must have strong relationships with them. A number of organizations have potential to fulfill this role, including employer organizations, labor-management partnerships, community colleges, WIBs, One-Stop Career Centers, community-based and faith-based organizations, and for-profit firms.

Building the partnership also entails:

- *Engaging employers*, as well as unions in those industries or sectors in which workers are represented. Target those that have unmet workforce and skill needs, an interest in partnering with others, and an interest in working with education and training providers to meet their needs.
- *Engaging education and training providers*, such as community and technical colleges. Target those that have credibility, trust, and relationships with employers, an interest in and ability to work with employers and others to develop training addressing the needs of both employers and low-income workers and job seekers, and provide a range of education and training options, from basic skills to industry or occupation specific training. Training providers also must be able to offer relevant credentials (e.g., certificates, degrees).
- *Engaging community-based and faith-based organizations* and other support service providers. They will recruit low-income workers and job seekers and provide “wrap-around” support services (e.g., case management, access to child care, and transportation assistance).
- *Engaging the public workforce development system*. This can be a source of labor market information, funding, and connections to employers, education and training providers, community-based and faith-based organizations, and other support service providers.

Partnerships

Partnerships are key to the success of community advancement initiatives. They leverage the core competencies of all partners to more effectively and efficiently address the needs of industry and employers, on the one hand, and low-income workers and job seekers on the other.

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership's Center of Excellence counts among its partners employers, unions, education and training providers, community-based organizations, state and local government, and foundations. The partners of WorkSource Partners' Regional Advancement Centers include employers, community colleges, and the public workforce development system.

Step 2: Development

Five needs are addressed in the development stage:

- Spelling out the employer workforce issue the initiative will address and the advancement strategy;
- Gaining buy-in from partners, especially employers;
- Designing the advancement strategy;
- Defining partner roles and responsibilities;
- Identifying and obtaining needed resources; and
- Identifying targeted outcomes.

Articulate the Employer Workforce Issue to Be Addressed

How will the initiative address a real employer need? For example, will it help overcome a skilled worker shortage in a specific high-demand occupation? Unless such a need is clearly articulated, employers are unlikely to be part of the initiative. If employers are not committed, it will be more difficult to place participants in jobs leading to family-supporting incomes.

Gain Buy-in of Partners

Begin by engaging employers, either individually or across an industry or sector. Gain commitments from employers to participate in the initiative, targeting those that have unmet workforce and skill needs the initiative aims to address, and that have expressed or demonstrated a willingness to help develop and implement it. With this foundation, gain commitments from the other partners, perhaps continuing to reach out to additional employers.

Articulate and Design the Advancement Strategy

What are the pathways to advancement upon which the initiative will focus? What do workers need (e.g., skills, experience, credentials) to move along these pathways? What workforce development services and supports will the initiative and its partners provide to workers and employers to ensure that these requirements for advancement are met?

There are a number of kinds of advancement pathways:

Single firm pathways strengthen a firm's internal career ladders by developing the skills of its entry-level workers and preparing them to advance to skilled, high-demand occupations within the firm.

Pathways across a group of firms within a single industry bring together from two to many employers to provide their entry-level workers with the training and supports required to move up to skilled, high-demand occupations in the industry, not necessarily at their current employer.

Pathways in sectoral initiatives develop career ladders as part of a broader effort to create or preserve jobs in an industry sector, such as manufacturing. Most provide skills training to prepare workers for employment in targeted occupations. Some also help firms in the sector modernize their plants and adopt new workplace practices.

Pathways across industries build career ladders across sectors, based on transferable skills.

In articulating the advancement strategy, begin by *analyzing advancement pathways*. Identify the specific occupations the community advancement initiative will target, with a focus on skilled, high-demand occupations. Identify the skill and training requirements of the targeted occupations—both entry-level and skilled, high-demand—and their relationship to one another. Map pathways to advancement.

At this stage, it is also important to *spell out what is required to move along the pathways to advancement*. For example, identify needed skills, education and training, certification, and changes in employer human resource and workplace practices. Also, *spell out the workforce development services and supports to be provided as part of the initiative*. Examples include: recruitment, screening, and assessment; education and training; job placement, retention, and advancement services; career coaching; support services (e.g., child care and transportation assistance); and business consulting services (e.g., technical assistance on human resources and workplace practices, and plant modernization).

Two web-based resources on career pathways are:

- The Competency Model Clearinghouse (<http://www.careeronestop.org/CompetencyModel/>) provides a wide variety of information on competency models including over 1400 links and case studies.
- The Department of Labor's Web site, www.Workforce3one.org, contains dozens of reports and other resources on career paths and career advancement strategies.

Define Partner Roles and Responsibilities

Clearly state the roles and responsibilities for each of the key partners: workforce intermediaries, employers, education and training providers, community-based organizations, other support service providers, and the public workforce development system.

The roles and responsibilities of *workforce intermediaries* fall in two general categories. First, they *organize and plan the effort*, including organizing stakeholders around common goals, conducting labor market research, mapping career pathways, building partnerships, developing the community advancement initiative, and aligning resources. Second, they

Workforce Intermediaries

Many industries and employers lack the time, energy, or capacity to plan and organize their own community advancement programs and provide or broker needed workforce development services and supports. These are the core functions of workforce intermediaries.

WorkSource Partners' Regional Advancement Centers illustrate this point. Long-term care employers lacked the capacity and expertise to develop the CNA-to-LPN community advancement program. As an employer partner said, "We could never have done this on our own. We run nursing homes."

provide or broker services, including training; job placement, retention, and advancement services; career coaching; support services; and business consulting services.

The roles and responsibilities of *employers* are quite diverse. They can include:

- Providing detailed information on entry-level and skilled, high-demand occupations, including their education, training, and skill requirements; vacancies; and pathways to advancement;
- Providing incumbent workers access to skilled, high-demand occupations, as well as providing job seekers access to entry-level jobs as incumbent workers move up;
- Changing human resources and workplace practices to promote advancement;
- Participating in the development and implementation of training, such as the development of curricula, skill standards, and certifications;
- Providing incumbent workers with tuition assistance;
- Providing in-kind contributions, including staff time, classroom space, and computers; and
- Participating in the development and implementation of the initiative.

High-leverage Training Strategies

Create bridges to close the gap between the skills of low-income, low-skill adults and those required of training programs. For example, establish links among programs such as ABE, ESL, GED preparation, non-credit workforce training, and community college certificate and degree programs.

Connect training to the labor market. For example, contextualize instruction to specific industries and occupations, use the workplace as a learning environment, provide training at times and places accessible to those who are working, and have labor market payoffs.

Accelerate the pace of learning, so that low-income, low-skilled adults learn more, learn faster, and complete training more quickly. For example, compress training into a shorter time period, integrate adult basic education/English as a second language instruction with technical training, and create individualized, competency-based instruction.

The roles and responsibilities of *education and training providers* center on developing and offering training that helps low-income workers and job seekers advance along pathways to family-supporting jobs (see box, “High-leverage Training Strategies”). In addition, providers participate in the development and implementation of the community advancement initiative.

Community-based and faith-based organizations and other support service providers can help the initiative reach out to and recruit low-income workers and/or job seekers. They are also a potential source of support services (e.g., case management and access to child care and transportation assistance) and job placement and retention assistance. Finally, and perhaps most important, these organizations, too, can be active participants in the development and implementation of the community advancement initiative, along with other partners.

The roles and responsibilities of the *public workforce development system* are just as varied. To begin with, the system can provide many connections: to industries and employers; to education and training providers; and to community-based and faith-based organizations and other service providers. Second, they can provide information about local labor markets, as well as funding to support the development and implementation of an initiative. And as with all the partners, they can participate in the development and implementation of the initiative.

Identify and Obtain Needed Resources

Funding will likely come from a variety of sources. One source is *State and local government*, including community colleges, incumbent worker training programs, workforce and economic development initiatives, and support services. The *federal government* also has programs that can be accessed. Examples include the Workforce Investment Act and

Resources

Community advancement initiatives leverage public and private resources. They also help align public funding to better meet the needs of employers and low-income workers and job seekers.

Funding for the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership’s Center of Excellence comes from the building and construction trades, employers, the state, and foundations. By blending funding streams, the center can better meet the needs of the skilled trades and offer training free of charge.

Funding for WorkSource Partners’ Regional Advancement Centers also comes from a variety of sources, including the state, employers (including tuition assistance), and federal student financial aid. Employers make other contributions as well, including instituting flexible work schedules, providing full medical and dental benefits for participating employees who work a reduced schedule during training, and in-kind contributions (e.g., classroom space, computers).

student financial aid programs. *Employers and worker organizations* may contribute to the initiative, through tuition assistance programs, paid leave, employer-union training funds, and in-kind contributions. And, finally, private and corporate foundations are a good source, especially for start-up funding.

Identify Target Outcomes

Identify target outcomes for employers, participants (low-income workers and/or job seekers), and the initiative itself (see chart).

| Possible Outcomes for a Community Advancement Initiative | | |
|---|--|---|
| Employer Outcomes | Participant Outcomes | Initiative Outcomes |
| Reduced turnover and lower vacancy rates in entry-level jobs More efficient, effective recruitment for skilled, high-demand occupations Increased productivity or improved quality of service Increased investment in workforce development Changes in human resources and workplace practices that promote advancement | Improved skills Advancement to family-supporting jobs Placement of unemployed individuals in entry-level jobs opened up when participants advance to better jobs | Employer and participant satisfaction Increased responsiveness of education and training providers, the public workforce development system, and others to the needs of industries, employers, low-income workers, and job seekers Strong, cohesive partnership |

Step 3: Implementation

The implementation stage entails: managing and operating the initiative; tracking and evaluating its results; and pursuing additional funding.

Managing and Operating the Initiative

This includes:

- Marketing the initiative to employers, supervisors, and low-income workers and/or job seekers.
- Providing or brokering workforce development services and supports (e.g., recruitment, screening, and assessment; education and training; job placement, retention, and advancement services; career coaching; support services; and business consulting services).

- Managing the partnership, including guiding partners in implementation of their roles and responsibilities and fostering its development and expansion.
- Ensuring the initiative is meeting employers' workforce and skill needs and participants' need for family-supporting jobs.
- Gathering updated information on industry and employer workforce and skill needs as well as the regional economy and labor market, making changes to the initiative, as needed.

Tracking Results

In Step 2, the initiative identifies target outcomes for employers, participants, and the initiative itself. During implementation, it is important to track results.

Tracking employer results: How many employers and incumbent workers have been served? How many skilled, high-demand occupations have participants filled? How many entry-level occupations have participants filled, and what is the retention rate? Has productivity increased or service improved? How do program investments, including in-kind contributions, compare to outcomes? What human resources and workplace practices have changed to promote advancement?

Tracking participant results: How many participants have been served? How many increased their education/skills (e.g., completed training and received a certificate or degree)? How many advanced (e.g., received a pay increase, advanced to skilled, high-demand occupations)? How many moved from unemployment to entry-level jobs that are part of an advancement pathway?

Tracking initiative results: Are employers and participants satisfied? Are training providers, the public workforce development system, and others more responsive to the needs of industries, employers, low-income workers, and job seekers?

The tracking data will be crucial to maintaining the involvement of the partners and raising the funds needed for long-term sustainability. To make the data useful requires a system to evaluate the initiative and its results; analyzing the return on investments; and promoting continuous improvement. This includes gathering and analyzing data on results from performance tracking systems and information from employers, participants, and initiative partners via interviews, focus groups, and surveys. It also includes creating processes for sharing findings with partners and acting on them.

Pursuing Additional Funding

This can come from public or private sources. For example, to promote sustainability and expansion, the initiative could seek funds from state, local, and federal governments; employer and union partners; and foundations.



Community Advancement Profiles

Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership's Center of Excellence

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership is a workforce intermediary jointly led by labor and management. The mission of WRTP is to preserve and develop family-sustaining jobs in the Milwaukee area. Its key functions are to:

- Help local companies modernize plants and adopt new workplace practices;
- Upgrade the skills of incumbent workers; and
- Recruit, train, and mentor new employees.

In 2005, WRTP launched the Center of Excellence to address the boom in construction and a skills shortage in advanced manufacturing. The center provides a single point of contact for meeting the workforce needs of skilled trades and industries. It streamlines services to the industry and to job seekers, performing such critical functions as centralizing job orders from employers and developing training certificate programs related to career opportunities in skilled trades and industries.

The center's partners include state and local government, employers, unions, education and training providers, community based organizations, and foundations.

The center's BIG STEP apprenticeship preparation program improves access for women and people of color to the building and construction trades. BIG STEP focuses on developing the academic skills needed to pass the entrance exam for jobs in the field. Between 2001 and 2005, BIG STEP placed 200 low-income graduates in skilled trade apprenticeships. Two-thirds were people of color and 14 percent were women. Earnings at placement ranged from about \$12 to \$15 an hour, depending on the trade.

The Center of Excellence Program

WRTP's Center of Excellence offers assessment, job preparation, and job placement services for community residents. In addition to BIG STEP, the center provides access to a range of programs, including a commercial driver's license program, entry-level certificate programs in construction and manufacturing; and machining, welding, and other career advancement training programs in manufacturing.

BIG STEP illustrates how the center works. Community residents interested in skilled trades come to the center through a widespread referral network that includes Joint Apprenticeship Committees for each of the building trades, job centers, the Urban League, and community-based organizations. BIG STEP is for those who have the highest basic skills and are interested in apprenticeships. Candidates must test at or above the eighth-

grade level in reading and math. Those not meeting these entry requirements are referred to one of the center's in-house education partners for remediation. Most participants are already employed, usually in entry-level jobs in construction or other sectors. They come to BIG STEP with one major goal: to get help that will enable them to advance.

Following an initial assessment, a program of study is designed that addresses each participant's skill needs. The basic program lasts 12 weeks; it features one-on-one tutoring and is self-paced. Counseling helps participants identify the trade that best suits their interests, skills, and abilities. It also includes coaching for job interviews and assistance with job placement.

Upon completing BIG STEP, most participants become candidates for apprenticeships in construction. Then they are either placed on ranked lists at hiring halls, or they conduct their own job search with what the industry refers to as a "hunting license." To improve the placement prospects of those on the ranked lists, BIG STEP makes various courses (e.g., hands-on mechanical aptitude and construction math) available to its graduates.

Partnerships

Key to the success of the Center of Excellence is the relationship it has brokered with employers, unions, the public workforce development system, and training and support providers.

Each partner has distinct needs that are met by its participation in the center. BIG STEP exemplifies this: recruitment of community residents interested in construction careers is streamlined through the Department of Workforce Development and the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board; program content and training curriculum is driven by industry input; and graduates of BIG STEP have immediate market value to the region's employers. The payoff is that employers have a base of skilled workers from which to hire, participants have improved job prospects, and unions can build their membership.

WRTP has also forged partnerships with the public, private, and philanthropic sectors to support the expansion of pre-employment and apprenticeship preparation programs in the Milwaukee area.

Outcomes

In its first year of operation, the Center of Excellence placed about 350 community residents, at an average starting wage of \$14.60 an hour plus benefits.

Funding

Funding for the Center of Excellence comes from a variety of sources, including the trades, employers, the state, and foundations. By blending multiple funding streams, the center can better meet the needs of the skilled trades and offer training free of charge.

WorkSource Partners' Regional Advancement Centers

WorkSource Partners is a Massachusetts-based, employer-based workforce intermediary. It helps long-term care employers and their community college partners develop comprehensive Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)-to-Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) career ladder programs that address the shortage of nurses and provide entry-level workers with opportunities to advance. By bringing pre-college and college training to the workplace in conjunction with career counseling and support services, WorkSource Partners helps employers design, implement, and expand a “grow your own” community advancement model: the Regional Advancement Center.

The Regional Advancement Center Model

The CNA-to-LPN Regional Advancement Centers are sponsored by Genesis HealthCare and the Intercare Alliance, two major long-term care employers. The centers offer a sequence of educational steps, coupled with counseling and support services, to prepare workers to enter and succeed in community college LPN training programs. Both employers contract with a community college partner to deliver a full sequence of preparatory educational courses as well as a customized LPN program. Genesis HealthCare partners with Holyoke Community College and Intercare Alliance with Quinsigamond Community College. Through the centers, employees also receive counseling and support services on each step of the ladder.

WorkSource Partners conducts outreach at all Genesis HealthCare and Intercare Alliance facilities to communicate employer commitment to career advancement and solicit employee interest in participating in a CNA-to-LPN program. A career development specialist conducts one-on-one sessions to help interested employees develop a career plan based on assessments of their academic skills, career interests, and life circumstances. Employees who enroll in CNA-to-LPN career advancement courses receive ongoing academic and life coaching designed to help them balance family, work, and school.

Career ladder training includes pre-college math and English, offered at the worksite; prerequisite college courses required for entry into the LPN program (e.g., psychology, human development, anatomy, physiology, and biology); and a customized, 10-month, evening and weekend LPN program.

To help employees meet the demands of full-time education, Intercare Alliance limits the work schedule of students in the LPN program to no more than 24 hours a week. They provide flexible work schedules, especially around exam time. All full-time employees who enroll in the LPN program agree to reduce their work hours until they graduate. At Genesis HealthCare, the negotiation of work schedules is informal and conducted on a case-by-case basis. Managers are committed to the program and have been supportive and

flexible. For example, Genesis changed its policy so that employees in the nursing program who maintain a 24-hour-a-week schedule can keep their eligibility for benefits.

Partnerships

The CNA-to-LPN Regional Advancement Centers are a partnership of long-term care employers, entry-level workers, community colleges, and the public workforce development system. WorkSource Partners, as the workforce intermediary, brought together the employers and other partners to design and implement the centers. It also provides employee outreach, assessment, and counseling services.

Outcomes

For long-term care employers, the Regional Advancement Centers have reduced their use of agency nurses to fill LPN vacancies, resulting in cost savings, reduced nursing assistant turnover and vacancy rates, and improved patient care. And for employees, the centers have helped them enroll in and complete LPN training, pass the LPN licensing exam, and advance to LPN jobs.

Funding

Seed funding for the Regional Advancement Centers came from the Extended Care Career Ladder Initiative (ECCLI), an innovative Massachusetts program that helps the long-term care industry upgrade the skills of entry-level workers. Program costs are covered by a combination of ECCLI funds, employer contributions (including tuition assistance), and federal student financial aid.

Employers make other contributions that help defray program costs, including flexible work schedules, full medical and dental benefits for participating employees, classroom space, and computers.

WINs Resources

The following WINs resources are available on the Web sites of the WINs partners, along with many more resources on employer-responsive strategies for community advancement models, workforce intermediaries, building workforce pipelines, employer engagement, training strategies for non-traditional workers, and more.

- Center for Workforce Success at the National Association of Manufacturers:
www.nam.org/workforce
- Jobs for the Future: www.jff.org
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce:
www.uschamber.com/icw

Career Ladders: A Guidebook for Workforce Intermediaries (Jobs for the Future 2003): Information and extensive resources on the role of workforce intermediaries in planning, developing, operating, and expanding career ladders. It summarizes lessons learned from innovative work across the country.

Employer-focused One-Stop Centers: Businesses Getting the Most for Their Investment (U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce 2004): Hundreds of One-Stop Centers across the country are meeting and exceeding employers' workforce development needs. ICW has the names of the businesses and their stories to prove it. Search the Online Database at: www.uschamber.com/icw/.

Filling America's Jobs Series (Center for Workforce Success at the National Association of Manufacturers): A Series of How-To Guides. "Working with CEOs to Communicate the Importance of a Skilled Workforce in Sector Workforce Development"; "How Businesses Can Implement Sector Workforce Development Strategies for Jobs and Economic Growth"; "How Employer Associations Can Help Small Firms Be More Competitive by Improving the Productivity of Entry-level Workers"; "How to Increase Supervisory Impact on Retention"; "A Guide for Public Workforce Professionals"; "A Guide for Employers to Benefit from the Public Workforce System."

Finders, Keepers: Business Taking Action to Secure Skilled Workers (U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce 2006): A series of best practices that share the successes of five chambers of commerce (four local and one state) that were supported by the WINs initiative to develop innovative pilot programs in workforce development.

Meeting the Workforce Needs of the Milwaukee Construction Industry: Case Study of the Center of Excellence (Jobs for the Future 2006): Profile of the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership's Center of Excellence, which addresses the boom in construction and a skills shortage in advanced manufacturing and, at the same time, connects low-wage workers to advancement opportunities in these industries.

The Role of the Workforce Intermediary CD-ROM (Center for Workforce Success at the National Association of Manufacturers): This CD-ROM describes the importance of regional collaboration—driven by the business community—to train the worker pipeline.

Surviving in a Dynamic Economy—How Chambers Can Help Navigate the Workforce Development System (U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce 2004): How chambers are helping employers meet labor force needs in three geographically diverse communities that are facing challenges—a shrinking manufacturing base, the expansion of services in the health care industry, and demographic shifts in the workforce.

The 2005 Skills Gap Report: A Survey of the American Manufacturing Workforce (Center for Workforce Success at the National Association of Manufacturers 2006): The results of this survey provide a picture of the broadening gap in the availability of skilled workers and the employee performance requirements of 21st century manufacturing and what should be done to ensure a future U.S. manufacturing workforce.

Workforce Intermediaries and Their Roles in Promoting Advancement (Jobs for the Future 2004): The origins and elements of workforce intermediaries, their strategies for advancing workers to family-sustaining careers, and the challenge of securing financing to sustain intermediary services and expand them to a scale that makes a real difference to communities.

Locating a One-Stop Career Center: The America's Service Locator

www.servicelocator.org

For a variety of workforce needs, the most efficient first step for an employer is to contact a One-Stop Career Center. The One-Stop Centers provide assistance with recruitment and training. Prepare for a visit to the local One-Stop Center by determining as precisely as possible your employee needs. The America's Service Locator Web site lists One-Stop Centers by state, zip code, services, and more. One-Stop Centers can also be located by calling: 1.877.US2.JOBS or 1.877.889.5627 (TTY).

Also, learn more about the public workforce system by visiting www.doleta.gov/business and www.workforce3one.org.

Workforce Innovation Networks—WINs

WINs is a partnership of:

- The Center for Workforce Success, the nonprofit education and training arm of the National Association of Manufacturers' Manufacturing Institute;
- The Institute for a Competitive Workforce, a nonprofit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and
- Jobs for the Future, a Boston-based national nonprofit working on education and workforce development.

From 2003 to 2005, with the support of the Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, WINs honed the capacity of employer-based organizations to function as workforce development intermediaries that can play a new and important role on the employer side of the nation's workforce equation.

The Role of Employer-based Workforce Intermediaries

Employer associations and other similar employer-based organizations are uniquely suited to being workforce development intermediaries: they understand and aggregate employer workforce needs, speak employer language, and enjoy employer trust. Since 1997, the WINs partnership has identified and refined the core elements of the role of effective, employer-based workforce intermediaries. Such organizations:

Convene, organize, and support employers on workforce development matters, including aggregating and conveying employer needs to the federal job training system and other providers of workforce services;

Directly provide education and training to workers and job seekers or broker such services to them by linking them to the public workforce system's One-Stop Career Centers and other education and training providers;

Work with education and training providers to upgrade their offerings and make them more relevant to evolving employer needs (e.g., incorporate skill requirements, including formal skill standards; help design curricula; and work to certify programs and credential graduates);

Help govern the various elements of local workforce development systems (including but not limited to federally funded Workforce Investment Boards and One-Stop Career Centers, community colleges, and voc-tech centers at the secondary and postsecondary levels), and make them more employer oriented and effective in serving both employers and workers; and

Conduct research and development (e.g., research employer needs locally and experiment with new workforce development techniques and partnerships).