

Capital Workforce Partners **“Funneling” Individuals into Construction Careers**

Capital Workforce Partners’ Jobs Funnel program began in 1999 when Connecticut funded a multi-million dollar construction project to build six large civic buildings in downtown Hartford, CT. The state’s announcement of the project spawned a grass-roots effort in the city to ensure that Hartford residents received the largest share of the construction jobs and were launched into long-term construction careers.

The Jobs Funnel operates on approximately \$750,000 to \$1 million per year. Over the last five years, the Jobs Funnel received \$4,073,063, with the largest contributors being the State of Connecticut (66%), Capital Workforce Partners (15%), Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (10%), Annie E. Casey Foundation (4%), Laborers/Associated General Contractors Training Fund (2%), Connecticut Light and Power (2%), and City of Hartford (1%).

Training is provided by a number of community-based organizations, including the Urban League of Greater Hartford, South Arsenal Neighborhood Development Corporation, Connecticut Puerto Rican Forum, and Co-opportunity Hartford. The core elements of the Jobs Funnel pre-apprenticeship model include:

- Orientation;
- An assessment process;
- Remedial instruction to address identified math deficiencies;
- Extensive case management support services;
- Pre-employment life-skills workshops;
- Customized, short-term pre-employment training in any of several building trades (also including stipends, work gear and tools);
- Job placement assistance; and
- Ongoing, post-placement job retention support.

The Jobs Funnel serves a particularly hard-to-serve population, with a majority of minority participants, and 56 percent former felons, 43 percent having limited or no employment history, and 15 percent with substance abuse problems. In addition 58 percent require math remediation and 43 percent lack reliable transportation.

Despite these participant barriers, the Jobs Funnel has placed 2,200 individuals into construction jobs and apprenticeships, with almost 80 percent of these still employed in the industry three years later. Post program wages are nearly double those of pre-program, with most of the participants earning above the \$20,000 level identified as the minimum income necessary for a single individual to be considered financially self-sufficient in Connecticut.

Capital Workforce Partners has used WIA adult dollars to fund its share of the program. The WIB recently added American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) dollars to the program to support training in weatherization installation and energy auditing.

A key strength of program is its connections to the demand side of the equation – the unions and construction firms. WIB staff has built strong relationships with 15 different construction trades, learning what their needs are and ensuring that the participants the program supplies are prepared to do a good job. In addition, all of the community-based organizations involved in the program work together under a single roof to ensure that service provision is seamless. The biggest challenge the program faces is funding, which is particularly difficult in this economy.

The WIB recommends that others wanting to replicate the program bring all the players together to develop a strategic plan based on a common mission.

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