



Abt Associates Inc.

SkillWorks Initiative, Year End Report – Year 3

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June 2007

Prepared for
SkillWorks Funders Group

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Executive Summary

SkillWorks is a five-year public-private investment of approximately \$15 million on the part of philanthropy, government, community organizations, and employers to change how workforce development is done in Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. SkillWorks' goals are to:

- Help low- and moderate-income individuals attain family-supporting jobs;
- Help businesses to find and retain skilled employees;
- Increase the resources targeted to education and skills training, especially for low-skilled, entry-level employees;
- Build the capacity of workforce development providers to meet the human resource needs of employers and low-income individuals; and
- Promote public policies that help low- and moderate-income individuals to advance into family-sustaining jobs.

As part of the overall initiative, the SkillWorks Funders Group is supporting a comprehensive evaluation being conducted by Abt Associates and Mt. Auburn Associates. The purpose of this evaluation is to document the participant and policy outcomes achieved, to highlight the improved practices that emerge, and to identify the continuing challenges that will need to be addressed. In the process of documenting and assessing the initiative's progress and accomplishments to date, the evaluation team also seeks to provide feedback to the Funders Group and the SkillWorks grantees that can inform their future activities.

This document presents the evaluation team's findings regarding Year 3 of the SkillWorks initiative. It primarily focuses on the activities and accomplishments in the third year of program operations; however, for some key metrics, the report also presents the cumulative results that have occurred from Year 1 through Year 3.

This executive summary focuses on some of the key Year 3 findings across the Implementation Partnerships and across the various SkillWorks components. It begins with an overview of the characteristics of the participants in the Implementation Partnerships, and the outcomes they have achieved. It then looks at employer outcomes, and the institutional and systems changes that have been fostered by the SkillWorks activities. This discussion also examines some of the activities and accomplishments of the Workforce Solutions Group and SkillWorks funders and staff relative to their public policy advocacy.

The chapter then looks at some of the factors that led to the outcomes observed, or challenged the SkillWorks grantees in attempting to achieve those outcomes. The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations relative to possible future investments by the SkillWorks funders that could build on the learning and capacity that have been created over the past three years.

Participant Characteristics and Key Partnership Activities

Participant Targeting, Enrollment, and Engagement

Through Year 3, the Implementation Partnerships generally met or exceeded their SkillWorks formal enrollment goals. That is, most of the Implementation Partnerships served as many or more individuals as they had proposed to serve in their funding applications to SkillWorks.

For each partnership with a pre-employment component, the numbers of new pre-employment enrollments generally has remained fairly steady from year to year, though HCRTI has seen a shift from primarily training enrollees to a majority of walk-in clients (see Table ES.1). The experience with new incumbent enrollments for the three years is more mixed across the Implementation Partnerships. One partnership had substantial increases in the numbers of new incumbent enrollees per year (BSCPP), one had significant declines in new incumbent enrollees over the three years (PCWD), and three partnerships stayed at about the same level from year to year (HCRTI, HCC and PACE).¹

	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		TOTALS	
	Pre-employment	Incumbent	Pre-employment	Incumbent	Pre-employment	Incumbent	Pre-employment	Incumbent
HCC	52	55	52	60	50	60	154	175
HCRTI: Pre-employment Training	125		70		45		240	
HCRTI: Pre-employment Walk-ins	37		51		89		177	
HCRTI: Incumbents		208		244		236		688
PCWD	44	182	51	167	42	117	137	466
PACE			33	41	34	34	67	75
BSCPP			N/A	59	N/A	141	N/A	200
TOTALS	258	445	257	571	260	588	775	1604
Three-Year Total for Pre-employment and Incumbents*							2342	

*Over the three years, 37 PCWD enrollees took classes at HCRTI.

In terms of the characteristics of Year 3 participants, for most Implementation Partnerships the majority of new enrollees were Boston residents. Most new enrollees were also individuals whose household incomes at enrollment fell below the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency index.²

¹ After multiple rounds of communication with partnerships to double-check reported data, Table 1 represents the most accurate enrollment counts to date. The most significant changes from previously reported data are HCRTI's and PACE's Year 3 incumbent enrollment figures. HCRTI and PACE both discovered that previously reported figures included duplicate counts.

² Some partnerships were only able to provide limited information on their participants' household incomes and household sizes, particularly for incumbent workers. Such data are essential for assessing participant income against economic self-sufficiency levels, and therefore the evaluation team's FESS assessments were based on whatever data were made available by each partnership.

During Year 3, some Implementation Partnerships saw changes in the percentage of new enrollees who were non-English speakers or for whom English was not their primary language. These changes went in both directions, however. For example, although the vast majority of BSCPP incumbent participants continue to be individuals whose primary language is not English, the percentage declined from 92% for Year 2 enrollees to 73% for Year 3 enrollees. In contrast, PACE experienced a significant increase in the percentage of pre-employment enrollees whose primary language is not English (from 39% in Year 2 to 71% in Year 3).

These changes (relative to the primary language of enrollees) were not necessarily sector-specific, however. For example, PCWD's percentage of new pre-employment enrollees whose primary language is not English increased from 14% in Year 2 to 31% in Year 3, whereas HCRTI's percentage for its pre-employment enrollees decreased from 43% to 19% during the same period.

In Year 3, some partnerships also saw increases in the baseline educational levels for particular subgroups of enrollees (e.g., the HVAC training component of BSCPP). But for the majority of new enrollees in Year 3, the highest educational certification at the time of enrollment was either a GED or a high school diploma.

Based on the data on participant characteristics, it is clear that during Year 3 the Implementation Partnerships continued to focus their efforts on SkillWorks' intended target population—that is, low-income, low-skilled job seekers and workers in Boston.

Pre-employment Participant Assessment and Job Readiness

During Year 3, several of the Implementation Partnerships implemented procedures for more rigorous screening of applicants, in order to foster a better “fit” with the training curricula, target career paths, and/or employer hiring requirements. However, this more rigorous screening has not necessarily resulted in better graduation or placement rates, at least in the short term. Moreover, the providers have found the screening processes to be very resource intensive and time consuming to find sufficient numbers of qualified candidates. (For instance, Project Hope screened 150 individuals to identify 12 qualified candidates for PCWD.) In response to this situation, PCWD has concluded that more basic job readiness and remedial training (along with supportive services) are necessary for many pre-employment participants, if they are to succeed subsequently in more technically demanding training programs and/or in job placements.

Ongoing Incumbent Participant Engagement

In the aggregate, the numbers of incumbent enrollees increased considerably over the first three years of the SkillWorks initiative, from 445 new enrollees in Year 1 to 588 new enrollees in Year 3 (see Table ES.1, above). However, a number of Implementation Partnerships experienced difficulties in maintaining the engagement of some of their incumbent participants over time.

Most of the partnerships concluded that, in general, an intensive and nurturing coaching style was necessary to maintain incumbent engagement and to assist workers in moving along their career path. However, there is an inherent tension in this approach because it is hard to maintain the intensity of coaching as the numbers of incumbents increase over time. There was also considerable variation in the amount of coaching desired or needed by individual employees.

Given the limits of staffing resources, the partnerships have had to address the question of how to provide the most effective coaching services and, as part of this, how best to allocate the time of coaches to individual participants.

Outcomes to Date

The following sections highlight some of the SkillWorks outcomes that have been achieved to date. The report first focuses on outcomes realized by participants in the training and career advancement activities of the Implementation Partnerships. However, SkillWorks was originally envisioned as impacting larger numbers of job seekers, workers, and employers (that is, reaching “scale”) primarily through its public policy and systems change activities. Accordingly, the discussion then turns to the progress that has been made by SkillWorks in promoting policy, institutional, and systems changes.

Outcomes for Participants

To date, the Implementation Partnerships have provided significant help to nearly 400 participants in achieving entry-level jobs. They have also assisted over 1700 incumbent workers in enhancing their skills and/or in beginning the climb up a career ladder.

Pre-employment Placements

In the aggregate, the number of placements for pre-employment participants increased from Year 1 to Year 2, but then declined somewhat in the third year. In Year 3, the partnerships placed a total of 99 individuals, including 11 placements associated with HCRTI “walk-ins” (see Table ES.2).³ The Year 3 placement rate for pre-employment participants graduating from the partnerships’ various formal training programs (which does not include the HCRTI walk-ins) averaged 58.7% across partnerships.⁴

³ HCRTI had previously reported that 41 Year 3 enrollees were placed in Year 3. Upon closer examination, staff discovered that 20 of the 41 placed in Year 3 were actually Year 2 enrollees. The data in Table 2 has been adjusted accordingly.

⁴ For several partnerships, graduation occurred late in the program year, and/or there was a lag between graduation and placement. Accordingly, it is reasonable to expect that the final placement rates for the cohort of Year 3 participants will increase over time.

It also is worth noting that only 11 of the 89 HCRTI walk-ins achieved placements (12%), compared to 21 of the 38 HCRTI training graduates (55.3%). This suggests that there is value in the more intensive skill-building and coaching services received by the latter group (although some of the differences in results may be due to the characteristics of the individuals in each group).

	Enrollment	Program Completion		Placement					
	# Enrolled	# Graduating	% of Enrolled	# Placed in Partner Employer	% of Graduates	# Placed in Non-Partners	% of Graduates	Total Placed	% of Graduates
3rd Yr									
HCC	50	50	100.0%	5	10.0%	31	62.0%	36	72.0%
HCRTI: Pre-employment Training	45	38	84.4%	12	31.6%	9	23.7%	21	55.3%
HCRTI: Pre-employment Walk-ins**	89			4		7		11	
PCWD^	42	36	85.7%	22	61.1%	0	0.0%	22	61.1%
2nd Yr									
PACE^	34	26	76.5%	5	38.5%	4	30.8%	9	69.2%
TOTALS	260	150	57.7%	48	32.0%	51	34.0%	99	58.7%

* This table reflects the number of Year 3 enrollees placed. In Year 3, HCRTI placed an additional 20 Year 2 enrollees, PACE placed 9 Year 2 enrollees, and PCWD placed 18 Year 2 enrollees.

** HCRTI walk-ins are not calculated in the "% of Graduates" column because they do not enroll in, or graduate from, the HCRTI pre-employment training program.

^ 5 more participants were placed in December 2006 and January 2007.

^ For PACE, the number of individuals that completed Module 1 was used as a proxy for the number of participants graduating, since completion of Module 1 is the threshold PACE uses to begin placing participants. Actual program graduation does not occur until a participant completes Modules 1 and 2. Additionally, placement activities for 13 of the 26 Module 1 completers did not begin until December 2006. Therefore, the placement rate was calculated by dividing the number placed by the number eligible for placement (13 participants).

It is important to point out that many of the placements for the pre-employment graduates continue to be outside of the partnerships' formal employer partners. This pattern is particularly striking for HCC and HCRTI. Despite this distribution, employer partners for these partnerships report that they have been able to hire enough graduates to fill their needs. Partnership staff also explained that they have been expanding the reach of their placement efforts due to the slowing economy and lower demand for entry-level workers by some partner employers.⁵

In Year 3, placement wages tended to range from \$10.00 to \$12.15 per hour (see Table ES.3). On average, pre-employment Year 3 enrollees who were working prior to enrollment and subsequently were placed in jobs achieved an hourly wage increase of between \$0.40 per hour and \$3.51 per hour in their first job placement (see Table ES.4).⁶

⁵ Additionally, the placement pattern may represent the beginning of a more intentional strategy by some partnerships (such as by HCRTI) to find employers where the "fit" of participants' skill levels is better.

⁶ Two things need to be noted about this statistic, however: (a) except for PCWD, this calculation is based on limited samples for each partnership; and (b) in some cases, the average is lowered because some enrollees were leaving a relatively high-paying job (such as in construction) that they could not maintain, for a lower-paying but more stable job (such as in the healthcare field).

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
HCC	\$ 9.75	\$ 10.61	\$ 11.63
HCRTI	\$ 12.27	\$ 11.92	\$ 11.99
PCWD	\$ 11.43	\$ 12.00	\$ 12.15
PACE		\$ 11.07	\$ 10.00

	HCC	HCRTI	PCWD	PACE
Average hourly wage increase from last job held, for those pre-employment enrollees that were employed at (or immediately prior to) enrollment	\$3.51	\$1.87	\$0.40	\$0.41
Number of pre-employment participants included in this calculation	20	29	22	8

Retention for Pre-employment Placements

The results relative to one-year job retention for the pre-employment enrollees were somewhat mixed, but generally positive. HCRTI and PACE each reported one-year retention rates of 88%; PCWD reported a one-year retention rate of 63% for its Year 1 enrollees, and 78% for its Year 2 enrollees.⁷ These figures compare very favorably, for example, with the AECF Jobs Initiative, which achieved a one-year retention rate for its placed participants of 54%.⁸

Incumbent Retention

According to the available data, most of the partnerships are showing a high percentage of their incumbent enrollees are still retained at the employer partners (see Table ES.5). In terms of the Round 1 SkillWorks grantees, PCWD reports that approximately 81% of its incumbent enrollees from Years 1 through 3 are still with their Partners employers, and HCC reports that 78% of its incumbent enrollees from the three years are still employed at the Hilton hotel properties.⁹ HCRTI's data on

⁷ HCC only tracks retention for placed participants for 9 months, and reported a 9-month rate of 66% to the evaluation team.

⁸ Note: it is important to keep in mind that the methods for calculating 12-month retention rates have differed between the Jobs Initiative and the SkillWorks partnerships (and among the partnerships), and these differences in methodologies can contribute significantly to the apparent differences in results.

⁹ This metric is different from the 12-month retention measure that was used for the pre-employment participants. The duration of employment being measured for the incumbents depends on when the incumbents enrolled in the SkillWorks activities.

incumbent retention are incomplete; for HCRTI incumbent participants whose employment status is known, the end of Year 3 retention rate for enrollees from Years 1–3 is about 70.9%.¹⁰

In terms of the Round 2 SkillWorks grantees, PACE reports that 67% of its Module 2 incumbent enrollees from Years 2 and 3 are still employed with partner businesses,¹¹ and BSCPP reports that 97% of its incumbent participants have been retained.

	Total Number of Incumbent Enrollees				Number of Incumbent Enrollees Still Employed at Employer Partners	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL	End of Year 3	% of Total
HCC	55	60	60	175	138	79%
HCRTI*	208	244	236	688	360	71%
PCWD	182	167	117	466	378	81%
PACE - Module 2 New Incumbent Worker Enrollments		8	1	9	6	67%
PACE - ASE Test Prep Participants		33	33	66	unknown	
BSCPP		66	134	200	194	97%
TOTAL	445	578	581	1604	1076	

Although these retention rates generally appear to be quite positive, to date we have not had success in obtaining precise data on the “typical” retention performance of most of the employer partners, and therefore we are not in a position to say how the SkillWorks participants’ retention rates compare to the norm for similar positions within the targeted firms or industries.

Advancement and Promotions

There have been some positive interim indicators relative to the skills offerings of the Implementation Partnerships. Graduation rates for the skills courses offered by the partnerships generally have been high. In addition, BSCPP appears to have had significant success in improving the English language skills of its participants within a relatively short period. And at PACE, 33 participants have passed one or more ASE certification exams, and 3 graduates have used their credits from PACE to enroll in

¹⁰ This percentage is based on the number of employees known to be retained (360), divided by the total number of incumbents that enrolled from Year 1 through Year 3 employed at the four reporting employers (508). HCRTI had a problem with some employers failing to respond to its survey on participant retention. Since the four employers employ 74% of the incumbent population, the retention rate for their employee participants was considered as a proxy for the overall incumbent population.

¹¹ PACE has limited demographic or tracking data on incumbents who only participate in the ASE prep classes (i.e., data from one of the participating employers for one year’s participants).

an Associates' degree program at Ben Franklin Technical College. Overall, however, relatively few individuals across the partnerships have achieved an industry-recognized credential or degree to date.

According to the information reported by the partnerships (see Table ES.6), 336 incumbent participants have achieved wage increases and 203 incumbents enrollees were promoted through the end of Year 3. Despite our attempts to pursue this issue in interviews with partnership staff and employer representatives, it is very difficult to determine to what extent these advances were specifically due to the training and services offered by the partnerships.

Table ES.6: Incumbent Program-Related Wage Increases and Promotions (Years 1–3)*				
	Wage Increases	% of Incumbents	Promotions	% of Incumbents
HCC	122	69.7%	30	17.1%
HCRTI	106	15.4%	70	10.2%
PCWD	93	20.0%	93	20.0%
PACE	unknown		unknown	
BSCPP	15	7.5%	10	5.0%
TOTAL	336	20.9%	203	12.7%

*Totals may include more than one promotion or wage increase per participant. Note that excluding PCWD, this table includes all wage increases and promotions, not necessarily those that were the result of program training.

Moreover, relative to the entire enrollee population, the available data suggest that the SkillWorks skills training so far has not led to significant wage or career advancement for many of the incumbent enrollees. The reasons for this appear to be myriad, and vary somewhat by the sector or employer. Some of the most common reasons include the following:

- The very low skill levels of many of the incumbent participants (especially relative to English language skills);
- The fact that the career advancement goals of some incumbents, or the certifications involved, may require several years (or more) of training to be achieved;
- Immigration issues that make workers reluctant to switch jobs, even if they offer advancement opportunities;
- Transportation issues, family responsibilities, and/or competing demands of working other jobs that make it difficult to switch employment location or shift, despite the potential for economic gains;
- The level of comfort that workers experience in their current employment setting, even if promotion potential may not be available at those locations;
- In the hospitality sector, ostensibly higher paying front desk positions may reduce the opportunity to receive tip income (which can be a substantial portion of take-home pay); and

- Supervisory positions are often non-union (and union workers may fear leaving the security of a union position).

Employer Outcomes

Although there have been some limited efforts by partnerships to look at quantitative employer outcomes, to date there is still no *systematic* hard evidence across partnerships demonstrating increased productivity, reduced turnover, an improved ability to fill hard-to-fill positions internally, or other types of employer benefits that were cited at the beginning of the Initiative. There is, however, anecdotal evidence from various employers about the positive effects of the SkillWorks partnership experience, as well as insights relative to the challenges entailed.

Interviews with the employer partners reveal that the motivation for employers to be involved in the Implementation Partnerships is more complex than originally thought. According to the employer interviews, to date the main benefit for many of them has been the indirect economic benefits of improved community relations or public relations (for example, by being a “good neighbor,” the hospitals are earning good will with city officials and neighborhood groups). HCC is a notable exception—the Hilton Corporation sees a direct and identifiable benefit in their operations as a result of the training. Employer representatives of the Hilton properties have also reported that the employees participating in HCC activities were “better employees” as a result; they have better morale, operate better in a team environment, are better able to communicate with clients and other team members, are willing to exercise more initiative, and have raised the level of team performance.

PCWD had hoped to be able to fill some hard-to-fill allied health positions through PCWD, but discovered that working with large numbers of employees with diverse skill levels was more complicated than anticipated. PCWD also found that moving employees with limited skills on a path to nursing, radiology tech, or surgical tech positions takes much longer than originally thought.¹² On the other hand, PCWD feels that there is some evidence that its pre-employment activities are providing some Partners employers/departments with a new pipeline for entry-level workers. In addition, the PCWD experience is seen as having opened up a greater dialogue between the supervisory staff and the training staff and HR managers across the Partners hospitals.

In interviews with the evaluation team, a few employers have said that they were not impressed with the quality of the typical SkillWorks pre-employment participant referred to them, compared to candidates identified through other channels. Other employers, however, highlighted the quality of soft skills that the pre-employment participants bring with them to their jobs, including communication skills and commitment to their work. They also appreciate that the career coaches are available to resolve problems that may crop up, particularly with new hires.

¹² Another partnership that hopes to help employers fill hard-to-fill positions is BSCPP, with its new HVAC training component aimed (in part) at meeting Boston University’s needs for HVAC technicians. These positions are expected to pay at least \$20,000 more annually than what the BSCPP participants are currently earning. Interestingly, the HVAC component is expected to result in a “win” for Boston University as well. Boston University currently has trouble competing with construction contractors (who pay higher wages for such positions), but the university hopes to retain the BU employees that receive their HVAC licenses through the BSCPP program.

In terms of the training and services provided to incumbent participants, employers have been most positive about the workplace ESOL classes. For example, an HCC representative reported that the contextualized English courses were highly valued by employers, and some employers indicated that this was the most important part of the program. While such training may not be sufficient in itself to prepare the participants for promotion, it is seen as an important prerequisite to equip the individuals to participate in subsequent technical training. Moreover, the increased communications skills, confidence, and ability to interact with customers and fellow workers that participants derive from the ESOL classes help to make them more effective in their current jobs.

The SkillWorks experience also has sensitized a number of employers about the benefits of investing in their workforce. In response to this heightened awareness, for example, HCC partners are providing more flexible tuition reimbursement for worker educational needs identified through coaching. And PACE's partner employers are investing in training for new hires much earlier than in the past.

Institutional and Systems Change

Workforce Solutions Group: Activities and Accomplishments

Passage of the Workforce Solutions Act in July 2006 as part of the Economic Stimulus Bill represented a significant win for Workforce Solutions Group (WSG). It added \$24.5 million in funding for workforce development activities, created the potential to leverage additional federal funding through the Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) program, and established the Workforce Accountability Taskforce. The latter is seen as a mechanism to promote broader changes in the Massachusetts workforce development systems.

When the 2006 win is added to WSG's earlier success in 2004 in securing \$6 million in supplemental funding for workforce development, it is clear that WSG has been very effective, at least in the short term, in achieving additional funding for workforce development services. WSG has also been active in influencing how some of the elements of the Workforce Solutions Act were implemented, including the Educational Rewards Program, the Workforce Competitive Trust Fund, and the Accountability Taskforce. It has also been active in the design of the FSET in Massachusetts, in how the additional Adult Basic Education funding will be used, and in helping SkillWorks to organize and conduct the gubernatorial forum.

On the other hand, WSG has made less progress to date in promoting a specific policy or systems change agenda beyond the implementation of these items. In part, a tactical decision was made to wait until the Accountability Taskforce was established, viewing this entity as the mechanism through which WSG could promote a systems change agenda. However, WSG still faces the challenge that such an agenda might divide its various constituencies. Moreover, although more effort has been expended by WSG in Year 3 to reach out to the Implementation Partnerships and to involve them in WSG activities, there is still little evidence that the partnerships' experience is being incorporated by WSG in framing a specific policy or systems change agenda.

SkillWorks Staff and Funders Group Involvement in SkillWorks Public Policy Activities

In addition to the activities conducted by WSG, during Year 3 there was increased involvement of SkillWorks staff and funders in public policy activities, beyond the oversight role that the Public Policy Committee has conducted since the commencement of the initiative.

For example, the SkillWorks initiative director and some of the funders were active in organizing the gubernatorial forum, as well as in trying to better define the public policy agenda of SkillWorks beyond increasing the funding available for workforce development activities. This has included encouraging WSG to articulate the details of a policy and systems change agenda. It has also involved deciding when SkillWorks itself will pursue policy items that are more focused on issues specific to the initiative or to Boston stakeholders.

The Broader Influence of SkillWorks on Funders Group Members

There is considerable variation among members of the Funders Group in terms of how their SkillWorks experience has influenced the activities of their organizations relative to workforce development.

Some of the funders have stated that that the experience has had no effect on their organization's funding priorities. But even in a case where SkillWorks has not affected funding activities, one program officer reported that the experience has influenced how she evaluates programs for her trustees—she and her organization's trustees are now more realistic about the length of time to move individuals up a career ladder. Others indicate that while the SkillWorks experience has not changed the activities that they fund (because they were already investing in similar activities), it has increased their contact and opportunities to partner with other funders. In particular, representatives of public sector funders discussed their increased relationships with private funders.

Others funders indicate that SkillWorks has helped them to re-shape their investment strategies. SkillWorks is seen as providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for creating sustained impact and systemic change in workforce development. One funder reported that her organization is now taking a more long-term, integrated, and comprehensive approach to address sustainable employability and economic mobility. Through the SkillWorks experience, this organization better understands the importance of working for more public funding for skills training. Another funder noted that SkillWorks has influenced the focus of the Commonwealth's Trust Fund and the workforce development RFPs that have come out from the State.

Another program officer reported that, for her organization, SkillWorks has reinforced the importance of human capital development, and the critical issues around basic skills attainment. Accordingly, the organization has strengthened its focus on “pre pre-employment” needs in Boston.

Partnership Contributions to Promoting Institutional and Systems Change

As we have previously noted, the SkillWorks Implementation Partnerships have played a key role in helping to raise employer awareness of the value of investing in workforce development. This has led to changes in the practices of some employers, such as the expansion of training and supports for workers that the HCC and PACE employers (mentioned above) have adopted.

In the healthcare sector, the SkillWorks partnerships (PCWD and HCRTI) were not the only catalysts fostering greater investment in workforce development, but they have been a very important influence. SkillWorks has been particularly important in encouraging hospital employers like Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) to appreciate that their training mission extends beyond their critical staff, which had been MGH's traditional focus.

This influence has led to some significant cultural changes in the healthcare institutions. It has also encouraged the development of some new affiliated training programs, such as Partners' respiratory training program at Bunker Hill Community College. In addition, some hospital employers have incorporated this new awareness of the importance of workforce development internally, through creating new in-house training programs.

This kind of development represents both a victory and a continuing challenge for a nonprofit-led partnership like HCRTI. That is, although the hospitals' commitment to providing more training in house may better meet the needs of some workers, it also means that the nonprofit service providers must constantly be reassessing their niche and readjusting the array of services that they offer.

In terms of the role of the partnerships in promoting institutional and sectoral changes, BSCPP has helped to shape the career path programs for workers at Boston University and Harvard University. For example, at Harvard BSCPP encouraged development of a broader career path program than the university was originally contemplating. BSCPP also fostered the commitment of the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority to add to its agreements with building services contractors a requirement that the latter offer ESOL classes to their workers.

BSCPP hopes to generate additional changes in employer practices in 2007, when Boston's master commercial contract is negotiated. For these negotiations BSCPP expects to offer tangible examples of employer-sponsored training that could be secured in the master contract.

The SkillWorks experience also has helped the nonprofit partners to increase their capacity in some important ways. They are now thinking more strategically about their workforce service portfolio or market niche. They have substantially improved their understanding of industry needs and their ability to work effectively with employers. Several of the nonprofit partners (Project Hope and AACA, for example) have parlayed this increased capacity into new relationships with employers and additional workforce funding opportunities. The nonprofits are also developing new organization-wide capacities as a result of the lessons learned from the SkillWorks experience. Some of these lessons have emerged from the trial and error process that each partnership has gone through. The SkillWorks technical assistance consultants have provided other lessons and guidance on building infrastructure, and still others have come through the peer learning opportunities that the SkillWorks activities have fostered.

SkillWorks as an Inspiration and Source of Learnings for Other Initiatives

Among its institutional and systems outcomes to date is the role that SkillWorks has played in stimulating the establishment of other workforce initiatives and partnerships around the country. SkillWorks served as a primary model in the establishment of the Bay Area Workforce Funding

Collaborative (BAWFC). And the state of California is now in the process of replicating the BAWFC effort in several other regions around the state.

Closer to home, the SkillWorks model played a similar catalytic role in encouraging United Way of Rhode Island to establish its SkillUp-Rhode Island initiative. The lessons from the SkillWorks effort were also instrumental in guiding the design of The Boston Foundation's Allied Health Workforce Project, which makes employer-specific grants.

In addition to the above efforts, the SkillWorks initiative has served as a source of information and peer support to a wide variety of other workforce efforts around the country, including the grantees of the national Initiative for Workforce Intermediaries sponsored by the Ford, Annie E. Casey, and Hitachi foundations.

Factors Affecting Outcomes to Date

Over the past three years, the SkillWorks grantees (both the Implementation Partnerships and Workforce Solutions Group) have built some significant relationships and infrastructure, achieved some noteworthy participant and employer outcomes, and fostered some key institutional changes and legislative wins. However, the participant and employer outcomes to date are more modest than perhaps was originally anticipated, and overall the initiative has not yet reached the scale or guarantee of sustainability that some had hoped for. Below, we examine some of the reasons for this situation.

Partnership Capacity and Relations

Core Capacity and Staff Turnover

Despite some of the improvements noted above, most of the Implementation Partnerships are still challenged around basic capacity issues, and most (if not all) are still fragile. These challenges have included a high level of staff turnover in most of the nonprofit lead entities and in many of the partner organizations. The partnerships have also experienced the departure of some key employer champions.

In some ways, the organizations leading the SkillWorks partnerships should be among the strongest in the system. The continued capacity needs of these organizations may point to issues that go beyond the specific types of SkillWorks capacity building assistance provided to them to date, and raise issues about the ability to expand the SkillWorks model more broadly throughout the system.

On the other hand, not all of the staff turnover that has occurred should be viewed in a negative light. Some of the leadership and staffing changes that have occurred in the nonprofits over the last year offer the promise that the affected partnerships will emerge stronger than they were before, in terms of strategic thinking, management oversight, and technical capacity.

Meeting the Training Needs of Low-skilled Job Seekers and Workers

The needs of pre-employment participants for basic skill-building is greater than many of the partnerships originally anticipated, and some employers believe that longer training programs (and better screening and coaching) are needed.

In considering lengthening the training, however, it is important to consider the burden on low-income individuals of attending an unpaid training program. Representatives of several partnerships indicated that by the time people graduate from their pre-employment programs, they desperately need work and therefore accept the first job offered, rather than wait for the right position.

Training stipends, paid release time, and on-site classes at employer partners therefore are crucial to facilitate job seekers and workers pursuing education. But employers are often reluctant to allow a group of employees from the same department to leave for classes at the same time. Employers also feel that release time works best if someone is willing to pay for replacement employees to backfill for the workers attending classes.

The SkillWorks experience to date also has revealed the need for customized training for small groups of participants with similar skill levels. However, it is hard for anyone—but particularly nonprofits—to achieve any sort of economies in providing such training. Moreover, the partnerships have found that there are often no guarantees that openings will be available for participants at the time that they graduate. Accordingly, it may be more appropriate for employers to create such customized training efforts (such as through TBF’s Allied Health Initiative), when they know they will have specific openings available.

Strengthening Coaching Services

Coaching appears to be a key variable in the success of the partnerships. The nature of the work in sectoral partnerships (with career ladders) is about building and maintaining trusted relationships with both workers and employers. Variation in the quality of coaches, and the disruptions resulting from turnover in these positions, are continuing capacity issues for the partnerships.

Moreover, we have mentioned that as the incumbent components expanded, they outpaced the capacity of the coaches to provide services to the growing participant population. The partnerships attempted to become more intentional in how they allocated coaching resources, but this still left large numbers of incumbent participants receiving little or no coaching services to support them along their advancement pathway.

Strategic Partnerships

Another issue in building partnership capacity relates to outsourcing and strategic partnerships. Workforce providers frequently are encouraged by funders to avoid trying to be all things to all people, and to form strategic partnerships to deliver services. However, a couple of the Implementation Partnerships had difficulties when they tried to partner (outsource) service delivery. For example, both PCWD and HCRTI were disappointed with the quality of the resulting services and brought certain direct services in-house.

On the other hand, the SkillWorks experience also provides some evidence that—without a lot of outside support and encouragement—it is very hard to achieve the desired level of strategic coordination between partnerships or among nonprofit providers, even when such coordination appears in the self-interest of the entities involved. This is true even when the entities are working in the same sector or with the same employers. Again, this seems to be a result of limited staff capacity;

the entities have the best of intentions, but have difficulty allocating the staff time necessary to ensure that the desired coordination occurs.

Increasing Employer Engagement

Most of the Implementation Partnerships called themselves “sectoral,”¹³ but for much of the first three years of SkillWorks largely focused their intensive services (particularly incumbent services) on a limited group of employers.¹⁴ Their experience during this period highlights the distinction between a true sectoral approach and working with a specific set of employers.

The partnerships found that working with a distinct set of employers often did not generate enough placement opportunities for their pre-employment program graduates, or promotion and advancement opportunities for incumbents. The partnerships tried to address these issues, initially through their employer partners, but then through reaching out to a wider set of employers.

In a number of the partnerships, the level of employer engagement is not as strong as hoped for at this point, though employers themselves perceive their level of engagement to be significant. Employer roles obviously differ across the partnerships. Nonetheless, relatively few are playing strong leadership roles in the partnerships (the PACE employers and Hilton management representatives are among the notable exceptions). And fewer still are making major financial investments in the partnerships. The partnerships seem to be successful enough to keep employers from walking away, but not successful enough to get them to fully invest in the efforts.¹⁵

BSCPP’s experience in trying to foster employer-based advancement activities provides a good example of the variation in the extent of engagement and responsiveness across employers. BSCPP has achieved some success with universities (most notably Harvard) in establishing worker advancement programs. However, its effort to work with a building services contractor to develop contextualized language and supervisory training at the Hancock building was delayed throughout Year 3. The training program is finally being implemented in 2007, but language suggesting the possibility of promotions was removed from the agreement with the building services contractor at the latter’s request. Similarly, BSCPP has 14 employers participating in its new HVAC component, but they are not financially supporting the training or offering release time to participants, or any guarantees of promotion or increases in pay to graduates.

¹³ Although BSCPP is more occupational than sectoral in its orientation.

¹⁴ It is worth noting that while the Implementation Partnership focused their services on a limited set of employer partners, some of the partnerships ended up placing most of their pre-employment graduates with other employers.

¹⁵ However, it should be acknowledged that representatives of the Hilton Corporation have indicated that they would consider funding some sort of alternative program if it turned out that the HCC program would not continue. Also, the employer partners in HCRTI have provided substantial financial contributions over the three years of SkillWorks; however, both they and HCRTI are currently reassessing what will be the role of the Institute for these LMAA institutions in the future.

Improving MIS Capacity

Most partnerships also continue to struggle with data collection, analysis and reporting. This has been the case even though a well-designed system to document and analyze efforts and outcomes is critical to program oversight and continuous improvement, and significant SkillWorks funding has been expended to boost management information system (MIS) capacity.

By Year 3, the Funder Groups had come to fully recognize the value of a core set of uniform performance measures across partnerships. Yet even when the evaluation team tried to clarify and improve the outcomes measures, and to work with the partnerships to improve their reporting capacity for the Year 3 report, the response of the partnerships generally was disappointing.

This situation was partly a consequence of partnership staff turnover (and the resultant loss of institutional memory and staff familiarity with the partnership's data bases), and partly due to a lack of in-house technical staff. Also, some partnerships did not embrace the new measures, and/or (given the level of work required to report on them) did not feel it was an absolute priority.

MIS for performance tracking takes substantial time and effort, both to develop and maintain. Usually it takes several years to develop the reporting capacity, and then another year or two to really begin to learn how to use the data for self-assessment and mid-course corrections. Acknowledging the substantial financial cost of setting up and staffing an adequate MIS, the evaluation team raises several questions for the Funders Group (and other workforce development funders) to consider:

- Would a dedicated partnership staff member, or additional financial accountability around performance reporting, improve the partnerships' ability to report?
- Should there be additional emphasis on adoption of a uniform data collection *system* across partnerships?
- Is there efficiency for small CBOs to run these systems, or should this be an intermediary function?

Factors Relating to the Skillworks Model (and Its Implementation)

Implications of the Focus on Disadvantaged Individuals

As the preceding discussion indicated, the partnerships continued to focus primarily on serving disadvantaged job seekers and workers. The experience to date shows the inherent tensions between focusing on the lowest-skilled, low-income job seekers or workers, and (a) meeting the needs of employers, or (b) expecting to see substantial economic success within a few years.

SkillWorks was expected to be a win-win situation for both employers and low-income participants/communities. The experience across partnerships over the first three years of the initiative demonstrates, however, that the types of situations in which this model can be realized can be difficult to find, and may be more rare than originally anticipated.

Moreover, if there is an expectation that participants achieve FESS levels, there is an inherent conflict in focusing resources on the lowest-skilled employees where advancement to a FESS job may take over six years.

Ensuring an Emphasis on Career Pathways

Many of the partnerships did extensive planning around career pathways within their sector, and yet this information did not drive the programs and services once they began implementation. Some reasons for this are the fact that “career path” positions may not be available when a person is ready to advance (e.g., HCC), individual skills were lower than was originally anticipated (all partnerships), or individual preferences and constraints inhibit the use of the path (all partnerships). Additionally, for many pathways it may take participants years to advance to the next level, due to the educational/certification requirements involved. This has led some partnerships to focus (at least partially) on activities that make workers more effective in their current positions, as a way to demonstrate value to employer partners.

Overall, it is unclear whether an overestimation of participant skills or an underestimation of employers needs for quickly skilled workers was the leading cause in the lack of viability for career pathways; both seem to be contributing factors. With the PACE program, partner employers expected Module 1 training graduates to be much more highly skilled/trained than they actually were. As a result, the expected advancement to completing ASE certificates was unrealistic. On the other hand, HCRTI staff expected their training participants to have much higher English and education skills than they did. The low skill levels of participants resulted in participants focusing on skill development to improve job performance rather than focusing on job advancement.

Pre-employment Versus Incumbent Components

For several of the Implementation Partnerships, there was a gap between the pre-employment and incumbent components. For example, there was no formal transition between these program components at PCWD. For others, such as at HCC and HCRTI, the fact that many pre-employment graduates were placed outside of the employer partners made the coordination between the pre-employment and incumbent components more challenging.

Having the same partnerships design and implement both pre-employment and incumbent training programs does not necessarily make sense. They are too different, they often serve very different types of clients, and they take different capacities:

- Pre-employment programs generally serve as a community funnel. As such, CBOs that can access an extensive labor pool, provide connections to a range of employers and job options, and mobilize an array of job readiness and support services may be in the best position to carry out such programs.
- Incumbent programs generally need to be employer-specific (or at least employer-driven). It is unclear, in fact, whether CBOs can effectively provide incumbent worker training. Such training does not seem to be mission-driven for most CBOs or play to their strengths, unless they are primarily providing the coaching/wrap-around services for those programs.

The Interrelationships of the Three Components of the SkillWorks Model

As the evaluation team pointed out in our Baseline/Year 1 report, one of the unique features (at the time) of the SkillWorks initiative was that it had the three distinct components—Capacity Building, Implementation Partnerships, and Public Policy Advocacy—that were expected to complement each other. Our Year 2 report suggested, however, that these components were still functioning largely independently of each other through the second year of initiative operations. Over the course of Year 3, there was much more emphasis on trying to integrate the three components. In particular, the SkillWorks capacity building activities have been focused to a much greater extent on improving the key capacities of the partnerships and their lead organizations. During Year 3, the Workforce Solutions Group (WSG) has also reached out to the Implementation Partnerships to a much greater extent. However, as we pointed out in the public policy discussion above, to date there is still little evidence that WSG has incorporated the partnerships’ particular needs and experience in framing a specific policy and systems change agenda.

Recommendations: (Options for) Future Investments

The following are a set of recommendations for future SkillWorks investments suggested by the experience over the first three years of the initiative.

- **Invest in “best practices” relative to assessment tools and methods:** Given the importance of effective candidate assessment, and the difficulties that the partnerships experienced in conducting such assessments in an efficient manner, it would be worthwhile to identify best practices, particularly those that can be applied across employers/sectors.
- **Support the development of more “pre pre-employment” training:** The partnerships and their employers have identified the need for more remedial and other forms of prerequisite job readiness training. These are seen as crucial to preparing disadvantaged job seekers to be successful subsequently in more demanding pre-employment and technical training programs, and in entry-level positions.
- **Use financial literacy training more extensively to promote FESS:** BSCPP has found that financial literacy training can be an important tool to motivate participants and help them get on a pathway to reach FESS. This finding is consistent with the experience of a number of other workforce development initiatives around the country.
- **Provide resources for additional coaching services:** The partnerships have found coaching often to be an essential factor in promoting participant movement along career and advancement pathways. However, most of the partnerships did not have the resources to provide such services in a consistent, intensive manner to many of their incumbent participants.
- **Offer support and technical assistance to build the capacity of the Implementation Partnerships to act more as sectoral intermediaries, and to engage in advocacy to promote sectoral or systems changes:** It is important to acknowledge that serving as sectoral brokers and promoting broader sectoral and systems changes require different

sets of skills than does service delivery. During the first three years of the initiative, the partnerships were led to believe that they were primarily being judged on their ability to deliver direct services to a distinct set of participants. They did not get the full extent of the guidance they would need to understand the importance of focusing on sectoral and system change activities, or the support required to be able to carry out these functions effectively. If the Funders Group wishes the partnerships to be more active in such activities, it should provide them with appropriate supports.

- **As part of the SkillWorks policy agenda, call for greater, ongoing investment on a regional and statewide level in building the capacity of workforce training and supportive services providers:** The experience of the first three years with the Implementation Partnerships has shown that, if the SkillWorks practices and principles are to be adopted more broadly throughout the workforce development system, significant capacity building in the network of providers will need to occur.
- **Promote better connections with the community college system:** In terms of building the capacity of the workforce development system, it also will be important to foster greater connections to the training resources and employer relationships that exist in the community college system.
- **Address the immigration issues of participants in a more focused manner:** Across partnerships, a substantial portion of the SkillWorks participants are immigrants whose primary language is not English. We have also seen that immigration issues, as well as low levels of English language skills, appear to act as significant barriers to career and economic advancement for many of these individuals. SkillWorks should explore what greater role that it can play in addressing the immigration issues faced by participants, and well as in expanding the ESOL services available to workers.
- **Set clear and uniform data collection and performance reporting standards:** The Funders Group should be more explicit in its standards for data collection and reporting. It should not only communicate its views about the importance of MIS and reporting capacities, it should also increase accountability by indicating that SkillWorks funding availability will be directly tied to timely and complete reporting by grantees.

The following chapters in this report present more detailed examinations of the experience of each of the SkillWorks Implementation Partnerships during Year 3, and of the public policy activities of the Workforce Solutions Group and other SkillWorks partners. The report concludes with a review of cross-site findings, providing additional details that supplement the material contained in this executive summary.

Chapter One International Institute of Boston – Hotel Career Center (HCC)

The partnership between the International Institute of Boston (IIB), the Hilton Hotel Corporation, and the Massachusetts Lodging Association Education Foundation is intended to help low-income immigrants move towards economic self-sufficiency, while at the same time helping Hilton Hotels train and retain high-performing employees. The partnership accomplishes this by providing job-specific language and computer skills training and intensive career coaching to incumbent employees and pre-employment participants. The focused career coaching helps participants develop and pursue short- and long-term career goals.

Pre-employment graduates of the Hospitality Training Program (HTP) are placed in positions with growth potential at both partner and non-partner hotels. Hilton hotels are IIB's priority location for placing participants due to Hilton employees' ability to access incumbent services through HCC; however, if positions are not available at Hilton, IIB places participants in other hotels in the Boston area. Incumbent Hilton employees enroll in the Hotel Career Center (HCC) in order to perform better in their current job, increase their ability to be promoted, and increase their earning potential.¹⁶

Changes in Program Design, Activities, and Administration During Year 3

Major Changes in Services and/or Course Content

A new incumbent training module was successfully added to the HCC offerings. A line-level supervisor training was added to develop supervisory skills of incumbent employees. The course is based on a curriculum from the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute. At the end of the course, participants are eligible to take an exam and those who pass can become certified supervisors. In the first offering of the course, ten were trained and four took the exam. Though none of those who took the exam passed, managers of individuals that took the course spoke very highly of the results and felt that their employees emerged with noticeably improved skills. IIB plans to offer a review class for those who plan to take the test in the future.¹⁷

Two new job-shadowing sites were added for the pre-employment component, both at non-Hilton hotels. There are now a total of seven job-shadow sites, which are located in different areas and serve different clientele (four Hilton, three non-Hilton), where HTP participants spend their last two weeks of training, observing and participating in the work of the hotel.

¹⁶ The complete partnership is called the Hotel Career Center, as are the services directed toward incumbent workers. To avoid confusion, the phrase Hotel Career Center (HCC) will almost exclusively be used to refer to the incumbent component rather than the entire program.

¹⁷ Some individuals chose to postpone taking the exam because they must be a supervisor or become a supervisor within six months of passing, or take the exam again.

The incumbent cross-hotel job exchange program that was temporarily halted in Year 2 was permanently discontinued. IIB staff found that it was difficult for participants to leave their own hotels, participants had a disincentive to participate because they could not earn tips during the exchange, and it was very complicated for hotels to support the exchange. To continue supporting the job exchange concept in a more feasible way, HCC staff strengthened the internal cross-training approach, which enables employees who have identified career goals to learn new skills outside of their traditional areas.¹⁸

The coaching process for pre-employment participants was standardized during the latter part of 2006. All graduates, regardless of their placement location, have access to career coaching; the intention is to follow up and provide coaching assistance for up to three years after placement.

Finally, career ladder workshops, illustrating the variety of opportunities within the hospitality industry and describing the ways that the different jobs build off of each other, are being offered to all HTP graduates and to all employees at partner hotels, not just HCC participants.

Changes in Staffing, Administration, and/or Governance of the Partnership

Due to an overall restructuring at IIB, including merging Employment and Education into Workforce Development, the leadership structure of the program has changed. The position of SkillWorks Manager has been eliminated and the Director of Workforce Development is responsible for project management of the overall HCC program.¹⁹ Two of the key instructors (one for HTP and for HCC) have been promoted to component managers of their respective areas. In their review of IIB's application for refunding, SkillWorks funders expressed concern that the current staffing might not be sufficient to support program implementation, management, and expansion. Accordingly, the review committee encouraged IIB to focus its energy on effective implementation rather than expansion for the remainder of Year 3 and into Year 4.

Additionally, the Hilton Hotels Corporation also saw significant turnover. Two of the Hilton hotels (Back Bay, Hotel at MIT) had turnover in the general manager position and the program's most visible advocate, Roger Swadish, also relocated to another part of the country. Chris Coffin, GM of the Double Tree Guest Suites, who has been involved with the program since its inception, has taken on the role as spokesperson. Hilton's continued support of the program, in spite of this turnover, demonstrates the institutionalized nature of the HCC program within the partner hotels and its ability to withstand staff turnover and shifting management agendas.²⁰

¹⁸ The internal cross-training program involves cooperation between HCC staff and Hilton supervisors to create opportunities for HCC participants to learn new skills or jobs in which they are interested. When a participant identifies a position that they are interested in, Hilton staff, with the help of HCC staff, establish opportunities for the participant to experience the new job and develop any required skills for completing the job successfully.

¹⁹ In 2006, the Education and Employment Services Departments of IIB were combined to form the Workforce Development Department.

²⁰ Hilton's support continued to include provision of meeting spaces, dedication of HR, manager, and supervisor time, and paid time off for participants. Additionally, at the end of Year 3, Hilton partners agreed to pay \$5,000 each to support the Initiative.

The overall Hotel Career Center partnership was expanded to include the Massachusetts Lodging Association Education Foundation. The MLA Education Foundation supports the Center by providing curriculum support and outreach, and serving as a co-applicant for Workforce Competitive Trust Funds. In Year 3, the Foundation reviewed the curriculum for the pre-employment program and determined that it met industry standards, and as a result the graduating certificate includes the logo from the Roger Saunders Institute.

Who Is the Project Serving?

Has the Project Met its Enrollment Goals?

In 2006, IIB enrolled 110 individuals—50 in the pre-employment program and 60 in the incumbent program (Table 1.1). In all, IIB has exceeded its initial goal of serving 264 individuals over three years by more than 20%. It actually served 329, with a slightly larger number enrolled at HCC than HTP.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTALS	Goal Year 3	Goal Overall
Pre-employment	52	52	50	154	48	144
Incumbent	55	60	60	175	50	120
Three-Year Total for Pre-employment and Incumbents				329	113	264

The consistent level of enrollment, about 50 individuals each year in HTP and 60 individuals in HCC, represents a concerted effort to serve as many individuals as possible while ensuring the highest quality of instruction.²¹

Is the Project Serving the Targeted Population?

IIB continues to seek to serve the SkillWorks target population—low-skilled, low-income Boston residents. However, it balances this focus with its mission-driven emphasis on serving the Greater Boston immigrant community. The result of this overarching emphasis, combined with the need/desire to accept all eligible incumbent employees into HCC, has traditionally led to lower than expected numbers of enrollees who were Boston residents. Although the IIB improved the percentage of HCC enrollees who were Boston residents from 27% to 55% during Year 3, the number of Boston residents enrolled in HTP declined from 69% to 64% (see Tables 1.2 and 1.3), though both figures are up from Year 1 when only 50% of participants were Boston residents.

Pre-employment participants' level of educational attainment is relatively high during Year 3, with only 18% having less than a high school diploma and 32% holding a 4-year undergraduate degree.

²¹ The size of HTP classes is limited by a variety of factors including the appropriate size for quality instruction, the number of job shadowing locations available, and the size of group feasible for hotel tours.

This high educational achievement can mask the challenges that HTP participants face, though. Being non-native speakers of English with international schooling, they are at a disadvantage in the job market. The educational attainment of incumbent enrollees in Year 3 is slightly lower, with 28% having less than a high school diploma and another 33% holding a high school diploma or GED certificate. The more modest educational achievements, coupled with lower-level English language skills and the fact that a large portion of HCC enrollees are over 40 years old, also create a disadvantage for these individuals in the workforce.

About two-thirds of Year 3 enrollees (pre-employment and incumbent) reported household income below the FESS standard set for Boston. The income level of incumbent workers was slightly higher than pre-employment enrollees—38% of households were above FESS, as compared to 26% of pre-employment households.

One significant change from Years 1 and 2 was the fact that a significantly greater percentage of pre-employment enrollees were employed at the time of enrollment into the HTP program (86% in Year 3, up from 17% in Year 1 and 40% in Year 2). HTP staff commented that they have been seeing higher levels of English skills from the most recent round of immigrants, which perhaps increased their ability to work prior to enrolling in the HTP program.

Table 1.2: Pre-Employment (HTP) Demographic Data						
	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Enrollment						
Total number enrolled	52		52		50	
Boston Residency						
Yes, Boston resident	26	50%	36	69%	32	64%
No, not Boston resident	26	50%	16	31%	18	36%
Missing	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	52	100%	52	100%	50	100%
Highest Educational Level and Certification at Enrollment						
Neither GED nor high school diploma	10	19%	6	12%	9	18%
GED certificate	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
High school diploma	10	19%	23	44%	12	24%
Some college / technical school	15	29%	7	13%	11	22%
Associates degree	2	4%	1	2%	0	0%
4-year undergraduate degree	5	10%	6	12%	16	32%
Post-graduate degree	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%
Certificate from technical or vocational training program	10	19%	7	13%	1	2%
License to practice vocational trade	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Missing	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
Total	52	100%	52	100%	50	100%
Primary Language						
English	5	10%	2	4%	1	2%
Not English	47	90%	50	96%	49	98%
Missing	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	52	100%	52	100%	50	100%
Employment at Enrollment						
Total employed at enrollment	9	17%	21	40%	43	86%
Full-time workers	1	2%	5	10%	28	56%
Average hourly wage	\$9.00		\$9.00		\$9.83	
Part-time workers	8	15%	16	31%	15	30%
Average hours worked	23.3		21.3		25.4	
Average hourly wage	\$7.63		\$7.59		\$8.04	
With employer-sponsored benefits					0	0%
Without employer-sponsored benefits					43	100%

Table 1.3: Incumbent (HCC) Demographic Data						
	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Enrollment						
Total number enrolled	55		60		60	
Boston Residency						
Yes, Boston resident	28	51%	16	27%	33	55%
No, not Boston resident	27	49%	44	73%	26	43%
Missing	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%
Total	55	100%	60	100%	60	100%
Highest Educational Level and Certification at Enrollment						
Neither GED or high school diploma	10	18%	16	27%	17	28%
GED certificate	1	2%	1	2%	3	5%
High school diploma	26	47%	21	35%	17	28%
Some college / technical school	6	11%	12	20%	4	7%
Associates degree	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4-year undergraduate degree	3	5%	3	5%	7	12%
Post-graduate degree	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
Certificate from technical or vocational training program	9	16%	5	8%	5	8%
License to practice vocational trade	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Missing	0	0%	1	2%	7	12%
Total	55	100%	60	100%	60	100%
Primary Language						
English	10	18%	6	10%	3	5%
Not English	45	82%	54	90%	57	95%
Missing	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	55	100%	60	100%	60	100%
Employment at Enrollment						
Full-time workers	55	100%	60	100%	60	100%
Average hourly wage	\$11.14		\$11.01		\$12.02	
Part-time workers	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Average hours worked	N/A		N/A		N/A	
Average hourly wage	N/A		N/A		N/A	
With employer-sponsored benefits					D/U*	D/U
Without employer-sponsored benefits					D/U	D/U

*D/U = Data Unavailable

Participant Outcomes

Employment Outcomes for Pre-Employment Participants

In program Year 3, HTP enrolled 50 individuals seeking employment in the hotel industry. All 50 enrollees graduated from the program, a 100% graduation rate (Table 1.4). Seventy-two percent of graduates were placed in the hospitality industry, though the trend of lower than desired placement rates at the Hilton properties continued, with only 10% of graduates being placed at employer partner properties. One of the reasons for this lower than desired placement rate is that graduates placed at non-partner hotels often receive higher wages. When partner employers were asked about the HTP program and the number of graduates they have hired, they spoke highly of HTP's quality of graduates but did not necessarily see HTP as an exclusive place to hire new employees. Most managers and supervisors indicated that their needs were being sufficiently met by the number of HTP graduates they had hired.²²

Nonetheless, IIB staff, in consultation with HR managers at partner employers, have remained committed to creating a stronger bridge between the HTP program and partner employers. At the beginning of Year 4, IIB staff seized an opportunity to discuss the low placement rate of HTP graduates into the Hilton properties with Hilton management staff. During this conversation, HR managers were able to isolate the interviewing/hiring delay that often resulted in graduates accepting positions at non-partner hotels before a final hiring decision was made at one of the Hilton hotels. By reminding managers and supervisors to focus on the applications and interviews of HTP graduates, HR managers were successful in increasing the placement rate at partner hotels to 36% after the first round of training in 2007.

Enrollment		Program Completion		Placement				
# Enrolled	# Graduating	% of Enrolled	# Placed in Partner Employer	% of Graduates	# Placed in Non-Partners	% of Graduates	Total Placed	% of Graduates
50	50	100.0%	5	10.0%	31	62.0%	36*	72.0%

* An additional five graduates were placed in food service or hospital housekeeping positions.

The number of individuals who were placed into the hospitality industry fell slightly in Year 3 (Table 1.5). It is clear from employer feedback that the decreased placement rate was not due to any concern about graduates' quality of performance. Employers interviewed about HTP graduates were entirely positive. In fact, one non-partner employer indicated that HTP graduates are given the benefit of the doubt in hiring because of IIB's track record. This is critical for immigrants with no employment history.

²² In general, partner employers do not seem to have a strong attachment to the HTP program; they primarily view the HCC program as the program they are committed to supporting.

YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		TOTALS	
Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled						
40	76.9%	42	80.8%	36	72.0%	118	76.6%

All placements were into full-time, permanent positions with benefits, and at the end of Year 3, all HTP graduates from Year 3 continued to be employed at their initial placement (Table 1.6).²³ IIB staff believe that the superb retention rate is due to a refined testing/interview/assessment process that ensures that enrollees have an interest in working in the industry and have the skills and personality to be successful. They also believe that graduates have a sense of loyalty to HTP and understand that their behavior will reflect on how their employers view future HTP graduates.

	Initial Placements		Year-End Status	
	Placed in Jobs	% of Graduates	Placed in Jobs	% of Placed
Placed with partner employers	5	10.0%	5	100.0%
Full-time jobs (at least 30 hrs/week)	5	100.0%	5	100.0%
Part-time jobs	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Permanent positions	5	100.0%	5	100.0%
Temporary positions	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
With benefits	5	100.0%	5	100.0%
Without benefits	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Placed with non-partner employers	31	62.0%	31	100.0%
Full-time jobs (at least 30 hrs/week)	31	100.0%	31	100.0%
Part-time jobs	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Permanent positions	31	100.0%	31	100.0%
Temporary positions	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
With benefits	31	100.0%	31	100.0%
Without benefits	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	36	72.0%	36	100.0%

The positive result of HTP's 100% end-of-year retention rate for Year 3 pre-employment graduates is somewhat offset when taken together with the nine-month retention rate of Year 1 and 2 pre-

²³ Since HTP graduates participants four times a year, all graduates had been on the job at least two months and some as many as nine months.

employment graduates.²⁴ The nine-month retention rate for the latter individuals was only 66%. In Year 3, IIB has increased its emphasis on career coaching, particularly at non-partner hotels, committing to provide the same level of coaching to all graduates regardless of whether they are placed at a partner hotel. This investment may increase the overall longer-term retention for Year 3 graduates in the coming year.

The pre-employment average wage at placement has continued to increase each year (Table 1.7). The average wage increase from the last job held was substantial, at \$3.51/hour. This number is based on a small sample (only 20 graduates, primarily because wage data is only readily available for those individuals placed at partner hotels). In general, non-partner hotels tend to pay higher wages than the Hilton partner properties, so IIB feels that it is reasonable to assume that this is a representative, or even conservative, estimate of overall initial wage gains for pre-employment graduates.

Table 1.7: Pre-employment (HTP) Average Wage At Placement and Average Hourly Wage Increase Realized			
	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
Pre-employment average wage at placement	\$ 9.75	\$ 10.61	\$ 11.63 ²⁵
Average hourly wage increase from last job held, for those pre-employment enrollees who were employed at (or immediately prior to) enrollment		\$ 2.68	\$ 3.51
Number of pre-employment participants included in this calculation			20

Employment Outcomes for Incumbent Workers

As was already mentioned, HCC exceeded its enrollment goal again in Year 3. The retention rate for all employees enrolled over the three years was 79% (Table 1.8).²⁶ That is, 79% of those who enrolled in the program since HCC began continued to be employed at the end of 2006. Compared to the 80% annual retention standard provided by one of the employers, the HCC incumbent participants are at least meeting industry standards. It is possible, however, to interpret the overall 79% retention rate as better than the industry standard for *annual* retention, since one-third of the individuals had remained at their place of employment for 24 months and another third at least 12 months.

²⁴ IIB only tracked participants for 9 months, rather than the 12 months expected by the SkillWorks evaluation.

²⁵ For those placed at Hilton hotels, the starting wage was only \$9.75.

²⁶ Those who left are known to have moved primarily to other hotels or other cities.

Table 1.8: Incumbent (HCC) Year End Job Status at Employer Partners					
Total Number of Incumbent Enrollees			Number of Incumbent Enrollees Still Employed at Employer Partners		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL	End of Yr 3	% of Total
55	60	60	175	138	79%

Wage increases and promotions are two key ways in which the program’s impact can be measured. Unfortunately, IIB and the partner employers were unable to isolate which of the wage increases that occurred for incumbent participants were due to HCC’s intervention. During employer interviews, HR directors, managers, and supervisors tended to think that most wage increases were due to cost of living increases, unless they were connected with a promotion or change in position. Because of this, the 30 promotions received by enrollees are the best available indicator of success at moving along a career path (Table 1.9).²⁷

Table 1.9: Incumbent (HCC) Program-Related Wage Increases and Promotions (Years 1-3)			
Wage Increases	% of Incumbents	Promotions	% of Incumbents
122	69.7%	30	17.1%

During evaluation interviews, numerous stories were told of HCC participants who experienced advancement. An example is the story of a busperson who had a high level of English but not enough confidence to go after the server position she wanted. As a result of the HCC program and working with a career coach, she was made a server and has since applied for a management position at another hotel. Other examples included a housekeeper who became a supervisor, a mini-bar attendant who moved to the front office, and a laundry attendant who is now a housing supervisor.²⁸

²⁷ IIB staff indicated that the number of “promotions” would likely be higher if strategic lateral moves were taken into account. For many HCC participants, lateral position changes are taken and seen as steps toward eventual advancement. These career moves are not adequately captured by our reporting system. Additionally, it is common for individuals to move to a different hotel chain in order to take a higher job (promotion). These also are not tracked.

²⁸ Promotions are most common in housekeeping because there are more supervisory positions available.

Skill Enhancement Outcomes²⁹

HCC staff work intensely with participants to establish career plans and adapt an English For Advancement (EFA) curriculum to address the goals and aspirations of program enrollees. Given their commitment to this process, they have established a high standard for interpreting when enrollees have “new” career goals for advancement. Not only do participants have to have clearly established goals, they must also be actively working toward those goals. Because of this rigorous definition, and the fact that IIB only tracked (for evaluation purposes) career goals for those individuals known to have a household income below FESS levels, the numbers in Table 1.10 are small. The information in the table reflects data on the 16% of enrollees (or 28 individuals) whose household income falls below FESS level.³⁰ For this small sample of enrollees, about half, or 14 individuals, are actively trying to achieve a career goal.

Table 1.10: Pathways to FESS Jobs					
Number of Incumbent Enrollees with <u>New</u> Career Goal for Advancement to Occupation Likely to Pay FESS-Level Wages (#) ³¹			Percentage of Incumbent Enrollees with <u>New</u> Career Goal for Advancing to Occupation Likely to Pay FESS-Level Wages (%)		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
4	4	6	7.3%	6.7%	10.0%

HCC staff included completion of EFA and computer training classes in their definition of whether enrollees completed training for advancement. Essentially, all individuals who enrolled in an HCC course over the years were included in Table 1.11.³² However, this table under-represents the level of training that HCC leverages for its participants. In interviews with evaluators, career coaches described individuals who have paired HCC classes with English classes near their home to hasten the pace of their advancement. Other individuals have taken community college courses in accounting, writing, or bartending to improve their job performance. Finally, one employer indicated that the HCC supervisory course allowed individuals to participate in the training who would not have felt comfortable completing the hotel’s own supervisory training course.

²⁹ Interim outcome indicators related to skill enhancement were standardized somewhat in Year 3 but individual partnerships were still allowed latitude in determining exactly how they would define each achievement, given the participants’ starting skill level and industry standards.

³⁰ Household income is only known for about half of total enrollees. Therefore, it is likely that some portion of the remaining 50% of enrollees also fall below FESS standards and are seeking to actively advance into occupations paying FESS-level wages.

³¹ An individual was considered to have a new career goal for advancement if obtaining job upgrades or wage increases and/or participating in classes or workshops to increase job skills. These numbers reflect current participants, listed according to their year of enrollment.

³² The types of courses included in the calculations range from English for advancement, to computers, to line-level supervisory training.

Table 1.11: Completion of Training for Advancement (in sectors where jobs paying FESS wages do not necessarily require formal licensing or certifications)			
	Number of Incumbent Enrollees Who Have Completed Vocational-Specific Training That Is Seen as Fostering Achievement of the Next Level of Career Advancement		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
HCC	40	50	60

Over the three program years, five HCC participants enrolled in GED classes, considered by IIB staff to be a significant educational achievement (Table 1.12). Additionally, during employer and IIB staff interviews, individuals mentioned multiple people that applied for college enrollment and were admitted. These numbers are not reflected below.

Table 1.12: Other Significant Educational Achievements			
	Number of Incumbent Enrollees Who Have Realized Other Significant Educational Achievements (such as obtained GED, entered college, etc.)		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
HCC	1	3	1

Employer Outcomes

Increased Productivity

When asked to describe the benefits of employees participating in the HTP or HCC programs, employers were eager to respond and consistent in their responses. For HTP graduates, employers explained that the employees come in with good knowledge of what to expect, which in turn makes them effective employees. Managers and supervisors of HCC enrollees consistently described improved attitudes, communication with guests and fellow employees, and team morale, in addition to higher self-confidence and increased literacy skills, as a result of program participation. Employers of HTP and HCC participants discussed the improved productivity that these characteristics/changes foster. While no employer quantified this improvement, they all spoke with firm conviction about the improved skills and resulting work environment as a result of the training. One specific example provided was an individual who attended the HCC supervisory training. After the training, the participant was better able to respond to issues/conflicts that arose on the restaurant floor, articulating opinions and making suggestions. These improved skills transformed the work environment and made the entire team more effective.

Ability to Promote From Within

Employers' responses to whether the HTP and HCC programs helped them to improve promotions from within depended on whether they perceived that they were already able to promote from within. For some employers, program enrollees were perceived as a tremendous asset but not any more so

than the high-quality employees they already employed. For other employers, enrollees were perceived as able to advance faster than the average employee, with one employer representative indicating that promotions occur at a rate 33% faster than would be expected otherwise. One specific skill mentioned that improves employers' ability to promote from within is the fact that HCC participants are more comfortable with and confident when using English, which creates greater potential for their promotion to guest contact positions.

Increased Retention of Workers

HTP and HCC graduates are perceived as very stable employees, though many employers interviewed considered their work staff, in general, to be stable. One supervisor did mention that all of her employees who participated in the HCC program continue to work for her, and that one of these individuals would not likely have remained employed except for the program. This individual was moved from housekeeping to being a busperson about the time of enrollment in HCC, in order to see if a new area would improve performance. After participating in the program, the employee was promoted to server.

Improved Access to Entry-Level Workers

Employers do not feel that they have difficulty accessing entry-level workers but they do have trouble accessing high-quality workers. Over the last few years, HTP has become provider of choice for at least two employers because of the quality of workers it produces. Another employer has added an IIB referral "flag" to its application form so that it can easily identify and highlight HTP graduates.

In addition to the fact that HTP graduates improve employers' access to *high-quality* employees, the existence of the HCC incumbent program has allowed Hilton partner employers to hire individuals with less experience than normal, because it knows that the HCC program can be utilized to help train the employee.

Improved Community Relations

Consistently, employers connected with the HCC program described the way that the program has improved their relations with the community from which they hire. For some, the program is seen as a recruitment tool, since employees refer their family and friends to the participating hotels, largely because of the program and what it signifies to employees about employers' commitment to them.

System Change Outcomes

Enhanced Capacity of Service Providers

The main capacity improvement that HCC and HTP have had on IIB's capacity has been the integration of coaching into the overall service delivery design. IIB now has a systematic approach to coaching that is utilized across both programs, with all participants. One IIB employee said that she "can't imagine going back to not having" coaching as a tool. IIB staff have seen the life-changing power that creating specific, customized, implementable plans can have on participants' lives.

Impacts on the Sector

Although there have not been observed system-wide impacts on the Greater Boston hotel industry, there have been changes across the participating Hilton hotels. As a result of the Planning and Evaluation Team (PET) meetings, HR directors and hotel general managers have realized the diversity of ways that each hotel deals with paid release time, tuition reimbursement, and hiring. By understanding this diversity, they are more likely to try new ways of operating. Recent conversations with PET members about IIB's desire to track merit wage increases has opened a dialogue about why this is important and how HR departments might be able to better track this in the future.

Additional system changes that have occurred at the partner hotels include greater flexibility in the types of classes that qualify for tuition reimbursement (e.g., writing courses, ESOL courses), greater utilization of tuition reimbursement resources by employees, and managers' greater commitment to employee advancement, since they can now better see employees' potential based on input from coaches and the positive experiences they have seen in other employees. Finally, for the first time, partner hotels are contributing \$5,000 each to the HCC program in Year 4. These are the first cash resources provided in support of the program.³³

Impacts Related to Public Policy

IIB staff spoke highly of Workforce Solution Group's efforts, describing them as informative and well organized. The key benefit of WSG's efforts was perceived to be the fact that they create a space where private entities (employers) and non-profits can listen to each other. Since these groups often speak in different languages, WSG helps translate competing interests into common language so that progress can be made on public policy initiatives.

Conclusions

Outcomes to Date: Summary

HCC and HTP have led to some significant outcomes for low-income, low-wage workers. Skill enhancements have been clear and wage gains for HTP graduates have been noteworthy. The programs have led to a new employer focus on investment in adult education and employee awareness of the need for advancement, which has the potential to create a new environment for incumbent workers. There is still room for improvement, though. Although actual promotions have occurred, there seem to be many more participants ready to advance than positions that have become available. The complexity of advancement, including the size of the hotel, participant barriers to advancement, and potential staffing innovations, will be discussed in the *Challenges* section below.

³³ While these resources are a substantial and positive step, they are still minimal in terms of the scale of the project. Initially, HCC had hoped to receive \$100,000 in support from the Hilton Corporation Foundation in Year 4. Once research was completed into the Corporation's grant requirements, it became clear that the HCC program did not fall under the funding criteria. Subsequently, partner hotels agreed to provide \$5,000 each from their training resources. Although beneficial, the small scale of these resources, in light of the cost of program implementation, begs the question of whether Hilton Properties is contributing at a level equivalent to the benefits that partner hotels are receiving.

Employers have said that the projects have led to meaningful outcomes. They have better teams, more effective team members, increased ability to promote from within, improved access to high quality entry-level workers, and some evidence of increased retention.

Key Learnings

Direct service staff must understand and be able to meet the needs of multiple customers.

Inherent in a dual customer approach is the need for service providers to understand the different customer needs involved and flexibly adapt service provision to meet these needs. For the IIB staff, this has meant understanding why employees participate in the HCC program and why employers choose to support it. For participants, some are participating to improve their English so that they can advance in their work; others want to improve their English so that they can better communicate with their children's teachers. Coupling these diverse reasons with employers' desire for increased productivity means that the instructors must find a middle ground that allows for everyone's goals to be met. IIB management feels that staff have been able to meet customers needs, as evidenced by continuing participation and employer outcomes.

Advancement choices are complicated.

In every interview conducted for HCC's Year 3 assessment, the issue of employee advancement was discussed. These discussions illuminated the complex issues surrounding advancement, including the fact that a lack of advancement is not necessarily an indicator of program failure. Interim steps must occur before advancement becomes feasible and participants must desire to advance. For example, for advancement to occur participants must gain the skills needed. In addition, there must be appropriate and desirable positions available (in terms of schedule, location, and pay), and employees must have the internal confidence and desire to stretch and try for something new. There were examples of shortcomings in each of these areas discussed during evaluation interviews. There were stories about participants being ready for advancement and no positions being available; there were also stories of participants not applying for promotion positions even though they were qualified and the positions were available. Neither the lack of promotion opportunities nor the unwillingness of participants to go after promotions is a failing of HCC, particularly in light of HCC's flexible approach to career ladders and advancement discussed later in this section. Rather, they are facts of program implementation that must be understood and mitigated to the extent possible when working to foster additional opportunities for low-income, low-skilled individuals.

In order to better understand the frequency and the relative importance of the different barriers to advancement, IIB has begun to track when and why individuals choose to forgo promotions. Some of the commonly cited reasons include an unwillingness to lose the significant income derived from tips, even for an eventual increase in wage rate; an unwillingness to change locations, either because the new location is inconvenient or because a new hotel will mean a loss of camaraderie and a known set of peers; and a new schedule that will not work with family commitments or a second job schedule.

There are critical factors that foster employee and employer outcomes.

1. Coaching is critical for retention and advancement

Employers (both partner and non-partner) see coaching as critical to participants' success. Both managers and supervisors indicated that the coaches have made them more aware of staff skills. Employers, in general, described feeling more confident about the potential success of those they hire

since they know that the workers are supported by the coach. For the participants, coaches help open their eyes to what is available outside of their work department or current employer (HCC) and all that they can accomplish in the workplace in terms of advancement.

IIB staff believes that coaching that is very focused—systematically identifying worker needs and designing plans around them—can result in participant achievements. One caveat mentioned by IIB staff, though, is that when working with multi-lingual, multi-ethnic population, the English abilities of participants affect the quality of coaching that can occur, particularly for the HTP program where on-the-job coaching occurs over the phone. Over the last year, the English levels of participants have been higher, and therefore coaching has been easier and more consistent, potentially contributing to the 100% retention rate of HTP graduates in Year 3.

2. The attitudes of managers/supervisors are critical to the success of HCC

The buy-in and participation of managers and supervisors is a fundamental aspect of the HCC program and a contributor to the success of participants. Across the partner hotels, HR directors recently agreed that the front-line supervisors “make or break” participants’ success through their willingness to support participants’ time in class, creation of opportunities for participants to cross-train and learn new skills, and ability to see the potential in their employees for advancement.

HCC staff and management at the partner hotels are seeking ways to create incentives for supervisors and managers to support their HCC participants. To date, they have not yet identified the best way to provide these incentives.

3. In-house location for incumbent training is critical to employers

When asked about the innovative aspects of the HCC program, employers all mentioned the fact that the training occurs “in-house.” HR directors described the fact that supervisors are more willing to let employees participate during their shifts because they know that the classes are in the building and training time will be maximized. Additionally, employers appreciate the fact that they can drop by the class and see how everyone is progressing. Employers have the perception that because the training is in the building, employees know employers are watching and will be less likely to waste time or not attend, therefore improving participant outcomes.³⁴

4. A customized, contextual approach is essential for employee learning

All training taught through HTP and HCC is contextualized to the hospitality industry. This is believed to help keep participants engaged, make them more effective on the job, and increase employer buy-in for the training.

³⁴ IIB recently submitted a Workforce Competitive Trust Fund grant application that supports a different model for providing on-site training. In the application, IIB, in partnership with Jewish Vocational Services, proposed to provide services similar to those provided through HCC, but in rotating geographic locations. The services would be centralized in different areas of Boston and Cambridge, with the actual location of classes rotating to different hotels in the area. Since this model would force employers to allow employees to travel to off-site locations, HCC will be able to judge how the classes’ location affected participant attendance and overall outcomes.

In addition to contextualizing all basic skills being taught, HCC staff have realized over the three years that course content must also reflect the goals and needs of participants in order to maximize the training's effectiveness. To increase the feasibility of implementing this approach, the position of instructor and coach were integrated so that the same person functions in both roles. By consolidating the two positions into one staff member, the teacher/coach is able to adapt HCC curriculum to respond to specific challenges that multiple staff members might be facing. For example, one HCC coach taught a class session on how to respond to management criticism when she realized that multiple employees were struggling to deal with this specific communication scenario.

Customization has also occurred in the additional workshops HCC offered to program participants. The supervisory training previously mentioned was a customized course based on HCC participants' needs that emerged over time. Additionally, one coach realized that multiple students were considering applying for college, so she organized a workshop to discuss how to apply for financial aid, etc.

Interim steps toward career goals must be flexible.

In terms of career advancement, the career coaches realized that traditional career ladders, where an individual moves from one set position to the next, do not necessarily work well in the hospitality industry since there are often few positions open at a given hotel. Instead they have developed a more flexible approach that focuses on an ultimate career goal. When designing the steps needed to reach that goal, they focus on the skills needed and help participants to see which positions might help them gain the skills they need. This approach allows for forward progress while an individual waits for a desired position to open.

Critical Challenges

As the Hotel Career Center Partnership looks to the future, there are a few critical challenges that must be addressed. Some of these challenges are already being addressed by the partnership in Year 4; others continue to require attention and focus.

IIB's ability to track progress of non-Hilton employees, particularly since so many of the HTP graduates are placed outside of the partner hotels, is a critical challenge. From interviewing key IIB staff for this report, it is clear that significant wage, promotion, and educational achievements are occurring that are not completely represented in the current data tracking system. The extent to which IIB can improve collection of this critical information will directly enhance its ability to communicate the impact of its efforts, and to refine its strategies to continually improve its approach. The partnership acknowledged this challenge in the application for Year 4 refunding and articulated its intention to improve its participant tracking for this sub-group of enrollees. In Year 4, IIB is addressing this challenge by providing non-partner hotels with a release form and asking them to have HTP graduates sign the form while completing employer paperwork. This is a tangible and positive first step, but it is unclear whether this will be enough to overcome employer policies around release of information or the lack of incentive for non-partner employers to go through the work of providing the requested information.

A second challenge also relates to available data. This year's participant income data indicates that a significant number of households (for which data is known) are at or above FESS levels. Due to the

low wage levels paid in the hospitality industry, it is unclear from existing data where the resources are coming from to elevate household wages to the FESS level. IIB staff speculate that a combination of tips, second (and third) jobs, and other household members' income help to augment participant wages. Additional data would help to clarify participants' economic situations and document changes in how participant households accumulate resources. If IIB is successful in helping to increase wages to the extent that a person can work one job instead of two, this would be a significant outcome to report. Currently, this story is unable to be told; with additional data collection, IIB might be able to communicate more effectively the overall effect that their intervention is having on household financial stability.

The size of the Hilton properties and the limited number of available positions at each hotel poses another challenge to the success of the HCC. Promotions are described as very competitive, meaning that there are participants ready to advance and there is not a direct place to advance to within their current property.³⁵ It is unclear whether HCC has reached a threshold where too many participants have been trained, are qualified for advancement, and the advancement is too slow in coming. If this becomes the case, it may serve as a deterrent to new employees' participation in the program.³⁶

On the other hand, if trained HCC employees begin to leave for better positions at other hotels, there may be a continued need for the training. Since employer partners seem to be more concerned with HCC providing an improved workforce rather than a stable workforce, this might not be perceived as a negative program outcome. From the perspective of the participants, as long as they are able to advance, whether internally or externally, there does not seem to be an inherent disadvantage to receiving promotions outside of current employers. This process would be non-traditional, since one expects that training and advancement would be most desirable within a given employer, but it would not necessarily be negative, given the size of the Hilton properties and the goals of the participants. However, unless IIB develops a mechanism to track folks that move on to other hotels, it will not be able to demonstrate fully the results of its efforts.

Finally, the commitment and/or ability of employer partners to move employees up to FESS levels are unclear. Although the employer partners are willing to support participants in their quest for advancement, see the potential of individuals to do so, and have made some system changes to facilitate this advancement, such as increasing paid release time, broader systems changes have not occurred. There has not been any discussion, for example, relative to restructuring positions to create more promotion opportunities. And, as measured by its combined cash and non-cash contribution to date, Hilton's commitment to the HCC effort has been comparatively modest, given the level of support provided by the SkillWorks funding.

³⁵ Evidence of this occurring is the fact that coaches have had to adjust the career coaching approach, moving from a linear advancement process to one more focused on skills and potential for different positions to provide needed experience. This allows participants to be flexible in pursuing different types of positions as they become available.

³⁶ HCC's refinement of its ability to track when individuals are ready for promotion, whether a position becomes available, and whether or not an individual decided to go after the promotion will provide a better understanding about the extent to which there is actually a saturation of trained employees waiting to advance.

Chapter Two Health Care Research and Training Institute (HCRTI)

HCRTI represents a partnership involving seven health care-related employers, five community colleges and training agencies, and seven community organizations. Led by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC) and Fenway Community Development Corporation, in collaboration with MissionWorks, the HCRTI partnership is seeking to institutionalize a sectoral career ladders project in health care focused on the Longwood Medical and Academic Area (LMA). Through an employment pipeline for residents that streamlines and simplifies the recruiting and hiring process for health care employers, the goal is for partner employers to be able to access a well-qualified and trained entry-level workforce. Additionally, HCRTI has worked to establish itself as a permanent health care training center for LMA's existing entry-level workers.

Changes in Program Design, Activities, and Administration During Year 3

Major Changes in Services and/or Course Content

Preemployment Component

- HCRTI staff has improved the intake, assessment, and interview process for pre-employment applicants by tracking data on applicants' promptness, appearance, and presentation at all three of these initial participation stages. These steps were taken in order to improve subsequent course completion rates.
- Over the last few years, HCRTI has noticed an increase in employers' requirements for key positions open to HCRTI graduates. In order to meet such higher credentialing requirements, HCRTI has, for example, increased the intensity of the central sterile supply training to better prepare employees for certification testing. To this end, it has contracted with an instructor who serves on the certification board and can effectively prepare participants for the examination. It is also watching other relevant positions to see if additional requirements are being added.
- The pre-employment program was also able to implement, in partnership with Roxbury Community College, a new program entitled "Math and Science Advancement: Pathways to College and Employment" in October 2006. The program was funded by a grant from the Neighborhood Jobs Trust/City of Boston Office of Jobs and Community Services, and was designed to provide adult Boston residents with math and science training and support services to enable them to progress into higher education in health care fields, or in some cases directly into health care positions. This program complemented pre-existing pre-employment training modules by offering Boston residents a new, longer training program focused on higher education.

Incumbent Component

- HCRTI implemented a standardized ESOL assessment tool and added two additional levels of ESOL to better serve participants' needs. By further segmenting the classes, teachers and participants are able to more accurately work at a level that is appropriate for all students.
- As had been planned during Year 2, the surgical technologist certificate program was launched during Year 3. Fourteen employees from five hospitals are participating. Participants will complete all requirements necessary for certification as surgical technologists by June 2008. When setting up this program, HCRTI was able to incorporate lessons learned from the nursing program. Instead of serving as the fiscal agent between the education provider and the employers, as is the case with the nursing program, HCRTI structured the partnership so that the employers are directly contracting with the community college to provide instruction and the Institute is playing a key coordinating role. This arrangement helps the Institute to focus on its core competencies of facilitation and coordination rather than on financial management.

Changes in Staffing, Administration, and/or Governance of the Partnership

As was the case in previous years, HCRTI experienced significant staff turnover in 2006. Sarah Griffen, Institute Director, stepped down and the new Institute Director, Lucy Meadows, started during the summer of 2006. Freddy Gonzales, Director of Operations, also left in April 2007. The Director of Operations position has been eliminated.

Additional Partnership staffing, administration, and/or governance changes:

- The Institute's management was centralized over the course of Year 3, with those Institute staff based in the Fenway CDC and MissionWorks reporting to the Institute's Director of Operations, based at JPNDC.³⁷ Under Ms. Meadows's leadership, the Institute has been focusing on team building, fostering access to training for staff, and working to fill gaps in staffing, in order to stem staff attrition and improve team morale.
- A one-year pilot partnership with Mission Hill Jobs Collaborative, consisting of five Mission Hill organizations, was established to broaden HCRTI's impact by building links with new partners who carry out "pre pre-employment" activities for neighborhood residents.
- Year 3 was also a time for HCRTI to invest time and resources into sustainability planning. During this process, preliminary consensus was reached that the Institute should move toward a more independent structure, separating from the CBOs as parent/governing organizations, in recognition of HCRTI's serving a citywide population, while maintaining a strong role for neighborhood organizations. The final structure will be determined in 2007.

³⁷ In April 2007, those reporting to the Director of Operations began reporting to the Institute Director.

- Significant energy has been invested in HCRTI’s MIS in order to improve the quality and depth of data available. A major step forward was the consolidation of the three formerly separate databases into one centralized database that can be remotely accessed by all staff. This system was put into operation in late 2006, although the finalization of the upgrades did not occur until recently.³⁸

Who Is the Project Serving?

Has the Project Met its Enrollment Goals?

Originally, HCRTI expected to enroll 165 individuals in the pre-employment program and 240 in the incumbent program in Year 3 (Table 2.1). The pre-employment enrollment fell short of the intended goal for Year 3 due to recruitment challenges,³⁹ whereas the incumbent enrollments met expectations.⁴⁰

Table 2.1: Total Enrollments					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTALS	Goal Year 3
Pre-employment training	125	70	45	240	165
Pre-employment walk-ins	37	51	89	177	60
Incumbent	208	244	236	688	240
Three-Year Total for Pre-employment and Incumbents				1105	465

Is the Project Serving the Targeted Population?

In general, HCRTI is continuing to serve the targeted population of low-skilled, low-income Boston residents. In the pre-employment program, 100% of Year 3 participants were Boston residents, and nearly all were earning an income below FESS standards (Table 2.2). The skill level of participants is more mixed, with 32% having high school diplomas, 22% having some college or technical school, and 78% speaking primarily English.

³⁸ As will be discussed later in the document, the data reported by HCRTI for the Year 3 evaluation were still largely incomplete. Because the MIS upgrades have finally been completed and recent staff changes suggest increased capacity, there is reason to hope that Year 4 reporting will demonstrate the desired improvements in data quality and depth.

³⁹ Recruitment challenges included recruiting for the fall program in late summer when potential applicants were involved with vacations and preparing children for school; a number of applicants with inadequate test scores; limited spaces in the desirable Central Sterile Supply training; and lack of interest in the Environmental Services track.

⁴⁰ While it appears that incumbent enrollment declined in Year 3, in fact it may have increased. Since HCRTI was able to guarantee only that Year 3 figures were unduplicated, it is possible that Year 1 and 2 enrollment figures include duplicate counts.

The HCRTI incumbent component serves a very different population than the pre-employment component (Table 2.3). About half of the Year 3 incumbent participants are Boston residents, a slight decrease over previous years, and a much larger percentage are immigrants with language barriers (less than 50% speak English as their primary language). Participants' educational attainment at enrollment has remained constant, with the majority of participants having a high school diploma or GED. In terms of household income, HCRTI was only able to verify the household income for 47% of Year 3 incumbent enrollees. For these enrollees, 5% had a household income above the FESS standard.

Table 2.2: Pre-employment Demographic Data						
	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Enrollment						
Total number enrolled	125		121		134	
Boston Residency						
Yes, Boston resident	120	96%	120	99%	134	100%
No, not Boston resident	5	4%	1	1%	0	0%
Missing	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	125	100%	121	100%	134	100%
Highest Educational Level and Certification at Enrollment						
Neither GED nor high school diploma	4	3%	0	0%	3	2%
GED certificate	20	16%	6	5%	5	4%
High School diploma	37	30%	58	48%	41	31%
Some college / technical school	21	17%	16	13%	29	22%
Associates degree	17	14%	3	2%	5	4%
4-year undergraduate degree	3	2%	4	3%	10	7%
Post-graduate degree	3	2%	1	1%	1	1%
Certificate – technical/vocational training	20	16%	27	22%	14	10%
License to practice vocational trade	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Missing	0	0%	6	5%	26	19%
Total	125	100%	121	100%	134	100%
Primary Language						
English	52	42%	58	48%	105	78%
Not English	68	54%	52	43%	25	19%
Missing	5	4%	11	9%	4	3%
Total	125	100%	121	100%	134	100%
Employment at Enrollment						
Total employed at enrollment	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	32	24%
Full-time workers	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	32	24%
Average hourly wage	D/U		D/U		\$9.85	
Part-time workers	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	0	0%
With employer-sponsored benefits	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	19	59%
Without employer-sponsored benefits	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	13	41%

* D/U = Data Unavailable

Table 2.3: Incumbent Demographic Data						
	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Enrollment						
Total Number Enrolled	208		244		236	
Boston Residency						
Yes - Boston Resident	123	59%	137	56%	126	53%
No - Not Boston Resident	81	39%	106	43%	88	37%
Missing	4	2%	1	0%	22	9%
Total	208	100%	244	100%	236	100%
Highest Educational Level and Certification at Enrollment						
Neither GED nor high school diploma	38	18%	27	11%	27	11%
GED certificate	18	9%	14	6%	13	6%
High School diploma	51	25%	57	23%	57	24%
Some college / technical school	33	16%	51	21%	60	25%
Associates degree	15	7%	14	6%	10	4%
4-year undergraduate degree	21	10%	23	9%	17	7%
Post-graduate degree	8	4%	4	2%	3	1%
Certificate – technical/vocational training	8	4%	3	1%	12	5%
License to practice vocational trade	2	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Missing	14	7%	51	21%	37	16%
Total	208	100%	244	100%	236	100%
Primary Language						
English	80	38%	96	39%	103	44%
Not English	111	53%	122	50%	113	48%
Missing	17	8%	26	11%	20	8%
Total	208	100%	244	100%	236	100%
Employment at Enrollment						
Full-time workers	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U
Average hourly wage	D/U		D/U		D/U	
Part-time workers	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U
Average hours worked	D/U		D/U		D/U	
Average hourly wage	D/U		D/U		D/U	
With employer-sponsored benefits	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U
Without employer-sponsored benefits	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U	D/U

* D/U = Data Unavailable

Participant Outcomes

Employment Outcomes for Pre-employment Participants

For the first time in Year 3, HCRTI was able to report placements in terms of the distribution between training and walk-in participants. The contrast is notable. The placement rate for training participants was 55.3%, while the placement rate for walk-ins was only 12.4% (Table 2.4). Clearly the preparation provided by the training allowed for more success in placement.⁴¹

	Enrollment	Program Completion		Placement					
	# Enrolled	# Graduating	% of Enrolled	# Placed in Partner Employer	% of Graduates	# Placed in Non-Partners	% of Graduates	Total Placed	% of Graduates
Pre-employment training	45	38	84.4%	12	31.6%	9	23.7%	21	55.3%
Pre-employment walk-ins*	89	89	100.0%	4	4.5%	7	7.9%	11	12.4%

* To allow for comparability, all walk-ins were considered as graduates even though it is not necessarily an accurate classification.

In addition to the 32 Year 3 pre-employment participants placed, HCRTI also placed 20 Year 2 pre-employment participants (Table 2.5). These additional placements elevated the total placement rate for Year 2 enrollees to 60%.⁴²

	Placed in Year 2		Placed in Year 3		TOTALS	
	Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled	Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled	Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled
Pre-employment (including walk-ins)*	53	43.8%	20	16.5%	73	60.3%

Interestingly, half of Year 3 participant placements were made at non-employer partners—54% of placed training enrollees, and 64% of placed walk-ins.⁴³ When Year 2 participant placements are

⁴¹ Placement services for walk-ins are viewed as an “add-on” service and are not expected to achieve the same level of outcomes. HCRTI does not follow up with these individuals or track their progress beyond initial placement. In Year 4, HCRTI has tightened the enrollment requirements for walk-ins, increasing the assessment requirements in order to increase the return on its investment.

⁴² All graduates placed at partner employers were placed in full-time, permanent positions with benefits. Those placed at non-employers partners were also largely placed in full-time, permanent positions with benefits, though a few were placed in part-time (four) or temporary (one) positions, without benefits.

included, the percentage of participants placed during Year 3 with non-employment partners increases to 56%, since 65% of Year 2 enrollee placements were with non-partners. In general, HCRTI's placement approach is to help participants find "good jobs" in general, rather than to focus principally on employer partners and only going elsewhere when nothing else is available.

Since there is not enough demand at partner employers to place all graduates, the Institute has deliberately broadened its employer network to make sure that everyone has access to a good job. Employer partners do not support this program financially, and currently they do not have a high demand for entry-level workers (that they cannot fill with normal hiring) so, according to our interviews with program staff, the partners are not concerned with the small numbers of pre-employment graduates being placed; their needs are being met.

Table 2.6 compares HCRTI's placement rates over the three years of implementation. The placement rate in Year 3 has decreased significantly. The apparent difference between Year 2 and Year 3 is inflated slightly by the fact that 20 Year 2 participants were placed in Year 3, giving HCRTI staff additional time to place the individuals; however, there is still a decrease of 28% in the placement rate between Year 2 and Year 3 if placements rates for the initial 12 months are considered (January-December 2005 and January-December 2006). Possible explanations for the decline include greater competition among individuals seeking entry-level employment and the fact that the ratio of training enrollees to walk-in participants has slowly transitioned toward a greater number of walk-ins, who are typically harder to place.

	YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		TOTALS	
	Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled						
Pre-employment (including walk-ins)*	51	31.5%	73**	60.3%	21	15.7%	145	34.8%

* Since the breakdown of placements between training graduates and walk-ins was unavailable for Years 1 and 2, placement rates for all three years were reported as combined.

** The number of Year 2 enrollees placed includes 53 placed in Year 2 and 20 placed in Year 3.

In general, there **was** greater competition for available entry-level jobs at the employer partners during Year 3 than in previous years. HCRTI staff and employers agree that the business climate has changed considerably since the Institute was created. During Year 1 there was a labor shortage in entry-level positions; now, employers have an abundance of job applications and they can generally choose from applicants more qualified than the pre-employment graduates. HCRTI had to exert considerable effort to achieve its Year 3 training placement rate for pre-employment graduates, with some placements coming late in the year.

⁴³ In previous years the SkillWorks evaluation did not ask HCRTI to break out its placements by partner/non-partner. Therefore, it is impossible to determine whether the placement patterns (partner vs. non-partner) have changed significantly in Year 3.

A key indicator of Year 3 training and placement success for the pre-employment component is the number of placed individuals who continue to be employed at the end of Year 3. Unfortunately, HCRTI only tracked retention and advancement for individuals placed at employer partners, which (as was just described) only represented 38% of total Year 3 placements from the pre-employment component.⁴⁴ When the end-of-the-year retention rate is calculated for those placements where retention is known, the result is that 90% continue to be employed at year end. Additionally, 88% of those placed at employer partners in Years 1 and 2 who had the potential to reach the 12-month retention milestone did so (49 of 56).⁴⁵

According to a sampling of partner employers, the 88% retention rate compares favorably to a common hospital-wide retention rate of about 81%. Also, according to one employer, the retention rate for departments where HCRTI graduates/participants are typically employed would likely be even lower, since departments with more front-line workers typically have higher turnover. For example, at one hospital, the Food Services department has a retention rate of 62.15% and the Environmental Services department is at 85.92%, though no HCRTI graduates or participants were terminated from either of these departments over the last 12 months. Given these rates, it is safe to assume that retention rates for HCRTI graduates placed at employer partners exceed the average retention rate. Written feedback from a sample of employer partners indicated that they perceive HCRTI pre-employment graduates to be more stable than employees hired through other means.⁴⁶

However, this says nothing about the success of individuals who are placed outside of the committed partners. Until data is available for non-employer partners, it will be difficult to make any significant claims about retention.

A similar data gap exists for the one-year retention rate for HCRTI pre-employment placements. Data are only available for graduates placed with partners. During Years 1 and 2, 56 participants were placed who had the potential to achieve 12-month retention by the end of Year 3. The one-year retention rate for this group of participants was 87.5%; 49 of these participants continued to be employed with the same employer at the end of 12 months. Again, this is a very positive retention rate, especially given comparable annual retention rates described above. HCRTI staff believe that this retention performance is attributable to good training, good placements, and the fact that participants tend to get involved with incumbent programs (providing computer skills and ESOL).

Another measurable outcome of the pre-employment program's success is the increase in wages between enrollment and placement. Since HCRTI did not systematically track starting wages at placement in 2006 (despite the SkillWorks evaluation team's stated interest in such data), employment specialists contacted participants later in the year and attempted to collect the data

⁴⁴ HCRTI relies on employer partners to provide retention and advancement information; therefore, data are not available for individuals placed at non-partners. It is possible that HCRTI will gather these data in the future through coaching follow-up or increased outreach to non-employer partners.

⁴⁵ Since HCRTI does not collect data from non-employer partners after placement, they were unable to confirm retention status for anyone placed with a non-partner employer.

⁴⁶ HCRTI sent a short email survey to partner employers asking for data to inform the evaluation. One question pertained to retention information about hired pre-employment individuals and two respondents commented on the reliability of these graduates.

retroactively. They were only able to verify the starting wage of 29 pre-employment graduates. The available data shows that the average increase was \$1.87 (Table 2.7), up slightly from Year 2.

Table 2.7: Pre-employment Average Wage At Placement and Average Hourly Wage Increase Realized			
	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
Pre-employment average wage at placement	\$ 12.27	\$ 11.92	\$ 11.99
Average hourly wage increase from last job held, for those pre-employment enrollees who were employed at (or immediately prior to) enrollment		\$ 1.36	\$ 1.87
Number of pre-employment participants included in this calculation			29

This modest increase was influenced by a few key factors. First, many participants reported a pre-enrollment wage of zero (indicating unemployment); these individuals were not included in the calculations. Second, another subset of enrollees reported wages comparable to those in the health care industry’s entry-level jobs. These individuals tended to enroll in the program in order to change careers in search of benefits and long-term employment, rather than an immediate wage increase. Finally, industry wages seem to be constrained by a lack of tight competition among employers looking to fill entry-level positions.

A positive outcome for HCRTI’s evolving pre-employment program, with its enhanced focus on skills development, is the fact that 13 graduates passed the central processing/central sterile supply national exam, allowing them to begin the certification process. Another 8 graduates passed the CNA licensing exam.

Employment Outcomes for Incumbent Workers

For incumbent participants, end-of-year retention data was only verified for participants from four employers.⁴⁷ In order to present the most accurate information, the retention rate was only calculated for these employers, which employed 508, or 74%, of the 688 total incumbent enrollees. For this subset of the incumbent population the end of Year 3 retention rate for enrollees from Years 1-3 is about 70.9%. There is no reason to assume that this rate cannot be extrapolated for the rest of the incumbent population.

⁴⁷ HCRTI has continued to struggle to have employers report data consistently. As HCRTI focuses on improving the accuracy of its data and its ability to report back to employers on key outcomes (interim and long-term), it may be in a better position to negotiate more complete data sharing.

Total Number of Incumbent Enrollees				Number of Incumbent Enrollees Still Employed at Employer Partners	
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL	End of Year 3*	% of Total*
208	244	236	688	360	70.9%

* These data reflect the year-end status of incumbent enrollees from four employers. To calculate the percentage of total still employed, the number of employed enrollees (360) was divided by the total number of incumbent participants (Years 1-3) that were employed by the four reporting employers (508).

In general, employers were unable to specify program attribution for participant wage increases and promotions. In Year 3, 106 HCRTI participants received a wage increase and 70 received a promotion.⁴⁸ While most wage increases overall are defined by the employers as merit increases, HCRTI was able to obtain from three employers definitions of which level of merit wage increases denoted above-average performance. At these employers, 40 individuals, or roughly 16% of employees who participated in HCRTI programs, received merit increases during Year 3.⁴⁹

Wage Increases	% of Incumbents	Promotions	% of Incumbents
106	14%	70	9.3%

Skill Enhancement Outcomes of Incumbents

The number of individuals who have developed career goals tied to occupations likely to pay FESS-level wages is fairly modest, only 33 individuals, or 10% of incumbent enrollees in Year 3 (Table 2.10). The low number is partially due to the rigorous definition applied by HCRTI—only those individuals actively pursuing a FESS-level occupation were included—and partially a reflection of the fact that FESS-level wages are a long way off for most participants, and their career goals reflect this. Most participants’ goals are focused on realistic interim steps such as learning English.

⁴⁸ HCRTI only asked employers to provide information on wage increases and promotions that occurred during Year 3. Therefore, the data in Table 2.9 only reflect wage increases and promotions for Year 3.

⁴⁹ Merit increases were defined as wage increases above the average hospital increase or tied to increased work responsibility or title change.

Table 2.10: Pathways to FESS Jobs					
Number of Incumbent Enrollees with <u>New Career Goal</u> for Advancement to Occupation Likely to Pay FESS-Level Wages (#)*			Percentage of Incumbent Enrollees from Each Partnership with <u>New Career Goal</u> for Advancing to Occupation Likely to Pay FESS-Level Wages (%)		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
D/U**	D/U	33	D/U	D/U	10.9%

*Career goals in the following job categories: Nurse, Radiological Technologist, Surgical Technologist, Lab Technologist, Department Supervisor, and Dental Hygienist

** D/U = Data Unavailable

There are a couple of key outcomes related to skill advancement on which HCRTI can report. In 2005, a total of 42 incumbents passed the prerequisites for a nursing and/or surgical technology program (Table 2.11).⁵⁰ Additionally, half of the ESOL students in 2006 advanced to the next level and all have been learning hospital/healthcare/workplace vocabulary and gaining confidence in answering the phone, communicating with patients, and reading signs. To HCRTI staff’s knowledge, no incumbents received other industry-recognized credentials or relevant degrees, though 21 pre-employment graduates passed the licensing exams, with 8 graduates passing the CNA licensing exam and 13 graduates passing the central processing/central sterile supply national exam, allowing them to begin the certification process.

Table 2.11: Number of Incumbent Enrollees Who Have Passed the Entry Requirements for Industry-Recognized Occupational Training Program or Associates/College Degree Program (for sectors where jobs providing FESS wages require licensing, a credential, or degree)		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
D/U*	42	0

* D/U = Data Unavailable

In general, the lack of reported advancement outcomes calls into question the Institute’s intentional focus on identifying ways that incumbents can advance and then helping them do so. It is possible that the shortcoming is only in data collection. However, it is generally true that organizations track those indicators that represent the work that is being accomplished. HCRTI’s success in tracking and reporting on these outcomes in Year 4 will be a key indicator of progress in building program capacity.

⁵⁰ Of the 42 individuals who passed the exam and entered the degree program, 22 remain. Participants in the nursing program will graduate with an Associate in Science degree in nursing and be eligible to take the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses. Participants in the surgical technologist certificate program will receive a certificate in surgical technology and will be eligible to take the Association of Surgical Technologist examination. As of the end of Year 3, there were 8 participants in the nursing program and 14 in the surgical technologist program. The nurses will graduate in October 2007 and the surgical technologists will graduate in May 2008.

Employer Outcomes⁵¹

Improvements in Performance or Productivity

Supervisors consistently reported seeing “some improvement” in their employees—with the highest consistency seen in overall job performance, overall positive work attitude, time efficiency, verbal communication, and showing self-confidence. Eighty-six percent of supervisors who responded to the supervisor survey (see footnote) felt that there were more opportunities for them to offer praise for their employees than before the individuals participated in the HCRTI training. Additionally, supervisors agreed that since the employees’ participation in HCRTI, the employees’ improved performance has assisted the team in the following ways: staff members communicate better with one another (almost complete consensus among supervisors); staff use their work skills more effectively; time is used more efficiently within the work environment; and staff members work better together as a team.

Overall, 81% of respondent supervisors rated the training as valuable for their employees. This rating is a modest decrease from last year’s supervisory scores.

Interviewed employer representatives were not quite as positive as the direct line supervisors.⁵² One employer viewed the pre-college classes as ineffective because they were not adequately customized. This employer saw some participants as under-prepared for the coursework; others were viewed as bored and delayed in their progress. The employer advocated for better pre-class assessments to accurately gauge individuals’ abilities.

Another employer representative felt that he had seen no measurable outcomes related to increased productivity, though acknowledging that supervisors do describe an increase in motivation among Institute participants.

Increased Retention of Workers

Partner employers agree that they have seen higher than average retention rate among Institute employees. They believe this tracks with conventional industry insights—when employers show an interest in their employees through professional development, they engender the loyalty of their employees. The retention rates could also be attributed to a higher level of performance and therefore a greater sense of satisfaction of employees in the work completed.

⁵¹ Data was gathered from a short employer survey emailed by HCRTI director (2 responses); focus groups/interviews that were conducted by Barry Dym as part of a capacity building grant (the evaluation team was informed of aggregate findings during conference call with Barry Dym); and results of HCRTI’s supervisor survey (17 responses from four employers; was sent to 63 supervisors).

⁵² Interviews were typically with employers’ HR and training staff (rather than the direct supervisors who had been surveyed).

Improved Access to Entry-Level Workers

As previously noted, improving access to entry-level workers is not as valuable an outcome now that the economy has slowed and hiring is easier.⁵³

Ability to Fill Critical Occupational Positions

Employers generally feel that there has not been a good match between HCRTI pre-employment graduates and the critical occupational positions that the employers are struggling to fill. Their experience has been that there are not enough qualified graduates to meet the hospitals' more high-skilled positions. For entry-level positions, employers implied that they can find, hire, and train employees just as well qualified, or possibly better qualified in some cases, through other means.

Improved Community Relations

Employers differed in their opinions about whether their organization's participation in HCRTI had improved its community relations. One employer indicated that a major impetus for its participation was because the pre-employment program would help to build good relationships with adjoining neighborhoods, and the employer representative believed the program had worked to accomplish this goal. Continuing in this line of thought, another employer said that "to the extent we employ the Institute to provide valuable training/coaching services (ESOL, PC training, pre-college courses, career development, etc.), we are seen as a workplace of choice by our employees and the Greater Boston community. Incumbent workers (who are Institute) participants have encouraged family, friends and neighbors to consider [the employer] when applying for jobs and seeking career opportunities." There was one dissident employer voice, however, which said that no improvement in the institution's community relations had occurred as a result of participation with the Institute.

On balance, the employers who were interviewed believe that **HCRTI'S training makes a difference in the quality of work performed by the individuals trained; however, they also believe that they can hire more qualified individuals directly in the job market.** Because of this, the employers are not convinced that there is a business case, in terms of increased productivity, retention, or ability to fill positions, for hiring HCRTI pre-employment graduates.

Additionally, the interviewed employers indicate that they have been dissatisfied with the management of the Institute: reporting has not been great, the scheduling of classes has not been satisfactory, and the Institute's ability to respond to new trends has not been apparent. Many of these concerns are seen as resulting from the Institute's frequent staff turnover, but there is also the issue of having the right staff and an adequate number of staff to meet the employers' expectations. Employers did note that the new director has made significant improvements in the program's operations.

⁵³ One concrete example of improved access is the 13 individuals who passed the national central processing/central sterile supply exam. Unfortunately, the scale is so small that the trained individuals do not likely translate into a noticeable change for employers.

System Change Outcomes

Enhanced Capacity of Service Providers

The primary ways that service provider capacity has been increased is through HCRTI's evolution into a more autonomous and increasingly responsive provider of training. With the new director, the Institute is building the capacity to respond to the criticisms that have been raised about program management. Over the last year, the Institute has increased internal capacity (in terms of hiring consultants and staff) in order to gain more control over the quality and content of the curriculum. By ensuring greater consistency, it can be more accountable to employers' and employees' needs and expectations.

Additionally, after learning how to respond to employer feedback over the past three years of implementation, the Institute entered Year 4 with an ability to determine the niche that it can fill relative to pre-employment placements, refining the services it provides and developing relationships with additional employers in order to provide a better match of entry-level positions for the candidates that come through HCRTI.

Impacts on the Sector

HCRTI's presence in the Boston health care arena has influenced the strategic discussion about how workforce development training is most effectively provided in the health care field, in terms of both participant and employer needs. As hospitals have begun to invest more resources in their own training capabilities, they have done so from a position of knowledge, having observed the Institute's efforts to train both very low-skilled and low-skilled workers. They have been able to form informed opinions about the types of trainings needed, the types of incentives that are most effective/meaningful, and the minimum skill levels that are needed for a given type of training. Without the Institute's investment and example, the employers would have had to pilot their own programs and learn in a much more costly environment.

Impacts Related to Public Policy

Although it is difficult to attribute their behavior primarily to their partnership with HCRTI, the hospital employers do seem to be placing an increased emphasis on workforce development. They are more frequently seeking government training funds, and are advocating for additional funding resources to support workforce training. While the employers were already engaged in public policy efforts, it is reasonable to posit that their intense interaction with the Institute has helped to raise their awareness and illuminated the possible ways that workforce investment can improve their bottom-line.

Conclusions

Outcomes to Date: Summary

HCRTI efforts have led to significant outcomes in the lives of the low-income, low-wage participants. Significant numbers of graduates of the pre-employment program have received certifications and been placed in health-related jobs with growth potential. The placed graduates and incumbent

trainees have received supervisor support for continued training and advancement; some have also realized wage increases and promotions. However, while individual success stories are compelling, the overall rate of placement and advancement outcomes to date suggest that there remains an opportunity to strengthen the overall cost-effectiveness of the model. In part, HCRTI is doing this by exploring whether there might be a better match relative to the types of employers to whom it refers pre-employment candidates, and in the training it offers to incumbent participants.

According to the aggregated interview report provided HCRTI's consultant, from the employer partners' perspective, the project has not necessarily led to many meaningful outcomes. Higher performance and retention have been seen, but there has not been advancement of participants into critical positions, the key indicator of success for employers now that they are not struggling to find and retain quality entry-level workers.

Key Learnings

Outsourced training is not always best

Outsourcing training and coaching, while cost-effective, can result in inconsistent quality. The Institute has begun to realize that some of the employers' and employees' concerns about training quality and coaching relevancy have stemmed from the fact that each contracted provider uses its own approach to delivering services, without input or control from the Institute. After receiving complaints about the quality of some of the teachers, HCRTI has begun contracting less with outside organizations and contracting more with individuals with whom it has a positive track record.⁵⁴ Courses for which individuals have been hired to teach include four levels of ESOL (all but literacy), the computer classes, communications, supervisory skills, and some of the pre-college classes. This new approach allows the Institute to have more control over content, and provides an ability to guarantee quality and responsiveness to employers.

Place-based community-based organizations are not well-suited for incumbent training

The partner CBOs have found themselves most committed to the pre-employment training program because of its ability to serve as a pipeline for community residents into quality employment. The incumbent training, which must work with any employee regardless of residency location, is harder to justify from a mission perspective. This internal tension has led to conversations at the governing board level to determine the appropriate involvement for the CBOs as the Institute moves forward. Spinning HCRTI off as a separate organization will free up both the Institute and the CBOs to do the work they were designed to do without the competing customer interests (that is, CBOs meeting the needs of residents and HCRTI meeting the needs of low-income workers **and** partner employers).

Employers want to know how training and coaching matter to their employees

According to employer interviews in past years, the career coach was viewed as critical in creating employees' individualized plans, drawing out aspirations from individuals who are not used to

⁵⁴ The difference between HCRTI contracting with an organization and contracting with an individual is the control that HCRTI has over the quality of the instructor. By contracting with organizations, HCRTI had to accept the instructors hired by that organization, even if they were not of consistently high quality. By contracting on an individual-by-individual basis, HCRTI can be assured of each instructor's quality or be able to directly address any concerns.

thinking about their possibilities and their long-term future. They also viewed the coaches as advocates for employees, serving as liaisons between supervisors and participants.

HCRTI has tried to provide this level of coaching for all participants. However, interviews with HCRTI and employer representatives revealed that only about 56% of participants were receiving coaching from HCRTI at the end of Year 3; the remaining participants are being coached by employer staff or are not receiving coaching.

While there has always been a portion of participants coached internally by employers, the percentage has increased in Year 3. An undercurrent of dissatisfaction, with both the quality of coaching provided by HCRTI's service partners and the coaches' ability or willingness to share relevant information with employer staff, seems to have motivated the transition. One employer is known to have brought coaching in-house when the employer was unable to understand how coaching was working with the hospital's incumbent participants, what kinds of lessons were being learned, and what progress was being achieved by participants. In general, employers want to know that progress is being made through coaching and to understand, at least at a general level, the types of steps that employees are taking.

The skill level and position of employees also seems to influence whom the employer views as the appropriate coach for their employees. For example, some employers have asked HCRTI to provide coaching to their lower-skilled employees (e.g., ESOL students) and have elected to provide coaching to others. It is the more highly skilled trainees that employers want to coach themselves, implying that they feel they can do a better job with these individuals themselves and/or that they are more invested in these employees.

Advancement goals are limited by incumbent enrollees' skill levels

The Institute consistently has focused on improving incumbent enrollees' skills so that ultimately they might advance into more highly compensated positions. The advancement challenge for HCRTI is that most of the individuals served by the Institute have very low English skills, and therefore, have an extensive time horizon before significant advancement can occur. It is unclear how HCRTI can successfully move people individuals into positions paying FESS-level wages, given where they are starting from.

HCRTI's recognition of this fact is demonstrated by the fact that many participant career plans include no occupational goals, rather ESOL goals focused on helping the individuals improve their English skills. Occupational goals are more prevalent in career plans where participants have a command of the English language and need to begin to add technical skills in order to facilitate advancement.

Critical Challenges

In the Year 1 evaluation report, we described the fact that employer representatives saw the value of HCRTI and expected to increase their investments in HCRTI "as the institutions' finances improved." They reported that success of the Institute would help the hospitals convince their own boards to allocate more funds to workforce development activities in general, and that as the employers' commitments increased, they would view the connection with HCRTI as a business relationship,

becoming more demanding regarding outcomes being achieved. All of this seems to have happened in Year 3.

Challenge #1: Training and coaching competition for partner employers

Hospital investments in workforce development have increased, with multiple hospitals expanding their workforce development staff and investments in employee training. They are now thinking systematically about how to grow their own staff rather than contracting out to external service providers. Across the employer partners, hospitals have begun to invest in:

- Internal coaching capacity (two hospitals);
- Growing staff for outreach, pre-employment screening, and training (all employer partners);
- More internal incumbent training (all employer partners); and
- Creating a loan forgiveness programs to support advancement (one hospital).

Employers' increasing attention to training and staff development is a positive development and HCRTI can claim some part in this result since it demonstrated what worked and what did not work. However, with the increased competition with the hospitals' internal units for training resources, HCRTI is forced to reconsider the services it offers and create a niche that is not now being met by employer partners.

As the partner employers decide the extent to which they will continue supporting HCRTI as a preferred training provider, they are beginning to demand demonstrated outcomes upon which they can base their decisions. HR staff are looking for data on participant test scores and assessment data; HR staff and supervisors alike are seeking evidence of skill improvement, and interim outcomes.

Challenge #2: Improving MIS and reporting

Collecting and managing accurate and detailed information on participant outcomes has been a continuing struggle for HCRTI. Significant levels of financial resources have been invested in improving the Institute's capacity to track this information, but it is still unclear whether the investment will yield the hoped-for results. Delays in implementation of the new, centralized data collection system inhibited the Institute's ability to provide significantly improved data for this Year 3 report.

Specifically, what remains to be seen is whether the improved tracking system will be sufficient to leverage improvements in the quality and completeness of data collected. For example, the Institute staff acknowledges the need to measure participants' progress in terms of interim steps (advancing to another position, applying to go to college, completing multiple workshops, achieving a step in a career plan, completing job shadowing), but have been unable to collect this information systematically to date. One critical component of data collection is information on employee retention, merit-based wage increases, and training-related promotions. Historically, HCRTI has only tracked this information through data received from employer partners. The two problems with this have been that employers do not consistently provide the needed information and that fewer than half of pre-employment graduates are placed with employer partners. Going forward, the Institute is

going to have to address these issues if it is going to improve its ability to report on outcomes to all its constituents, as well as have adequate data to monitor and improve its operations.

Once the data is collected and tracked, the next challenge is improving the frequency of feedback on outcomes that is given to line managers and supervisors and the frequency with which coaching progress data (test scores, assessment data, evidence of skill improvement, and interim outcomes) is sent to HR staff. One complicating factor is the confidentiality of the data being shared. HCRTI is grappling with how to meet employer needs while respecting the privacy concerns of participants.

The Institute acknowledges that, moving forward, it needs to be more thoughtful about the skills, aptitudes, and time commitments necessary for staff assigned to operate and oversee the MIS.

Challenge #3: Creating a business case for employer partners' participation

As the relationship has become more business-driven, the dichotomy between employers' demands for highly skilled, promotable individuals and the Institute's goal of building the skills of low-skilled individuals has become more pronounced. HCRTI's training, while focused on advancement, takes time, often more time than employers can justify from a business perspective when the labor market is soft and hospital shortages are in the more skilled professions.

The growing disconnect between employers' needs and HCRTI participants' abilities is not easily brokered. One employer described the fact that hospital employees can be generally grouped into two categories, those who are 5-10 years away from being able to get an allied health degree and those who only need minimal support to allow them to enroll in established training programs. It is the latter group that employers are most interested in assisting. The business case is real for this group. For the former group, it is perceived to be a social commitment rather than a business incentive. Unfortunately, from the perspective of trying to win employers' support, it is the former group that is the target of HCRTI's efforts. Employers understand that the Institute's training services are critical to career advancement of their lowest-skilled workers, but they do not make a direct connection between such advancements and their bottom line.

It is no surprise to anyone involved that the employers' initial motivations for partnering with the Institute, when there was a tight labor market, were:

- To fill entry-level positions, a need that has since diminished in importance;
- To improve employee retention; and
- To “do the right thing” for community residents.

Hospitals saw the Institute as a way to build and maintain connections with the community by helping disadvantaged community members start careers or advance from their current positions. Building a successful business case on this rationale will always be a challenge, but especially when some employers are increasingly taking on this responsibility themselves. For example, Brigham and Women's Hospital has now opened an HR office in the neighborhood, hired a staff person to be a liaison to the neighborhood (working closely with HCRTI employment specialists), and contracted out case management services for applicants.

HCRTI has shown that a program can be successful at meeting participant/employees' immediate needs in the short term, while struggling to achieve longer-term objectives of moving individuals to FESS-level wages, meeting employers' critical skill shortages, and altering the sectors in which employers operate. Low pre-employment placement rates and modest incumbent advancement accomplishments have provided a catalyst for the Institute to reconsider the program of services being delivered and the types of employers that are the best fit for the populations being served by the Institute.

Chapter Three Partners in Community and Workforce Development (PCWD)

Changes in Program Design, Activities, and Administration During Year 3

Major Changes in Services and/or Course Content

During Year 3, PCWD made the following changes in its programs and services:

- PCWD further tweaked the pre-employment programs, offering an extra day of career club and extending its hours to eight hours per week. The purpose of this change was to better utilize the time between training completion and placement in computer training and interviewing and resume workshops. Planning for this occurred in Year 3 and it was implemented beginning in Year 4.
- The coaching model for the incumbent worker program was changed from a model of outsourcing services to WorkSource to one of providing coaching services directly with PCWD and hospital staff. In response to a growing concern that off-site coaching was not as effective as internal staff capacity, coaching responsibilities for Spaulding and MGH were assumed by a PCWD staff member, the career development coordinator, and a new coach was hired directly by Brigham and Women’s Hospital to work with employees involved in training programs. Coaching for the pre-employment program is still outsourced to Project Hope.
- During Year 3, PCWD worked on redesigning its website with the help of the SkillWorks Capacity Building grant. While time was spent during Year 3 on the strategic planning for the site, it was not up and running by the end of the year.
- At the request of the SkillWorks funders, PCWD ran a release time pilot during Year 3. It offered a class on financial literacy at Brigham and Women’s Hospital that served a total of 10 employees in one department.

Transition to Work/Project Hope,⁵⁵ the primary service provider for the pre-employment program, also made some refinements to its program during Year 3:

- Project Hope focused more attention on its outreach activities in order to make eligibility criteria for the program clearer. Realizing that its old flyer was not specific enough about the program’s requirements, Project Hope redesigned the outreach materials. The result was that many more people who contacted the program met the eligibility guidelines.
- Project Hope was also more stringent about its screening process. In the past, the staff were somewhat flexible about the requirement that participants have one year of

⁵⁵ Transitions to Work, which is part of Project Hope, now refers to itself as “Project Hope.”

consistent work history with one employer. They are also paying more attention to whether or not the type of job at the hospital is the right fit.

Changes in Staffing, Administration, and/or Governance of the Partnership

The staffing of the PCWD has been very stable. All of the key staff leading the programs have been with the initiative from inception. Minor changes during Year 3 included:

- Project Hope added a new coach for the pre-employment program in July 2006. She was primarily responsible for outreach and recruitment for the third and fourth cycles of the pre-employment program.
- Overall, there was a stronger team approach to the pre-employment program. A new PCWD staff person was hired as the internal placement and support staff. In addition, the JVS staff person teaching the pre-employment training classes has become a more integrated member of the pre-employment team.
- WorkSource, which had provided coaching services for PCWD, is no longer involved in the partnership. Over the course of the three years of PCWD, WorkSource's relationship had evolved from a partner in the project to more of a "vendor." With the decision to take coaching services inside the hospitals, there was no longer a need for WorkSource's services.

The Future

The most important change during Year 3 involved the decision by Partners to not pursue continued funding through SkillWorks. PCWD staff spent time during Year 3 on strategic planning for the future sustainability of the program. As part of this planning process, staff decided that they needed to refocus the overall program. While they believe strongly that the SkillWorks funding has led to significant learning and has allowed Partners to institutionalize some of what it has learned, staff decided that they did not need further support from outside of the Partners system for the type of services that they would be providing in the future. They also wanted to have more flexibility in their operations than they believed the funding through SkillWorks allowed. In other words, as they refined their services, the "costs" of continuing to receive funding through SkillWorks, in terms of reporting and conforming to the needs of the funders, was seen as outweighing the benefits of the actual funding.

PCWD is now considering itself to be an internal workforce team within Partners that will pilot and explore new models for increasing the skill levels of Partners' employees. While PCWD will continue the pre-employment program at about the same scale as in the past, it will no longer be providing the types of direct services to incumbent workers that it did under SkillWorks. However, it will be playing an important internal workforce role. Its other services will include designing and overseeing the website, improving data collection and reporting capacity, testing new pilots, celebrating successes, and providing assistance to the hospitals in various aspects of workforce program development and planning. Finally, the PCWD leadership team was involved in the application to the Boston Foundation for its new Allied Health Workforce Program.

Who is the Project Serving?

Has the Project Met its Enrollment Goals?

During Year 3, PCWD met its enrollment goals for the pre-employment program, but did not meet its goals for the incumbent worker program. This was partially due to PCWD's changing approach to incumbent workers during Year 3. During this time period, the Leadership Group was rethinking its priorities and training approach for incumbent workers. It also focused on tracking all incumbent participants who had been involved in the project. The enrollment of many new incumbent workers was not a high priority for the project.

Overall, however, over the three-year time span of the project, PCWD has surpassed its enrollment goals for both the pre-employment and incumbent worker components of the program. It surpassed its goals for the pre-employment program by about 15%, and for the incumbent worker program by about 20%.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTALS	Goal Yr 3	Overall Goal
Pre-employment	44	51	42	137	40	120
Incumbent	182	167	117	466	130	390
Three-Year Total for Pre-employment and Incumbents				603	173	510

Is the Project Serving the Targeted Population?

Boston Residents

During Year 3, the majority of individuals—65%—who have been served through the PCWD program were residents of the city of Boston. In the case of the pre-employment program, about 74% of the Year 3 participants were residents of the city. This percentage decreased between Year 2 and Year 3 of the program, from about 86% to just over 74%. The decrease in the proportion of city residents is surprising given the program's focus on outreach to Boston's low-income residents through various community-based organizations that are working through Project Hope. This is due in part to an increasing number of participants living in shelters outside the city.

Boston residents also make up the majority of participants in the incumbent worker program. The percentage of participants who are Boston residents remained virtually unchanged between Years 1 and 2 of the program.

		Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Total	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Incumbent	Boston Resident	96	52.7%	104	62.3%	73	62.4%	273	58.6%
	Not Resident	86	47.3%	63	37.7%	44	37.6%	193	41.4%
	Total	182	100%	167	100%	117	100%	466	100%
Pre-employment	Boston Resident	36	81.8%	44	86.3%	31	73.8%	111	81.0%
	Not Resident	8	18.2%	7	13.7%	11	26.2%	26	19.0%
	Total	44	100%	51	100%	42	100%	137	100%
All Participants	Boston Resident	132	58.4%	148	67.9%	104	65.4%	384	63.7%
	Not Resident	94	41.6%	70	32.1%	55	34.6%	219	36.3%
	Total	226	100.0%	218	100.0%	159	100.0%	603	100.0%

Low-skilled, Low-income Workers

One of the goals of the SkillWorks Initiative is to help individuals who have incomes below the Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard (FESS) rise above the standard to a family wage job. It is difficult to gauge with any accuracy the number of incumbent workers who had incomes over the FESS standards since these standards are based on family size and household income. However, the data provide evidence that almost all of the pre-employment participants in Year 3 had family incomes below the FESS standard.

During Year 3, about 67% of the pre-employment participants had household incomes below \$10,000. This clearly put them and their families below the FESS level. This was a slight, but not significant, decrease from Year 1 when 86% earned less than \$10,000 and Year 2 when 69% earned less than \$10,000. Virtually all participants who had household incomes above \$10,000 were also below the FESS level given the size of their household.

Annual Household Income	Household Size (by number of persons)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Over 8	Missing	Total
Under \$10,000	7	8	5	6		1	1				28
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	2	2	4	2	1						11
Between \$25,000 and \$39,999			2	1							3
Over \$40,000											0
Missing											0
Total	9	10	11	9	1	1	1	0	0	0	42

The economic status of the incumbent workers participating in the PCWD project is very different. It is likely that many are already above the FESS.

A total of 20 of the 117 incumbent participants, or about 17%, were single-person households with incomes of over \$25,000. In addition, there were another 6 participants in two-person households with incomes of over \$40,000. Thus, at a minimum, about 22% of the incumbent workers were likely in households that were already above the FESS level. This is a slight increase from Year 2 when about 17% of the incumbent workers were in this category.

It is not surprising that a program that is targeting incumbent workers to advance in their careers in the healthcare sector would include a large number of individuals who were already earning an income above the FESS level. From an employer’s perspective, the focus is on lower-skilled employees who are interested in taking steps up the career ladder in healthcare. It would be difficult for an employer to only open up career development opportunities to employees whose family income was below some specified level. Moreover, targeting only those employees with the lowest skills and lowest incomes would not result in meeting the employer’s workforce-related needs.

Annual Household Income	Household Size (by number of persons)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Over 8	Missing	Total
Under \$10,000			1								1
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	5	5	3	3	2			1			19
Between \$25,000 and \$39,999	17	13	10	14	5	2		1			62
\$40,000 and over	3	6	5	12	5	2			1		34
Missing										1	1
Total	25	24	19	29	12	4	0	2	1	1	117

Other Demographic Characteristics

There were few significant changes in the overall demographic make-up of either the pre-employment or the incumbent participants during Year 3. The only changes of any note were:

- During Year 3, English was not the primary language for 31% of the pre-employment participants. This was an increase over Years 1 and 2 when only 14% of the participants did not speak English as their primary language.
- During Year 3, there was an increase in the number of pre-employment participants who had postsecondary education. Six of the 42 had a college degree, as compared to only 2 in Year 1 and 1 in Year 2.
- During Year 3, a higher proportion of incumbent workers were over 40.

PCWD categorizes its incumbent worker participants into three categories: 1) Health Career Starters—employees with very limited skills and knowledge of health careers; 2) College Bound—

workers with a high school degree or equivalent, but who still require pre-college work to pass the College Placement Test (CPT); and 3) College Ready—those employees who are able to pass the CPT and who might have some college-level work.

Over the three years of the program, the largest percentage of participants has been in the College Bound category. These are the individuals who are most likely to benefit from some of the programs developed by PCWD, most notably its pre-college classes. During Year 3, there was a noticeable drop in the number of health career starters enrolled in the program. While this was an earlier focus of some activity, PCWD found that this group was the most difficult to engage in the programs and the least likely to make progress along a career pathway.

Status	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Health Career Starter	39	21.43%	46	27.54%	16	13.68%	21.67%
College Bound	76	41.76%	80	47.90%	65	55.56%	47.42%
College Ready	67	36.81%	41	24.55%	36	30.77%	30.90%
Total	182	100.00%	167	100.00%	117	100.00%	100.00%

Participant Outcomes

Outcomes for Pre-Employment Participants

Placement of Pre-Employment Participants

Overall, PCWD has been very successful in placing its pre-employment graduates in jobs within the Partners system. Not only are placement rates high, but the time between completing the program and placement has also been reduced.

It is too early to judge the success of placing the Year 3 pre-employment participants. PCWD ran four rounds of pre-employment training during Year 3. The training for the third round ended at the end of September and the fourth round ended in mid-November. As a result, it is not surprising that most of the round three and four participants had not been placed by the end of November 2006—the end of Year 3 of the PCWD grant. While only 22 of the 42 Year 3 participants were placed during that program year, data were available through the end of January 2007. During December and January, an additional six participants were placed. (As of February 5, 2007, 30 of the Year 3 graduates have been placed.)

The graduation experience and overall success of the Year 3 pre-employment participants do not seem to be quite as positive as during Year 2. Only 36 of the 42 participants graduated from the program. And, of more concern, 14 of the 42 had either dropped out or were terminated by the end of Year 3, many for poor performance.

Table 3.6: Pre-employment Year 3 Performance								
Enrollment	Program Completion		Placement					
# Enrolled	# Graduating	% of Enrolled	# Placed in Partner Employer	% of Graduates	# Placed in Non-Partners	% of Graduates	Total Placed	% of Graduates
42	36	85.7%	22	61.1%	0	0.0%	22	61.1%

A better picture of the placement experience of PCWD comes from examining the placement experience of the Year 2 participants. While at the end of the second year only 32 participants had been placed in jobs, an additional 18 of the Year 2 participants were placed in jobs during this past year. Basically, PCWD had, by the end of Year 3, placed almost every pre-employment participant who had enrolled in the program during Year 2.

Table 3.7: Pre-employment Placement Experiences (Years 1-3)							
YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		TOTALS	
Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled	Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled	Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled	Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled
30	68.2%	50	98.0%	22	52.4%	109	74.5%

While the placement rate has been high, a relatively large number of the first placements continue to be in temporary or per diem jobs. Of the pre-employment participants placed in the first year, 15 were initially placed in temporary or per diem employment with no benefits. However, within a year, 10 of the 15 were placed in permanent positions—5 of them within six months. During Year 3, PCWD seems to be having greater success in placing participants in full-time jobs with benefits in their initial placement.

Table 3.8: Pre-employment Placement						
	Initial Placements Yr 1 Participants		Initial Placements Yr 2 Participants		Initial Placements Yr 3 Participants	
	Placed in Jobs	% of Graduates	Placed in Jobs	% of Graduates	Placed in Jobs	% of Graduates
Placed with Partner employers	30	78.9%	45	88.2%	28	58.3%
Full-time jobs (at least 30 hrs/week)	10	26.3%	28	54.9%	13	36.1%
Part-time jobs	5	13.2%	1	2.0%	2	5.6%
Permanent positions	15	39.5%	29	56.9%	15	41.7%
Temporary positions	15	39.5%	16	31.4%	6	16.7%
With benefits	15	39.5%	29.0	56.9%	15	41.7%
Without benefits	15	39.5%	16.0	31.4%	6	16.7%
Placed with non-partner employers	0	0.0%	5	11.8%	1	2.8%
Full-time jobs (at least 30 hrs/week)	0		2.0			
Part-time jobs	0		2.0			
Permanent positions	0		4.0			
Temporary positions	0		2.0		1	
With benefits	0		4.0			
Without benefits	0		2.0			

Employment Status – Retention

Retention of many of the pre-employment participants who were placed also appears to be an issue. Many of the pre-employment participants who were placed in jobs at Partners were no longer employed at Partners as of December 2006. However, retention seems to have improved for both the Year 2 and Year 3 participants.

Table 3.9: Retention Experience: Pre-Employment Participants						
	Year 1 Participants		Year 2 Participants		Year 3 Participants	
	#	% of Partner Placements	#	% of Partner Placements	#	% of Partner Placements
12-Month Retention	19	63.3%	35	77.8%	NA	
Still Employed at Partners	12	40.0%	34	75.6%	18	81.8%

As part of the evaluation, PCWD was asked to compare the retention experience of its pre-employment participants with similar entry-level workers in the Partners system. PCWD looked at the 90-day and one-year retention experience of about 200 individuals who were hired into the same job as many of the pre-employment participants. This analysis found that while the retention of the Year 1 PCWD participants was actually lower than the experience of the average new hire, once Year

2 participants are included the average, 12-month retention rate of PCWD participants was on par with the new hires in similar positions.

Wage Increases and Promotions

There are a number of success stories amongst the pre-employment participants who enrolled in the first two years of the program.

- Of the Year 1 participants still working at Partners, all are in full-time positions ranging in pay from \$10.00 to \$15.30 an hour. A total of seven received a promotion from their initial job, with wage increases averaging \$1.57 an hour.
- Ten of the Year 2 participants who were initially placed in temporary jobs eventually were placed in full-time jobs. Overall, 14 of the Year 2 participants have received promotions since their initial placement, with wage increases averaging \$2.25 an hour.
- According to the PCWD coaches, the 12 Year 1 participants who are still at Partners are probably “lifers.” In addition to receiving promotions, some are involved in training other employees and others have become involved in hospital-wide activities such as joining the Hazmat Team. These individuals are also very supportive of the program and will be tapped to be part of a Peer Advisory Council that is being planned for Year 4.

Educational Advancement

There have also been a number of pre-employment participants who have made significant advancements in terms of their skills and educational levels. In fact, some of the pre-employment participants who have left Partners did so in order to advance their education.

About nine of the Year 1 pre-employment participants have made significant advances: two have been accepted into nursing programs and one has left Partners to attend school. Another six are taking pre-college classes and the prerequisites needed for enrolling in a nursing program.

Another nine of the Year 2 participants have made significant educational progress:

- Two have been awarded One Family Scholars and are taking prerequisite classes for nursing at Bunker Hill.
- Two have completed the PCWD pre-college classes run by JVS.
- One has completed the Partners Medical Terminology Class.
- One has completed the prerequisites for a rad tech program and has applied for the program.
- One has enrolled in college for a social work degree and a second participant has completed a semester at college.
- One participant has successfully passed the pharmacy licensing exam and is taking prerequisite classes at Bunker Hill.

Employment Outcomes for Incumbent Workers

Not surprising, most of the incumbent participants are still employed at Partners. Only 88 of the 466 incumbent workers enrolled in the program have left Partners HealthCare. In recent years, the turnover rate for most positions in the hospitals has been relatively low. Moreover, it is unlikely that the services of PCWD for incumbent workers had any impact on the retention experience of participants.

While most remain working at Partners, many of the incumbent workers from Years 1 and 2 are no longer receiving any direct services through PCWD. Only 31% of the Year 1 enrollees and 63% of those from Year 2 are still receiving any services from PCWD. As noted in previous evaluations, PCWD periodically checks in with participants to see if they are still in touch with their coaches and interested in additional services. For many, the initial coaching assistance was sufficient. They are either pursuing advancement on their own or have decided that they are not ready to take any further steps. This has helped PCWD to understand that employees had diverse needs and for many regular coaching was not necessarily the best model.

	Still in PCWD		No Longer Working at PHS		Withdrew		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Year 1	56	31%	57	31%	69	38%	182
Year 2	105	63%	24	14%	38	23%	167
Year 3	102	87%	7	6%	8	7%	117
Total	263	56%	88	19%	115	25%	466

Wage Increases and Promotions

According to PCWD staff, what is commonly referred to as a “merit wage” increase is actually a cost of living increase that every employee working for a certain period of time receives. While there might be slight differences in the percentage increases from employee to employee, the reasons for these differences vary by department. Some managers may reward certain performance, while others may not. As a result, PCWD only considered wage increases that were tied to promotions and new job responsibilities.

Working with the staff of the human resource departments of the Partners hospitals, PCWD staff identified three codes in the hospitals’ “PeopleSoft” human resource database that were associated with a change in employment status due to a promotion or increase in work responsibilities. Only wage increases associated with these codes were considered. PCWD staff estimate that about 93, or 20%, of the incumbent workers have received a wage increase that was related to an increase in job responsibilities.

It is important to note that while 93 employees who were participants have received some type of promotion or wage increase, there is no evidence that these wage increases or promotions were due to the services provided through PCWD.

Table 3.11: Incumbent Program Related Wage Increases and Promotions (Years 1-3)			
Wage Increases	% of Incumbents	Promotions	% of Incumbents
93	20.0%	93	20.0%

Educational Advancement

During Year 3, PCWD ran three classes for incumbent workers: a pre-college class (18 of 19 graduated); reading and writing for non-native speakers (10 of 18 graduated); and an additional pre-college class in which the math and English portions were broken up (11 of 18 completed math and three of the four completed English).

A large proportion of the incumbent workers involved in PCWD have developed specific career goals in the healthcare field and are working on advancing their skills in order to qualify for enrolling in a specific health-related training or educational program. In Years 1 and 2, a very high proportion of the incumbent workers had set out goals in nursing or in rad tech. In fact, of Year 1 participants, 108 reported interest in these healthcare fields. In Year 2, about 90 of the participants were interested in careers in nursing or rad tech. Of Year 3 participants, 47 had noted a career goal in these two areas.

Table 3.12: Pathways to FESS Jobs					
Number of Incumbent Enrollees with <u>New</u> Career Goal for Advancement to Occupation Likely to Pay FESS-Level Wages (#)			Percentage of Incumbent Enrollees from Each Partnership with <u>New</u> Career Goal for Advancing to Occupation Likely to Pay FESS-Level Wages (%)		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
145	118	66	79.7%	70.7%	56.4%

During Year 3, a number of the incumbent participants enrolled in or completed the Central Processing Certificate Program. In all, 16 of the 117 participants in Year 3 were involved in this program, which was a joint effort of MGH and BWH Operating Rooms and Bunker Hill Community College. This was a new 15-week certificate program offered to OR techs. The program was supported by MGH Training and Workforce Development, which provided employees with tuition reimbursement that included the cost of books, the certification exam, exam review sessions, and additional fees. The hospital also provided paid release time and flexible scheduling options to help students accommodate their class schedules. While a number of PCWD participants enrolled in the program, PCWD was not involved in the development of this new program.

Overall, the pace of educational advancement of PCWD participants was much slower than anticipated when the project was initiated. Many of the incumbent participants have made very limited, if any, educational advancement. Many have taken ESOL classes or are continuing to work on their pre-college classes, but have still not advanced to the level of being able to enter a postsecondary degree program. Many others have dropped out of classes or have made no

advancement at all. There is, however, a strong cohort of participants who have been able to enroll in college and a few who have been able to complete a postsecondary degree.

	Year 1 Participants	Year 2 Participants	Year 3 Participants
Completed GED	4	2	1
Enrolled in Skill Training or Certificate Program	2	4	17
Completed Certificate Program			5
Taking Prerequisites for Professional Healthcare Degree (Nursing, Rad Tech, Surg Tech)	20	22	17
Applied to Associates Degree or College Program	2	5	2
Enrolled in College Program	25	13	2
Completed Postsecondary Degree: Associates/BA/BS	9	2	

Employer Outcomes

To date, there has not been much evidence that the incumbent employees’ training and services have led to direct positive outcomes at the participating hospitals. Initially, Partners hoped that it would be able to fill some of its hard-to-fill allied health positions through the skill enhancement and coaching activities related to PCWD. Partners found, however, that working with a large number of employees, with very diverse skill sets, was more complicated than anticipated. Taking an existing employee with somewhat limited skills, and helping him to stay on the path to a nursing, rad tech, or surg tech degree, takes a much longer time than Partners had initially thought.

There is, however, anecdotal evidence that the pre-employment program has provided certain departments with a new pipeline for entry-level workers. A few managers have begun to look to the PCWD pre-employment program to fill positions. In particular, the call center department, which has had high turnover, found that the employees it hired through PCWD have proven to be very valuable. Managers in a few other departments have also returned to PCWD because of their positive experience with employees who have gone through the program.

Staff at Project Hope report that they have seen evidence of the growing interest of managers in the PCWD program. When they tour the hospital with participants, managers are more vocal and excited about the project. Moreover, they say that the clusters of placements in specific departments is a good indication that a number of managers have been very positive about the outcomes of the pre-employment training program.

However, while there has been some evidence that the pre-employment program has provided a new pipeline for entry-level workers and has had some positive results in specific departments, Partners has expressed little interest in expanding the PCWD pre-employment program beyond its current size. At its current scale (about 40 participants a year), its significance in terms of the human resource needs of the Partners system remains very small, indicating that the primary motivation for Partners might be the community benefits, not the employer benefits.

Changing the overall “culture” related to career development for employees within the Partners hospitals was one of the major goals of the PCWD project when it was established. While the PCWD approach around Workforce Champions and Ambassadors never developed to the level anticipated, PCWD has had some impact on the overall approach to career development within the institutions.

One of the major outcomes of PCWD has been to create new relationships amongst the workforce and training staff within the different Partners hospitals. Staff at Brigham and Women’s and MGH noted that the individuals involved in workforce activities will call each other more frequently and stay in touch. “It has opened up a dialogue amongst us.” One of the human resource managers noted, “We are more aware of what we were not doing.” In some ways, these institutional outcomes may be one of the more sustaining legacies of the PCWD project.

Beyond this general system-wide outcome, the level of culture change associated with PCWD differed amongst the three hospitals that were the major partners in the project:

- Brigham and Women’s Hospital has made a growing investment in workforce development. In the past, the hospital spent about \$2.5 million in this area. Now it is spending about \$4.5 million, has a staff of five, and has developed a new loan forgiveness program. The hospital has also made a renewed commitment to hiring from the Mission Hill neighborhood and has contracted with Project Hope, the community-based organization involved in PCWD, to manage its screening and outreach efforts in this neighborhood.⁵⁶ According to the director of workforce development at the Brigham, some of the learning from its experience with PCWD has shaped the Brigham’s approach. However, it is important to note that PCWD was just one of a number of past workforce activities at the Brigham that influenced the hospital’s new approach to workforce development.
- Spaulding has gone through significant changes and restructuring over the three years of the PCWD grant. With new management and changes, it was often difficult to get the institution to focus on PCWD. However, Spaulding has stabilized and has now re-engaged. PCWD is currently working with Spaulding on a financial literacy training program based upon the pilot that it worked on with Brigham and Women’s Hospital.
- MGH has developed a number of new workforce activities, but it is not clear how much PCWD has affected these activities. As noted, MGH had developed a new Central Processing Certificate Program with Bunker Hill Community College. However, PCWD was not involved in the project. MGH also developed other community- and workforce-related initiatives that were separate from PCWD. However, staff at MGH did report that there is a new sense that the training mission of the hospital must go beyond the critical staff. Staff involved in the human resource department reported that PCWD has provided

⁵⁶ The decision by Brigham and Women’s to work with Project Hope creates some questions related to the pre-employment services of both PCWD and HCRTI. Both of these SkillWorks projects have been providing outreach, screening, and pre-employment training services. In the case of HCRTI, Mission Hill is one of the targeted neighborhoods. The motivation for hiring Project Hope, rather than working directly with PCWD or HCRTI, needs to be further explored.

resources for managers to engage in conversations about career development. Within its leadership program there is now an expectation that managers inspire their employees to go on and do career planning. Unlike the Brigham, MGH is still unsure about how it will proceed with some of the specific programmatic elements with which PCWD was involved. Most notably, it has not decided about whether or not it will continue to support in-house coaching capacity.

Institutional and/or System Change Outcomes

Increasing the Capacity and Effectiveness of Nonprofit Service Providers

A second type of institutional change involves the nonprofit partners with whom PCWD has worked. In some ways, the relationships that it has built with Project Hope, with WorkSource, and with JVS may lead to some longer-term “system” outcomes that can contribute to achieving scale.

The greatest system impacts of PCWD are probably related to its relationship with Project Hope. The organization has greatly increased its capacity to work with employers as a result of its work with PCWD and has been pursuing new relationships with other institutions. Project Hope has been involved in strategic planning around its entire approach to workforce development. This has led Project Hope to a new model and structure in which it sees the work it did with PCWD as the catalyst for its new plan. Project Hope has increased its staffing and has decided to focus on workforce activities in the healthcare sector given the experience and understanding that it has gained through PCWD.

Project Hope’s two new activities are:

- 1) It has a new contract with Brigham and Women’s Hospital to undertake the screening and outreach for potential employees who live in the Mission Hill neighborhood. The hope is that the hospital will be able to fill a number of the new jobs at its new facility with residents of the Mission Hill community.
- 2) Project Hope is developing a “pre pre-employment” program to address the large number of residents who contact Project Hope in response to its outreach activities for PCWD, but are unable to meet the standards of the program. In order to identify 12 participants for a PCWD pre-employment cycle, Project Hope staff go through the following process:
 - Screen about 150 people by telephone.
 - Between 50 and 55 individuals who meet the eligibility requirements come in for an initial intake process.
 - About 30 pass all of the assessments and go through an orientation day that involves a writing sample and interview.
 - PCWD staff interview about 18 potential participants.
 - Twelve individuals are selected to participate in the pre-employment training cycle.

As this process makes clear, there are about 140 individuals who are interested in healthcare-related jobs who do not have the skills or experience to enter the pre-employment program. Project Hope staff are now developing a program called PHASE ONE, funded through the Neighborhood Jobs Trust, which will provide support to these individuals, will provide an introduction to healthcare careers, will provide some basic job readiness training, and will then refer these individuals to additional services that they need in order to qualify for one of the pre-employment programs.

In short, staff at Project Hope report that PCWD “launched us.” Project Hope has developed an internal department, “Career Development.” Within this, it has a Department of Business Partnerships that includes its work with PCWD and the Brigham. Project Hope sees this as the beginning of its development of a city-wide preferred referral and outreach effort in the healthcare industry.

WorkSource, the firm that provided coaching services for PCWD, also learned a lot from its experience with PCWD as well as its work with the Health Care Training and Research Institute (another SkillWorks grantee). Throughout its work with PCWD, there were issues related to the system in place to track the progress of participants. Through this process, WorkSource came to understand more clearly the need for a good tracking system that would allow coaches more accessibility in terms of entering data. As a result, WorkSource has worked with a company to develop a customized online tracking system that will make this whole process run smoother.

System Changes in Workforce Development in Boston's Acute Care Hospitals

In addition to PCWD, the hospitals that are part of the Partners system have been involved in a range of workforce and training activities over the past five years. For example, MGH has Outpatient Training—two weeks of training on telephone and billing systems, an on-site medical terminology training program, and an ESOL program. Its human resources department has also provided courses for emerging leaders and has developed some new programs including the support grant program, the workshop on Steps to Success developed by PCWD, and the new Central Processing Certificate program. Brigham and Women’s Hospital had a lead PCA training program that it had developed with funding through a Fleet Foundation (now Bank of America) grant and had operated a very successful surg tech program. The Brigham has also been a partner in the Health Care Training and Research Institution, another SkillWorks partnership. Finally, Spaulding had a successful create-a-nurse program. This type of activity is also found at other hospitals throughout Boston.

Basically, over the past five years there has been an environment of increasing interest in and experimentation with training and workforce development activities in Boston’s hospitals. PCWD has been part of a process of experimentation and learning that has been taking place.

The Boston Foundation has learned a lot through its experiences with PCWD and the Institute. There has been growing recognition that targeting the lowest skilled, low-income workers for skill enhancement has benefits, but will not necessarily help the hospitals fill hard-to-fill allied health positions in a reasonable time period. Moreover, the hospitals wanted more autonomy and flexibility in the model they would use for creating the pipeline for these allied health positions. This learning led to the development of a new Allied Health Workforce Project. This program is providing three-

year funding to Boston hospitals that are interested in developing better pipelines for allied health careers.

Conclusions

Outcomes to Date: Summary

A review of the outcome data from the first three years of PCWD operations provides evidence that the program services have provided significant help to some participants in their climb up the career ladder. However, while there are a number of success stories, the program never reached the scale of impact that was anticipated at the outset. Clearly, over time, PCWD has built a more effective pre-employment program that has helped 102 low-income, low-skilled individuals to access jobs in the Partners system. While the retention was not as high as hoped, a large proportion of these participants remain employed at Partners, and about 20% of them have received promotions and/or educational advancement.

The outcomes for the incumbent workers have been, perhaps, more disappointing. The difficulties that many of the incumbent workers have had with passing the pre-college classes and taking the next steps towards a more advanced educational credential has been a point of frustration. While PCWD has spent much time revising its approach to this population, it still believes that it has not yet found the right methodology and approach to assisting low- and moderately skilled employees to advance into allied health careers. While there have been some examples of employees who are on a career pathway, PCWD did not see as much progression as it would have liked. Continued experimentation and the piloting of new programs for the Partners system is one of PCWD's priorities for the future.

Key Learning

From the point of view of Partners, the greatest benefit of the project to date has been the learning that has taken place. One of the greatest areas of learning relates to case management and career coaching. Specific lessons have included:

- For the pre-employment program, PCWD found that a more intensive and nurturing coaching style was more effective.
- PCWD found that employees need different amounts of coaching at different points in time. For the incumbent workers, it found that many employees did not need ongoing and regular contact with their coach. For some, a couple of meetings was sufficient to problem solve and put them on a new pathway.
- Brigham and Women's Hospital concluded from its experience that coaching had to be supported from within the hospital, not from the outside. This has led to the hiring of an internal coach to support incumbent workers involved in career advancement.
- Brigham and Women's also believes that career coaching should only apply to individuals who are actively engaged in a specific training program; in other words, employees who are already on a career pathway as opposed to those just generally involved in career exploration.

- MGH is still struggling with an approach to case management and coaching. The hospital believes that the human resource specialist positions should be providing this support to all employees.
- The coaches have found that it is important to be available to employees and being on-site with office hours is important.

A second area of learning surrounds the complexity and time involved in helping a relatively low-skilled employee make the educational progress needed to enter an allied health training program.

- There has been increased recognition of the barriers related to the costs of education and training. This has led to an increased focus on programs to provide financial supports to employees.
- The release time pilot provided PCWD with a deeper understanding of how important financial literacy training is to employees. PCWD is now replicating this pilot at Spaulding.
- PCWD found that it needs to pay much more attention to the skills assessment of incumbent employees, both at the front end for incumbent workers interested in educational advancement and then following completion of training courses.

The model of providing pre-college classes for incumbent workers was not found to be successful. While PCWD tinkered with the class over the last three years, it still met with limited success. Some of those involved believe that it does not make sense for the hospitals to reinvent the wheel and provide these remedial classes themselves. Others believe that it may still be able to design a better model, involving learning in small chunks based on competencies and with more individualized learning through online classes.

Brigham and Women’s Hospital found that developing training for very specific occupations with known job openings at the end was a more successful approach to career ladders for existing employees. It found that there were better outcomes for the lead PCA and surg tech programs in which participants were involved in training that led to direct advancement.

Critical Challenges

PCWD remains in a learning mode, focusing on how to continue to improve its pre-employment program and on how to provide existing employees with better and more effective coaching and remedial education services. According to PCWD staff, they will be doing more experimentation. They remain committed to the goals, but not to the original SkillWorks model. Staff have noted of SkillWorks, “They have helped us learn, but we still have a long way to go. We are in this for the long haul.” As they move forward, they are continuing to focus on the following challenges:

- Rolling pre-employment participants into some type of incumbent program. Currently, there is no formal transition and services stop after a year.

- Developing the right model for providing the education and skills needed for employees to advance along an allied health career ladder.
- PCWD is still assessing the appropriate role of coaching for incumbent workers and how the individual hospitals should support this activity.
- It has found that full-paid release time is very difficult in a hospital setting. Managers are very reluctant to allow a number of employees in the same department to leave for classes at the same time. Through its pilot with release time, PCWD has concluded that release time works if someone is willing to pay the funding for backfilling of replacement employees.

Chapter Four Building Skills Career Path Project (BSCPP)

The Building Services Career Path Project (BSCPP) is a labor-management collaboration between SEIU Local 615 and several employers of janitorial services including companies that specialize in building services as well as institutions that employ their own staff of building service personnel. The project is tripartite, involving the union, the employers, and the Voice and Future Fund (VFF), which is responsible for the project design and delivery of services. The purpose of the project is to help part-time building cleaners advance along career ladders to full-time, benefited, well-paying, higher-skilled custodial positions by improving the incumbent workers' English and occupational skills as well as creating greater transparency in the internal labor markets of the janitorial service companies. Ultimately, VFF's goal is that the BSCPP services provided generate demand among workers and employers for a system change that would institutionalize education and training as part of the collective bargaining agreement.

The initial partnership included seven employer partners: Acme, AM-PM Cleaning, American Cleaning, Harvard, MIT, OneSource, and Unicco. The partnership expanded this year as BSCPP added new offerings of interest to a new set of employers. A number of universities, including Boston University, Tufts, and Wentworth, along with large institutions such as Museum of Fine Arts, Children's Hospital, and Dana Farber, have become involved in Year 3. In addition to the employers there is a series of service partners who are working with VFF on delivering education, training, and counseling to participants. They include: Jewish Vocational Services (JVS), Boston Public Schools Adult Education and Community Services (AECS), and the Operating Engineers Union Local 877.

BSCPP received its first implementation grant in March 2005, Year 2 of the SkillWorks Initiative. SkillWorks Year 3 represented BSCPP's second year of program implementation. For consistency across partnerships, this document will refer to 2006 BSCPP activities as Year 3 and its 2005 activities as Year 2, although it was, in actuality, BSCPP's first year of implementation.

BSCPP services generally fall into three program components:

- English classes. ESL classes offered at the employer work site. These classes have primarily been geared to people with very limited English abilities. These classes are offered in addition to English classes offered on the weekends at the union hall that were in existence prior to SkillWorks and are not funded as part of BSCPP. English class participants do not receive career coaching.
- Occupational training. Classes are designed to develop job-specific skills and in some cases will lead to a trade certification. While a one-day occupational skills training class did not include career coaching, participants in the more intensive occupational classes receive career coaching.
- Multi-Service career advancement programs. A new component of the project in 2006, the career advancement programs involve crafting an individual plan for each participant to reach his specific career goal. The services may include ESL, GED, or ADP classes

depending on the need and ability of the individual participant. It could also involve interview and resume preparation, assistance in verifying degrees attained in other countries, internships, or other occupational classes.

In addition to these three major program components, BSCPP also offered courses in Year 3 aimed at enhancing participants' financial literacy. BSCPP is also piloting a different type of advancement program at specific employers that specifically prepares workers for supervisory positions.

Changes in Program Design, Activities, and Administration

BSCPP completed its first rounds of both basic education and occupational skills training in 2006. An assessment of those outcomes, combined with feedback from funders and findings of the first evaluation, led to a number of changes in program design. Furthermore, BSCPP added additional components to the programs in response to opportunities that arose at specific employers or in response to particular labor market shortages.

Changes in Program Design: Advancement Programs

Harvard University – SEIU 615 Advancement Program

In SEIU's 2005 contract negotiation with Harvard, the university agreed to set aside \$300,000 over the life of the six-year contract to build career path opportunities for SEIU workers at the university. BSCPP has been involved in shaping Harvard's program design. As of last year's evaluation, the individual charged with developing Harvard's program envisioned using the funds to send a handful of individuals to technical school. The BSCPP director, Ms. Waldstein, encouraged the development of a program broader in its reach. BSCPP's involvement in the program design led to a more "democratic" program according to its Harvard director, serving more people with a potential tradeoff of less intensive educational assistance.

The program is run through the university's extensive worker education program available to all hourly employees including contract employees. The program, known as the Harvard Bridge to Learning and Literacy, offers classes in literacy, English as a second language (ESL), General Education Development (GED) and Adult Diploma Program (ADP) test preparation, college preparation, computers, and citizenship preparation. In addition, the Bridge can arrange for one-on-one tutoring and career development services. While Harvard employees are entitled to a specific number of hours of Bridge classes, SEIU employees can avail themselves of the Bridge classes above and beyond the traditional benefit as a result of the 2005 negotiated agreement. Harvard also hired a career coach specifically to work with SEIU employees who are part of the program.

BSCPP categorizes participants in Harvard's Advancement Program as part of its program and this categorization has been approved by the SkillWorks project director. However, SkillWorks does not fund this program component. The Advancement Program is a joint program of SEIU 615 and Harvard with funding provided as an outcome of the collective bargaining agreement. Governance is through the joint body of SEIU and Harvard. BSCPP was useful in thinking about the program design and in participant recruitment. BSCPP staff were also helpful in orienting Harvard's new career coach. However, on a day-to-day basis, the program is managed and staffed by Harvard's Bridge to Learning and Literacy Program, which acts as the service provider.

Other Company-Specific Advancement Programs

BSCPP developed and has begun to implement new programs aimed at career advancement at specific employers. This type of advancement involves moving from a cleaning position to that of a supervisor. The desire to develop such programs was based on internal and external assessments of BSCPP initial services. The SkillWorks Year 2 evaluation found that BSCPP services were not sufficiently targeted to specific advancement opportunities. In addition, in spring 2006, BSCPP began to assess the outcomes of the entry maintenance class and was interested in tweaking its program model based on the learning. BSCPP worked with the SkillWorks capacity building consultant and SkillWorks project director to design a work plan aimed at creating more targeted paths for participant advancement.

The cornerstone of the new approach was employer-based advancement programs. BSCPP sought to build employer partnerships that would result in customized, employer-specific advancement programs. According to the work plan developed in May 2006, BSCPP would spend the summer identifying job openings and working out memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with employers. Classes were scheduled to begin in the fall of 2006.

BSCPP invested heavily in developing such a partnership with Unicco, the first employer targeted for an advancement program. Working closely with the building manager at a flagship Unicco building, BSCPP hammered out the details of the program. The program was planned to last 18 to 20 weeks and would include an introduction to the Hancock building and its importance to the city, classes offering contextualized language and supervisory skills development, and information on applying for jobs at Unicco.

Despite the spirit of collaboration evident in the interaction with the Unicco building manager, relations between SEIU and Unicco were quite tense throughout the summer. Program development also slowed while the lead BSCPP staff member took a leave during the summer. By the fall, the building manager had been replaced and Unicco provided no forwarding contact or information. The new building manager, while initially receptive, stopped returning phone calls.

Following a union action at Unicco's Boston headquarters in late 2006, and also involving the national vice president of public relations, BSCPP now has access to the building and as of April 2007 five participants have enrolled in the program. Any language suggesting a possibility of promotions at Unicco was removed from the agreement with Unicco at its request. There is no Unicco human resource involvement. Unicco conceded to offer one hour of paid time for the course.

No progress on other employer-specific advancement programs was made in 2006.

Opportunity Program

With employer-specific advancement programs proving more challenging to implement than expected, BSCPP decided to create a general advancement program aimed at workers from key BSCPP sites and their families and friends who are seeking to acquire new skills in order to advance in their career. BSCPP has also enrolled participants from beyond these specific partnering sites. BSCPP modeled the Opportunity Program on some of the elements that were proving successful in Harvard's Advancement Program.

Potential participants were screened to assess their degree of commitment to the program. One measure BSCPP used was that a participant must have already completed a class offered either through BSCPP or through the union's classes. In addition, applicants were interviewed to test their ability to commit the time to classes and their ability and willingness to change jobs.

Participant recruitment occurred at year-end. More detailed assessments of participants were conducted in early 2007. Based on the needs identified in those assessments, classes are being developed to fill specific gaps in the current offerings.

Changes in Activities: New Courses Offered

New Occupational Training Classes

Clean Room Training

During Year 2, BSCPP developed a partnership with an employer to train incumbent workers for entry positions in clean rooms. The class was implemented in 2006. The class was held in partnership with AM-PM, an employer that services a number of biotech firms in the Boston area. The training was to introduce building service personnel to the clean room environment so participants could make an informed decision before applying for work in that field. It also introduced participants to the basics of cleaning in that challenging environment. The class was one daylong session.

Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) and Refrigeration Technician Training

BSCPP devoted substantial time in 2006 to the planning of a new occupational training program that started in January 2007. Unlike the entry maintenance program, the new occupational training program prepares participants for a widely recognized credential. Participants enrolled in this track need to complete 300 hours of classes in electricity and refrigeration and 6,000 hours of documented, supervised work on HVAC-related tasks. Upon completion of those requirements, participants will then need to prepare for and pass a state licensing exam.

BSCPP developed a consortium of 14 employers to support the class. The extent of the employer commitment to date is that they agree to document the work hours spent by their employees on supervised HVAC-related activities. Employers are not financially supporting the training nor are they offering release time. There are no guarantees in place that upon receiving licensure participants will automatically be given a promotion or receive an increase in pay. BSCPP is relying on the fact that the shortage of licensed HVAC technicians will assure that participants are fairly compensated upon completion. BSCPP enlisted the participation of the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE 877) to supply the nationally recognized curriculum. Half of the participants are members of IUOE 877. The city of Boston's Madison Park Vocational Technical School is also a partner, providing the location for the class to meet.

As of the end of 2006, BSCPP had recruited participants to the program but the class had not yet started.

Other Classes Introduced in Year 3

Financial Literacy Classes

In recognition of SkillWorks' emphasis on financial literacy and asset development as a critical component to help participants reach Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard (FESS), BSCPP held two workshops this year for participants, one providing information for first-time homebuyers and the second on financial planning. The financial literacy class was three sessions, each lasting approximately six hours. That was followed with individual counseling sessions and some additional follow-up that made the full commitment for participants roughly 30 hours. The homebuyers' class was two daylong classes.

Changes in the Population being Targeted and Enrolled

Has the Project Met its Enrollment Goals?

BSCPP substantially expanded its enrollment in Year 3, more than doubling the number of people enrolled over Year 2. Based on the goal stated in the fourth quarter report to SkillWorks, however, it has not met its cumulative goal for the project to date.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL	Goal Year 3	Goal Overall
Total Enrollment		59	141	200	NA*	266*

* Different sources quote differing goals for enrollment. BSCPP's re-funding application stated a goal for 2006 of 400 enrollments for that year alone. Since then, quarterly reports have reflected lower goals. The third quarter report stated a cumulative goal of 180 and the fourth quarter report stated a cumulative enrollment goal of 266.

Demographic Profile

The population served by BSCPP has changed somewhat in its second year.

- A far smaller proportion of participants are residents of the city of Boston. Roughly two-thirds of Year 3 participants live outside of Boston. This reverses the proportion from Year 2 when two-thirds lived within Boston. Both the Harvard Advancement Program participants and, in particular, the HVAC participants are less likely to live in Boston and have brought down the average for the project.
- The population served has become more educated in Year 3. While nearly half of Year 2 participants had not graduated from high school, in Year 3 nearly three-quarters of participants have a high school diploma or a GED.
- While the vast majority of participants remain non-English speakers, that percentage has dropped from over 90% to roughly 80% of participants.

Table 4.2: Incumbent Demographic Data						
	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Enrollment						
Total Number Enrolled			59		141	
Boston Residency						
Yes - Boston resident			36	61%	45	32%
No - Not Boston resident			22	37%	95	67%
Missing			1	2%	1	1%
Total			59	100%	141	100%
Highest Educational Level and Certification at Enrollment						
Neither GED or high school diploma			29	49%	37	26%
GED certificate or high school diploma			14	24%	49	35%
Some college / technical school			6	10%	14	10%
Associates degree			0	0%	1	1%
4-year undergraduate degree			4	7%	10	7%
Post-graduate degree			0	0%	3	2%
Certificate from technical or vocational training program			0	0%	0	0%
License to practice vocational trade			0	0%	0	0%
Missing			6	10%	27	19%
Total			59	100%	141	100%
Primary Language						
English			1	2%	27	19%
Not English			54	92%	103	73%
Missing			4	7%	11	8%
Total			59	100%	141	100%
Employment at Enrollment						
Total employed at enrollment			59	100%	141	100%
Full-time workers			NA	NA	NA	NA
Average hourly wage			11.35		12.50	
Part-time workers			NA	NA	NA	NA
Average hours worked			20		20	
Average hourly wage			11.35		12.5	
With employer-sponsored benefits			NA	0%		0%
Without employer-sponsored benefits			NA	NA	NA	NA

Participants in the HVAC class are perhaps the biggest cause of the shift of the participant demographic profile. The start of the HVAC class represents a fairly dramatic shift in the type of participants recruited for BSCPP. Students are different both in terms of the employers from which they hail and in their demographic characteristics.

In order to be licensed by the state of Massachusetts, applicants must hold a high school diploma and be a U.S. citizen. As a result, many of the people enrolled have a different language and ethnic profile than the cleaners attending ESL classes or the entry maintenance class. More than 86% of the participants are white. All have a high school degree and more than 20% have some education beyond high school. Many of the participants are graduates of a vocational technical high school in the United States. The vast majority, approximately 95%, are native English speakers and the remaining few are fully comfortable with English.

The majority of participants work at universities or other large institutions in the Boston area. They are already employed in skilled trades positions. Many already perform some HVAC tasks in their current jobs, although the HVAC tasks may be sandwiched among a variety of other maintenance tasks.

As was the case last year, no information is provided from BSCPP on the income level of participants because many are employed at two or three jobs. In addition, many are supporting families in their native countries and may live in a house with several unrelated individuals, making it difficult to report on their earner status.

Progress and/or Outcomes Relative to Skills or Educational Certifications, Improved Employment Attachment, or Economic Advancement

Status of Participants

Employment Status

Employee retention in building services is quite high. Participant data show that only three participants are no longer with their initial employer. In two cases, the participant moved away. In one case, the participant left the employer to take a full-time entry-level maintenance position. Retention in the industry is generally fairly high, particularly among workers with fairly low skills and limited English abilities who see few alternatives.

Table 4.3: Incumbent Year End Job Status at Employer-Partners					
Total Number of Incumbent Enrollees				Number of Incumbent Enrollees Still Employed at Employer-Partners	
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL	End of Yr 3	% of Total
	59	141	200	194	97%

Note: One Year 2 enrollee and two Year 3 enrollees are family members of employees and not incumbent workers.

Program enrollment status

Table 4.4: Participant Enrollment Status			
Status	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Enrollment (unduplicated)	59*	141**	200
Dropped class	5	11	16
Completed Class	0	48 Year Two enrollees 53 Year Three enrollees	101

* Year 2 evaluation reported 66 total enrollment. This figure included seven participants who enrolled but dropped the class on or before the initial class. BSCPP has since removed these participants from its records.

** Year 3 enrollment is new enrollment in 2006 and does not include Year 2 participants continuing in courses in 2006.

BSCPP enrollment in Year 3 increased substantially over Year 2. Enrollment figures do not fully capture who BSCPP provided services to in 2006. All classes that started in Year 2 continued into some portion of Year 3. Similarly, Year 3 enrollment figures include 32 individuals enrolled in HVAC although the class commenced in 2007. Opportunity Program participants were also enrolled in 2006, but services will be substantially provided in 2007. In total, 50 BSCPP enrollees listed for Year 3 will receive the vast majority of their services in Year 3.

Another factor to consider when looking at enrollment figures is that there is a wide variety in the intensity of services received by participants. For instance, Year 3 enrollments include nine people who attended a financial literacy class but received no other form of educational, occupational, or career coaching services.

Detailed enrollment figures are represented below.

Table 4.5: Breakdown of BSCPP Classes and Enrollment				
Program/Class	2005 Enrolled	2006 Enrolled	Status	Description
2006 Services				
Multi-Service Advancement Programs				
Opportunity Program		25	Services currently being developed	Services vary depending on need of participant. Includes career coaching as necessary. No explicit timeframe for completion.
Harvard Advancement		40	Started Fall 2006 Ongoing	Services vary depending on need of participant. Includes career coaching as necessary. No explicit timeframe for completion.
Occupational Training				
Clean Room		10	Complete	One-day class introducing participants to cleaning in clean room environment.
HVAC Services		5	Enrollment in late 2006 Services started in 2007	These participants have completed course work and supervised hours. Currently receiving assistance in documenting hours and preparing for licensing exam.
HVAC Class		27	Enrollment in late 2006 Class started in 2007	Two 19-week modules: electrical and refrigeration. Each module includes a four-hour class twice a week.
Financial Literacy				
Home Buyers		12	Fall 2006	Two-day class.
Financial Planning		15	Fall 2006	Three-session class followed by counseling and individual follow-up.
Workplace ESL Classes				
BCEC II		8	Started Fall 2006	Two hours per week for one year. Class ran as a 10-week pilot. After reviewing its success, participants are now continuing on for full year.
MBTA		5	Started early 2006	Two hours per week for one year.
ACME/MIT		4	Started early 2006	Difficult to implement. Class terminated and participants were incorporated into classes at union hall.
Continued from 2005				
Occupational Training				
Maintenance	20		Completed in 4/06	Class met for 18, 6-hour sessions. Curriculum developed by the Asian American Civic Association. Class rotated students through classes in carpentry, painting, electrical, plumbing, and HVAC.
Workplace ESL Classes				
Hancock	11	3	Completed in 8/06	Two hours per week for one year.
Hynes	11	1	Completed in 7/06	Two hours per week for one year.
State	13	5	Completed in 6/06	Two hours per week for one year.
BCEC	11	1	Completed in 8/06	Two hours per week for one year.

Continuum of Services

BSCPP is working to provide participants a greater continuum of services aimed at advancement. At the start, participants enrolled in single courses and there was little connection between the offerings. Over time, it appears participants are using individual courses as a springboard to a longer term commitment to education and advancement. More participants are availing themselves of multiple offerings, usually sequentially but, in some instances, simultaneously.

A number of participants are choosing to continue educational opportunities following the completion of their initial BSCPP course. Just over half of the participants who enrolled in classes during Year 2 and completed those courses in Year 3 have gone on to pursue additional services. This is most common among participants in the workplace ESL classes. Participants enroll for one year in the workplace classes. After one year, the class concludes and the participants have the opportunity to continue on their own time through classes at the union's worker center (New participants are then recruited to restart the workplace ESL which satisfies a union goal of maximizing participation in training programs). Many participants have continued ESL classes or computer or financial literacy classes at the worker center.

Class	Completed	Pursued Additional Services	Percentage
<i>Occupational Training</i>			
Maintenance	19	7	37%
<i>Workplace ESL Classes</i>			
Hancock	8	6	75%
Hynes	8	4	50%
State	14	11	79%
BCEC	8	1	13%

Some participants who enrolled in Year 3 have also sought additional services. For instance, a third of financial planning workshop participants pursued other classes. Some participants who enrolled in Year 3 and are still participating in their initial course have added courses sequentially. For instance, three of the five participants in the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) ESL class are enrolled in other services as well. In total, 38 participants who enrolled in BSCPP in either Year 2 or Year 3 and have completed one course (or are still enrolled in a Year 3 class) have taken advantage of additional services as well. More than half of the additional services provided have been ESL and/or computer classes offered at the union. The rest were spread relatively evenly among advancement programs, citizenship, and financial literacy.

BSCPP is actively encouraging this type of progression from a single course to a broader commitment to advancement. Eligibility criteria for the Opportunity Program state that participants must have completed a class already as a demonstration of their commitment. Of the 25 Opportunity Program enrollees, 16 had already completed a union-sponsored ESL or computer course, seven had participated in a BSCPP course, and two appear to have not been involved in courses in the past.

Similarly, all of the Harvard Advancement participants had previously taken courses in Harvard's Bridge Program. Previous Bridge participation ranged from five months to six years.

Initially, the program model anticipated that participants would flow from ESL classes to occupational skills upgrading, but that continuum has not played out. Funders' desire to introduce occupational training early in the project meant that maintenance participants were enrolled without having participated in BSCPP-sponsored workplace English classes. That course was not run again. Another occupational training, clean room, was only offered to employees of one cleaner, AM-PM, which had not offered workplace ESL, so these participants have not had the opportunity to be involved in other BSCPP-sponsored English classes. Did the lack of English classes preceding those occupational courses hinder participant outcomes? Some maintenance class participants probably needed further academic remediation, whether that be ESL or basic education, to fully benefit from the maintenance class. In general, the outcomes related to those courses had more to do with an incomplete understanding of participant barriers to job change at the outset and an insufficient understanding of the actual opportunities within partnering employers, not a lack of initial ESL courses.

HVAC has not proved to be part of the continuum either. None of these participants were graduates of other BSCPP efforts. As was mentioned earlier, these participants have a different demographic profile from the participants in the rest of the program. In addition, of the 13 employer partners in the HVAC class, only 2 of those employers, Harvard University and Unicco, have been involved in other BSCPP-sponsored classes, making a continuum of services less likely for participants. Boston University and the other employers are now considered members of BSCPP; it is a sign of project health to have an expanding list of employer participants. For now, however, BSCPP does not offer a continuum of services to all of the workers at these partnering employers. Using the analogy of a ladder, BSCPP has put in place a rung on a fairly high step on the ladder. Until the lower rungs are in place, this opportunity will only be accessible to a fairly narrow group of more educated and skilled individuals. Once HVAC participants graduate, there will be new opportunities to institute the envisioned continuum as the maintenance positions they leave behind are targets for backfill by other BSCPP participants in English classes or the maintenance class.

One of the challenges in creating a logical career path for participants is that the path is a long-term process. BSCPP firmly believes that over time a part-time janitor with an education will be able to learn enough English to move to an entry maintenance job, and then possibly to an HVAC helper, and eventually complete the coursework and exam to achieve HVAC certification. However, the reality of the time commitment for this type of progression is probably close to ten years.

For right now, BSCPP is still in the process of creating or fixing the rungs on the career ladder that would make it possible for building service workers to even make that choice of a career path. BSCPP is being opportunistic in addressing certain pieces, such as the HVAC class that responds to a clear need in the industry. It is working through collective bargaining to ensure that other rungs along the career ladder (e.g., entry maintenance) are recognized by employers and adequately compensated. At the moment, the career path is still a work in progress.

Educational Achievements

ESL Progression

ESL classes have proven highly effective in improving participants' English skills. BSCPP has assessment data for 61 individuals, Year 2 and Year 3 participants, comparing initial assessments with most recent assessments. An analysis of the data shows that virtually all progressed substantially during their tenure. Roughly a third advanced, but not to the point of progressing from one category (e.g., Beginner) to another. However, 63% progressed at least one category and fully 42% progressed two or more categories. This speed of progression is well beyond the norm for ESL classes and is a substantial achievement for BSCPP.

The table below gives a sense of the distribution of English skills at the initial assessment and where participants stand as of their most recent assessment.

Level	Initial Assessment		Most Recent Assessment	
	Number of Participants	Percentage	Number of Participants	Percentage
No verbal English	7	11%	2	3%
Low Beginner (Minimal communication in English)	21	34%	4	7%
Beginner (Able to speak in class or very safe situations)	10	16%	8	13%
Advanced Beginner (Able to speak some outside of class)	9	15%	23	38%
Intermediate (Sufficient to hold a job requiring some English communication)	8	13%	12	20%
High Intermediate (High school or college classes completed in English)	6	10%	12	20%
Total with Assessments	61		61	

Note: BSCPP changed assessment methods in Year 3 from SPL to BEST Plus. No verbal English refers to an SPL of 2-4 or BEST of 88 or below. Low Beginner refers to SPL 6-14 or BEST of 90-140. Beginner refers to SPL of 15-20 or BEST of 142-210. Advanced Beginner refers to SPL of 21-29 or BEST of 215-390. Intermediate refers to SPL of 30-39 or BEST 400-500. High Intermediate refers to SPL of 40-50 or BEST 500-800+.

These results likely take into account progression beyond what was accomplished solely in the BSCPP-funded class. As noted above, a number of participants continued with ESL classes at the union hall once their employer-based class was complete. These assessments likely include that progress as well.

Graduation Rate (occupational)

The graduation rates in the occupational skills classes that BSCPP has offered have been quite high. In total, 29 of the 30 people who enrolled in occupational training in Year 2 and Year 3 completed their training. The maintenance training class graduated 19 of the 20 students who enrolled. Students received a certificate of completion although it should be noted that this is not an industry-recognized certification of a particular skill. All ten participants in the clean room class completed the one-day course.

Table 4.8: Completion of Training for Advancement (in sectors where jobs paying FESS wages do not necessarily require formal licensing or certifications)			
	Number of Incumbent Enrollees Who Have Completed Vocational-Specific Training That Is Seen as Fostering Achievement of the Next Level of Career Advancement		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
BSCPP		19	10

Graduation rates exclude participants in the HVAC class who were enrolled in BSCPP at the very end of 2006 and started classes in 2007. The HVAC classes require a yearlong time commitment on the part of participants.

Until participants in the HVAC class complete their classes and pass the licensing exam, BSCPP is unlikely to report substantial numbers of individuals receiving an industry-recognized credential or degree. This year, BSCPP helped one individual secure a Class 2 trucking license.

Table 4.9: Received Credential or Relevant Degree (for sectors where jobs providing FESS wages require licensing, a credential, or degree)			
	Number of Incumbent Enrollees Who Have Received an Industry-Recognized Credential or Relevant Degree		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
BSCPP	0	0	1

Other Educational Achievement (GED, degree program, other occupational program)

There are few other educational achievements to date. One participant in the Harvard Advancement Program has completed the coursework for his ADP, but needs to complete the exam.

Table 4.10: Other Significant Educational Achievements			
	Number of Incumbent Enrollees Who Have Realized Other Significant Educational Achievements (such as obtained GED, entered college, etc.)		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
BSCPP	0	0	0

Three maintenance class graduates are pursuing educational goals. One participant is taking an electrical class. Two other graduates of the maintenance program are enrolled in school, one in high school and one in college. In both cases, they were enrolled in school prior to the maintenance class so this is not a program outcome. According to BSCPP, one participant indicated that the maintenance class helped provide the motivation to stay in school.

While the Harvard Advancement Program will likely yield a few more educational successes in the coming year, it will be slow going for many of the other participants. Four additional Harvard Advancement participants are currently enrolled in an ADP class so perhaps in Year 3 those will translate into a few additional educational achievements. Many of the Harvard participants have already devoted a number of years to ESL classes offered through the Bridge to Learning and Literacy prior to the creation of the Harvard Advancement Program.

Many of the Opportunity Program participants have expressed an interest in receiving their GED, but as of the time of writing BSCPP was still sorting out their exact capabilities. Their progress will likely be slower because they have not benefited from years of ESL classes as their colleagues at Harvard have. The population appears to be bifurcated with a few having attained significant educational levels in their native countries and many others not having sufficient educational background to qualify for a pre-ADP class. BSCPP is currently designing a pre-pre-ADP class that can meet the needs of those enrolled.

Changes in Employment or Wage Status

Promotions or Other Economic Gains

BSCPP has documented 15 promotions or economic gains (unduplicated) resulting from BSCPP-related interventions. Those promotions represent 7.5% of the total enrollment population.

Table 4.11: Incumbent Program Related Wage Increases and Promotions (Years 1-3)			
Wage Increases	% of Incumbents	Promotions	% of Incumbents
15	7.5%	10	5.0%

Excluding the HVAC enrollees who did not receive any services in Year 3, the percentage of participants receiving some sort of career advancement or economic gain increases to 9% of enrolled participants who have received some services in either Year 2 or Year 3. The 15 promotions or economic gains are evenly split between participants enrolled in Year 2 and participants enrolling in Year 3. Eight Year 2 participants have experienced some sort of economic gain. Three of the eight have new positions. The other five Year 2 participants have income-enhancing side jobs or businesses that rely on the skills the participants developed in the maintenance class such as drywalling, painting, minor plumbing, or electrical work. These businesses supplement the participants' regular cleaning jobs. Seven participants who enrolled in Year 3 have received new positions. Three of those promotions are a result of the Harvard Advancement Program and the four others are individuals who enrolled in the union's Opportunity Program late in Year 3. A sample of the new job titles for those promoted are listed below:

- Area Supervisor
- Crew Chief/Crew Leader
- Environmental, Health, and Safety Technician II
- Maintenance

While those promoted have remained generally in building services, there are individuals in the Harvard Advancement Program who are looking to remain at Harvard but exit building services. There are currently two individuals completing internships, one in the finance office and one in the news office. In both cases, the internships are not only intended to build the individual's skills and confidence, but possibly turn into permanent positions.

The average hourly wage increase for the ten individuals who received a promotion was \$3.88. This is significantly greater than the average 74-cent increase in hourly wages received by other participants as a result of scheduled increases negotiated by the union. However, the average new wage of those with promotions was \$16.66 an hour. Assuming that the ten individuals worked 40 hours a week for 52 weeks a year at this wage level, they would have an annual salary of \$34, 642, which is \$10,000 below the FESS standard to support one adult and one child.

Wage increases exclude the five individuals who have side businesses that supplement their cleaning positions. While BSCPP reports that at least one of the five individuals pursuing a side contracting business is making as much as \$45 an hour at this work, the work is erratic and the fees charged by the other informal contractors are unknown.

While the ESL classes have clearly led to increases in English proficiency, those increases have not yet translated into promotions or economic gains. None of the 38 individuals who started ESL classes in Year 2 and completed the class in Year 3 have received a promotion or wage gain to date other than the union negotiated wage increase. As was noted in last year's evaluation, many participants had low levels of educational attainment in their native language and extremely limited English at the outset. While English assessments indicate tremendous improvement, most have additional progress to make before they can capitalize on their English gains.

None of the 10 participants in the clean room training showed any promotion or economic gain as a result. Apparently, AM-PM believed that it could replace the cleaners when taking over the contract at a new cleaning site. However, this is not the case. When a cleaning contractor wins a contract at a new site, it inherits the cleaning staff already working in the building. When AM-PM gained new biotech clients, it was unable to provide a slot for any of the workers who had attended the class.

Progression Along a Career or Educational Pathway

The best way to measure who is on an educational or career pathway in building services is whether they are enrolled in a program through which they are likely to receive career coaching. This is not an exact proxy. In Year 2, for instance, a number of maintenance class participants enrolled in the course without clearly defined career goals. In general, however, participants on an educational or career pathway are working to define a specific goal they want to work towards and are working with BSCPP to devise a set of services to help them reach that goal.

BSCPP substantially expanded the number of people involved in programs that will place them on an educational or career pathway. In Year 3, the participants considered on an educational or career path include those in the Harvard Advancement Program, the Opportunity Program, or the HVAC class or services.

Number of Incumbent Enrollees with New Career Goal for Advancement to Occupation Likely to Pay FESS-Level Wages (#)			Percentage of Incumbent Enrollees from Each Partnership with New Career Goal for Advancing to Occupation Likely to Pay FESS-Level Wages (%)		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
0	20	97		33.9%	68.8%

It is important to keep in mind that the timeline for achieving personal goals will vary tremendously by participant. Some participants in the Opportunity Program and the Harvard Advancement Program have already achieved promotions and economic gains after a matter of months, while others have years of education ahead of them before they are likely to make dramatic job changes.

BSCPP has not placed a major emphasis to date on preparing people for entry requirements for industry-recognized training programs. This is due to the fact that there are few industry-recognized certifications. While the HVAC program required participants to have a high school diploma, BSCPP recruited individuals who already had this requirement. Should the HVAC class become institutionalized, BSCPP may need to focus more attention in the future on helping people attain their GED in preparation for enrollment in the HVAC class.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
	0	0

Collective Bargaining Achievements

With the Harvard contract completed in 2005 and the master commercial contract up for negotiation in 2007, 2006 was a relatively quiet year for collective bargaining achievements. BSCPP's collective bargaining involvement was most evident at Boston University in Year 3. BSCPP suggests that the success at Harvard in negotiating the career path funding inspired union leaders from other higher education institutions to seek funding for training or other types of career path projects. Negotiators at Boston University tried to secure a university-supported training fund. In the end, they were not successful on that front but were successful in reviving the university-supported apprenticeship program that had been dormant for some time. Also, the collective bargaining process at BU led the university to change its human resource practices that will affect how the job qualifications are listed on job postings, improving the internal labor market at BU.

For the apprenticeship program, the university has handpicked three of its most promising workers to pursue a four-year apprenticeship program in each of the skilled trades, fully paid by the university. During the negotiations process, BSCPP presented the HVAC class concept to BU, which became an

early supporter of the project. BU, which offers no funded educational opportunities for hourly employees like Harvard's Bridge Program, recognizes the HVAC class as a first step. "I know the union would love to run ESL classes here but I thought let's start with this low-hanging fruit first and see how that goes..." said one B.U. official.

Current Views of the Employer-Partners

To understand what the benefit to employers could be one must understand what their problems were at the outset of the project. For most cleaning-related positions, employers were not experiencing a shortage of job applicants nor were they experiencing high turnover. Employers did express a need for their cleaning staff to hold sufficient English skills to interact with building employees, residents, or conventioners depending on the setting. Given that this was the need of commercial employers, this is the program benefit that appears to be most appreciated by employers. One can see this as a win-win for participants and employers since participants value their increased English skills even without a corresponding wage gain. English classes rarely lead to rapid career advancement, however, which has caused tension with SkillWorks funders. Given BSCPP's participant population, it is mutually beneficial for workers and employers to pursue English classes and this is a necessary, if not sufficient, component leading to career progression in the long term.

An additional caveat in expressing the employer perspective is that there is not necessarily a unified view amongst the employers on the value of the program. In commercial employers there may be a wide difference between how the building manager or a supervisor feels about BSCPP as opposed to more senior management. For instance, while senior management at Unicco had initially supported a building-specific advancement program at Hancock Tower, the new building manager has aggressively sought to undermine any career path classes on site.

The HVAC class presents the greatest opportunity of the current offerings to be a win for employers and an economic win for participants as well. Using Boston University as an example, when the BU employees receive their HVAC license they can apply for several open positions at BU. Given that these positions have remained unfilled for more than two and a half years, there is certainly potential that they will still be available when these participants complete the program. These positions will likely pay at least \$20,000 more than participants' current salary, an obvious win for participants. BU will win because it has a difficult time competing with construction contractors who will pay significantly more for HVAC employees. BU has not guaranteed any jobs to those attending the BSCPP class, but participants are likely to be interested in remaining with their current employer and BU may find skilled people willing to work for the pay it can offer. With a state license in hand, participants can choose whether to accept the lower wages but security and lifestyle benefits that come in higher education, or to pursue more lucrative opportunities in construction.

Institutional and/or System Changes

Changes in Provider Practices

One change in provider practice was the result of the entry maintenance class. For that class, Madison Park Vocational Technical High School was opened on Saturdays. This required direct, explicit pressure from BSCPP, then from the Private Industry Council. That the facility was not open on Saturdays had been a bone of contention with the community for a long time. Since the

Vocational High School agreed to open the facility for BSCPP, it has since opened it to a number of other programs.

Changes in Employer Practices

The most obvious change in employer practice is the Harvard Advancement Program. The Harvard Advancement Program is a direct outcome of the 2005 collective bargaining agreement. With the influence of BSCPP, Harvard has designed a comprehensive program aimed at improving the skills of participants and helping them in a variety of ways to access better job opportunities at the university. It is the exact type of changed employer practice that SkillWorks would hope to achieve. The Harvard Advancement Program is fully institutionalized as a part of a collective bargaining agreement. Based on an interview with Harvard's director of the program, however, BSCPP has a fairly low level of ongoing involvement in administering the program. However, BSCPP continues to claim all Harvard participants as BSCPP participants. More than a quarter of Year 3 enrollees were Harvard Advancement participants. In the future, BSCPP may want to revise its method of tracking enrollment to reflect the fact that the Harvard program is now a changed employer practice and not a service of BSCPP.

The Boston Convention and Exhibition Center (BCEC) is an example in which an "employer" (although Unicco is the actual employer of building service workers at the Convention Authority) has embraced the value of workforce development as a result of the BSCPP intervention. As a business in the hospitality industry, customer service is critical to its success. Unlike building services in office buildings, BCEC cleaners have significant contact with building visitors and become a vital part of the customer service experience. In this environment, English skills are critical. BCEC sees tremendous benefit to the on-site ESL classes in upgrading building services workers' English skills, which directly improves their ability to provide a positive customer experience for the convention visitors. The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority (MCCA) is committed to maintaining English classes on an ongoing basis. In fact, it is now written into MCCA's contract with Unicco that the company will provide the time for workers to attend training classes. MCCA was so pleased with the model that it put similar provisions in another vendor's contract. Aramark, another MCCA contractor, is now implementing English classes for its workers similar to those offered by BSCPP. To see MCCA's actions as a change in "employer practice," one needs to define the definition of employer rather broadly. MCCA is not a direct employer of building service personnel; however, its detailed contracts give MCCA tremendous latitude to determine the terms and conditions of work. Given this arrangement, it is more than a customer of a product or service and it is appropriate to view the role similar to that of an employer.

Some additional employer changes resulted from collective bargaining language influenced by BSCPP. For example, Boston University and Boston College revived their apprenticeship programs this year. In addition, Boston University made improvements in its human resource practices that will affect how the job qualifications are listed on job postings. The change will hopefully open up opportunities for people who do not meet every qualification criterion.

More changes in employer practices are likely in 2007, Year 3 of BSCPP's efforts. Negotiations on Boston's master commercial contract will get underway in June. BSCPP has been very influential as SEIU negotiators have clarified what they intend to bargain for in the negotiations. SEIU's chief

negotiator spoke of the value of BSCPP as the union approaches the negotiations. The biggest benefit of the program has been that it offers something tangible to point to when the concept of an employer-sponsored training fund is suggested. SEIU anticipates that it will be “fairly easy” now to negotiate an employer-funded training program, but the level of contribution will be the sticking point. In addition, BSCPP has been very helpful in identifying some of the gaps in the current building services job categories. SEIU intends to bargain for a new job category in the master contract, something above cleaner, probably called a utility. This position would recognize additional maintenance skills developed through programs such as the entry maintenance class and reward those skills with slightly higher pay.

In addition to the master contract, union officials representing higher education institutions have been meeting to share the specifics of the progress at Harvard and Boston University as well as to discuss the HVAC consortium model. As other higher education contracts come up for negotiation, it is likely that more educational opportunities will be negotiated in those contracts as well.

Public Policy Impact

BSCPP has not had an impact on public policy to date.

Continuing Challenges

BSCPP programs have evolved and expanded in Year 2. BSCPP has sought to learn from initial experiences, to be flexible and adaptive in its approach, and to test new models to see what works. In this process, the learning is at least as important as the outcomes. BSCPP can point to some successful outcomes. However, in general, the program has not achieved its desired outcomes as quickly as it might have hoped. Below is a description of some of the challenges BSCPP faces in realizing its goal of moving building service workers along a career path toward a job paying FESS-level wages.

Challenges with Participants

For a variety of reasons, it has proven more difficult than expected for BSCPP participants to advance in terms of their position or their pay scale. In many cases, participants are not as willing to change jobs as they initially indicated:

- Several expressed fear of leaving the security of a union job. Commercial cleaning supervisory positions are non-union.
- Many participants at commercial cleaning companies work multiple jobs. Changing positions either required a significant enough economic gain to offset the loss of the second or third job or the new position had to not disrupt the other job hours. This complexity often made advancement impossible.
- Participants at Harvard are quite comfortable in their positions and are often unwilling to change unless the opportunity provides a dramatic economic gain.

- Some participants are unwilling to have their immigration documents reviewed again. In one case, a commercial cleaner paid for a participant's documentation and the worker is beholden to that employer until he has paid off those costs.

Beyond participants' willingness to accept advancement opportunities, an additional barrier is set by their educational background. BSCPP must contend with a bifurcated population in terms of their educational background and create programs that can accommodate people who are functionally illiterate and those who have graduate degrees from their native country. For participants who are illiterate in their native language, career advancement is, at best, a very long-term process.

BSCPP is doing a much better job in Year 3 in trying to manage the expectations of participants and screening those who are truly willing and able to commit the time and are willing and able to accept the upheaval involved in making a career change. These screening mechanisms were apparently employed with HVAC participants.

BSCPP will need to give careful thought to the implications of participant capabilities and the timeline for advancement as the Opportunity Program evolves. The participants that have been recruited have on average a fairly low level of educational attainment and English capabilities. Nearly three-quarters of the Opportunity Program participants have not completed high school in either their native country or the United States. Half of the participants have eight or less years of education in their native country and no formal education in the United States. Yet, others have a master's degree. Given the population being served, BSCPP will need to structure the program with the following factors in mind:

- *Setting appropriate long-term and interim goals for participants.* In their intake, many participants expressed a desire to get a GED but did not list a particular reason to achieve that goal. A participant may want a GED as an educational goal but it may not be necessary to achieve their career goal. BSCPP needs to help participants distinguish between educational goals and career goals. If education is needed to reach the chosen career goal then BSCPP needs to guide participants in the appropriate education steps to reach their goal. BSCPP needs to help participants sort out how the education and career goals fit together or be explicit about the fact that they may not.
- *Mapping clear pathways for participants that clearly demonstrate what the steps are to achieve the mutually agreed upon goals.* BSCPP needs to be very explicit with participants about not only the weekly commitment required to pursue their goals, but also the multi-year commitment required to achieve their goals.
- *Designing an approach that does not over-emphasize career coaching when a career change may in fact be several years away.* To provide services in a cost-effective manner, BSCPP will need to minimize career coaching for those participants who have years of coursework ahead of them before they are likely to make a career move. For instance, the Harvard Advancement Program's career coach is only working with a fraction of program participants, those who actually have the educational background to consider a near-term career move.

- *Designing mechanisms for highlighting and recognizing interim successes.* Given the long-term commitment, BSCPP should look for mechanisms to celebrate interim milestones in part as a method of keeping participants motivated and engaged.

Challenges with Employers

Unlike other sectors in which SkillWorks is involved, the building services sector is defined more by a set of occupations than specific employer characteristics. As a result, the “sector” includes employers who have little in common other than the fact that they employ cleaners. A higher education institution is an entirely different organization from a commercial cleaner. Designing career path projects at these employers is likely to be very different and will likely yield very different levels of support. As examples, let’s contrast the employment setting at Harvard and Unicco, both BSCPP employers:

- *Harvard University* employs more than 25,000 people in Cambridge and Boston, with hundreds, if not thousands, of job titles with detailed job descriptions for each. The university exists in a very public eye and needs to meet the scrutiny of progressive students and faculty who have historically expressed concern regarding the university’s treatment of its hourly workers. In addition, Harvard University is in the midst of planning an enormous expansion for which it will need the support of the city of Boston to see the project completed. The university has an unrivaled endowment that enables it to invest heavily in a variety of administrative functions such as human resources. The university has invested heavily in education for its hourly employees since students led the living wage campaign in 1999.
- *Unicco* is a national firm with a heavy presence in the northeast, employing more than 18,000 people. The firm provides janitorial services, operations and maintenance, landscaping, lighting, and office services. It is a privately held company. It competes for service contracts primarily on the basis of price. In a limited number of contracts, such as MCCA, it faces stakeholders, in this case its customer, who places a value on English language skills for its hospitality business and also expresses a desire to improve the well-being of Boston’s immigrant community. But the vast majority of Unicco customers are most concerned that building maintenance functions be performed efficiently and inexpensively. To keep costs low, the company has an extremely flat management structure with little overhead. Investments in human resources are quite low. There are relatively few formal job titles and job descriptions or established pay scales for the positions.

While the specifics about these employers are not important, the profile is meant to draw out the differences between the two. The two employers differ in terms of:

- the degree to which internal labor markets are defined and supported by human resources;
- organizational complexity in terms of the pay levels and gradations of job titles that allow for progression along a career path;

- stakeholder demands influencing their commitment to workforce development;
- the need for city support for building projects; and
- levels of financial reserves to tap for financing workforce development efforts.

Finally, the two employers differ in terms of employee loyalty. Employees at higher education institutions already have made a “step up” on the career ladder. Jobs at higher education institutions often pay more, provide greater job security, and have better hours. Their educational attainment levels reflect their higher stature in the industry. They are generally far better educated than their commercial cleaner counterparts. Once people are employed at these institutions they “stay forever” according to some university contacts. This level of employee loyalty allows the institutions to feel some degree of security that the institution will benefit from the skill enhancement of its existing employees. Many employees at commercial cleaners talk about advancement in terms of exit from the industry.

BSCPP has grappled with some of the implications of the differences among employers but more work is needed.

- *Create a more systematic flow of workers from commercial cleaners to higher education employers.* If moving from commercial cleaners to the higher education setting is a form of advancement, BSCPP should look more proactively at developing a formal mechanism for that flow. BSCPP can start by designing a plan to backfill the maintenance positions that will open up as HVAC students move into new positions and a plan to backfill jobs at Harvard as Advancement Program participants access new opportunities.
- *Advancement programs should not exclusively focus on advancement within the industry but support participants should they choose to exit the industry.* Developing an advancement or opportunity program that is not conducted in partnership with the commercial employers may best serve participants in the long run. Given the limited opportunities for advancement in a commercial setting, a program that is separate from employers and is able to more fully assist participants with career choices that could include an “exit” from the industry rather than solely an “advancement” is in the best interest of BSCPP participants. BSCPP has implemented this approach in the Opportunity Program.

Challenges Related to Industry Characteristics

Discussions have highlighted some other aspects of the industry that create challenges to workforce development efforts in building services:

- In general, there is no labor shortage for building service personnel. The low-skilled jobs have few barriers to entry. Obviously, exceptions exist such as in the case of HVAC technicians.
- There is a limited skill set needed for the vast majority of positions in the commercial cleaning sector. While there are a limited number of skilled positions, there are too few

for this to be an advancement path of any significant scale. For the majority of positions, there is little need for occupational skills development to perform required tasks. Occupational skills do not necessarily create advancement opportunities in commercial cleaning services. The most common advancement on the commercial side is supervisor, which has more to do with English skills and managerial talent. More opportunities for skill-led advancement are available in residential cleaning, which is currently non-union, and in institutional settings such as higher education.

- Employers do not gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace by investing in skill development of their building service workers. The exception is in settings where building service workers may have interaction with customers, which then places a premium on English skills.
- There is simply a limited career path in building services. Unlike the healthcare sector or the automotive sector, there are few obvious careers to prepare for within the sector. The exception to that are skilled trades, but the traditional path to these skilled, credentialed jobs is not through cleaner. Cleaners often do not have the English skills, the high school diploma, or the risk profile to accept lower wages in an apprentice program to gain the required supervisory hours.

These factors raise the question as to whether there are some industries that are better suited to career path projects than others. Perhaps in the case of building services there simply is not enough of a “win-win” to create true employer buy-in for a skills-led employee advancement project.

However, the union presence means that it is not solely an employer decision to institutionalize workforce development. The presence of the union provides leverage for workers who want to further their education regardless of whether it is in the specific interest of the employers. If BSCPP is able to engage and inspire the workers to the point that they are willing to fight for educational opportunities through contract negotiations, it matters less whether employers reap sufficient reward to warrant the investment. It would simply be part of the price they have to pay for building services in the well-organized Boston market.

Conclusion

BSCPP has made substantial progress in adapting its programs in response to early successes and failures. By the time new programs were implemented, there was not an opportunity to complete the next iteration of programs, which makes it impossible to fully evaluate the success or failure of the new initiatives. However, early results are promising. The success of some of BSCPP’s new programs will be more fully seen in 2007. 2007 will also be an important year for BSCPP since it has staked much on the institutionalization of career pathways in the master contract. The outcome of that process will heavily influence building service workers’ ongoing access to educational programs that could lead to career progression and the viability of that progression within Boston’s major commercial cleaning employers.

Chapter Five Partnership for Automotive Career Education (PACE)

The Partnership for Automotive Career Education (PACE) represents a partnership involving four automotive service employers (altogether operating forty-three employment locations in Metro Boston), two educational institutions, and two Boston community-based service organizations. Led by the Asian American Civic Association (AACA) as fiscal agent in partnership with La Alianza Hispana and the Urban League, PACE is seeking to create a structure for a lasting collaboration between the automotive industry and community-based organizations (CBOs) that will help low-income workers find successful career paths in the labor market. SkillWorks's Year 3 represented the PACE partnership's second year of program implementation.

PACE has chosen to focus on the unmet need for automotive technicians, a broad labor classification in the automotive industry. The career paths for automotive technicians across the spectrum of employers are strictly defined and well-rewarded, making advancement opportunities feasible across a range of employment levels. The PACE CBO-employer partnership has joined together with training organizations to help automotive service employers fill entry-level positions with workers who are qualified, trained, and motivated to access these career opportunities. PACE also provides training and limited coaching for incumbent workers, fostering improved retention rates and advancement opportunities. The two principal modules of PACE training, Module 1 and Module 2, are packaged together as a two-semester program that continues post-placement and ends with the award of college credit that may be used towards an Associates Degree at any higher education institution.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ While previous reports (SkillWorks and Evaluation reports) described Module 1 as part of the pre-employment program and Module 2 as part of the incumbent program, PACE's program offerings and design have evolved such that the categorization of these modules is not this clean-cut. First, graduation from the so-called "pre-employment" component of the PACE program currently does not occur until an individual has completed *both* Module 1 and Module 2. Second, Module 2 participants can include pre-employment enrollees who have completed Module 1 but have not yet been placed into jobs, participants who completed Module 1 who have been placed into jobs, and incumbent workers from employer partners.

When a person enrolls in Module 1, he is considered a pre-employment enrollee. If that person is then placed in a job before beginning Module 2, that person is still technically a pre-employment enrollee but transitions to being considered an incumbent employee in terms of the services that PACE provides the individual (e.g., retention and advancement coaching).

In order to clarify who is actually participating in Module 2, Table 5.2 was created. It distinguishes those individuals who enrolled in Module 1 and continued into Module 2 but were not placed into employment between the classes (*Pre-employment Enrollees*); those who enrolled in Module 1 as pre-employment participants, were placed into employment between the classes, and then continued into Module 2 (becoming *PACE Incumbents*); and those incumbent workers who enrolled in Module 2 upon the referral of one of the PACE employer-partners (classified as *Employer Incumbents*).

Changes in Program Design, Activities, and Administration During Year 3

Major Changes in Services and/or Course Content

- The Module 1 training was made more hands-on in Year 3, with students working on parts and vehicles earlier in the course, as a result of participant feedback. The goal is to better engage students at the start of the course and to better prepare them for early job placement in the auto industry.⁵⁸
- For Module 2, the timing of the course schedule and the class location were also changed to address participant feedback.⁵⁹
- In Year 3, PACE instituted a more rigorous screening and interview process in an effort to better ensure that program enrollees understood the auto industry and were committed to seeking employment in the industry. This was in response to the first year of implementation, when a number of pre-employment graduates decided not to pursue an automotive career. The new process includes an extensive application, a battery of reading, writing and math assessments, a pre-screening interview, a group interview with the selection committee, and a three-week orientation trial period. Built into the orientation period is a job shadowing experience, where participants can observe the shop floor and have a true sense of what their initial job placement might be.
- Because of turnover in the career coach position at PACE, management staff developed a Career Coach manual and clarified which incumbents would receive coaching from that point forward—only Module 2 participants, not ASE preparation course participants unless requested by the employer.⁶⁰
- Finally, PACE-provided supervisory trainings were held during Year 3 with centralized manager meetings at employer partners to ensure maximum participation. These trainings were designed to support supervisors as they work with a more ethnically diverse population, including PACE graduates.

⁵⁸ Module 1 training, or “Introduction to Automotive Maintenance,” includes automotive technical training (safety, basic automotive mechanics, maintenance service, tire service and wheel balancing, brake service and alignment, steering and suspension, and electrical/electronic systems), contextualized ESOL/Math training for those that need it, computer literacy, and workplace etiquette. Module 1 is directed at pre-employment participants with little or no previous automotive work experience.

⁵⁹ Module 2 training, or “Intermediate Automotive Maintenance,” was designed for incumbent worker participants and includes two separate courses—(1) Automotive Systems Maintenance and Electrical Systems and (2) Chassis, Brakes and Suspension.

⁶⁰ PACE began their first year of implementation with one career coach and added a second career coach position midway through the year. By the beginning of the second year of implementation, both of these positions were vacant. PACE chose to hire one new career coach and leave one of the positions vacant. In total, there have been three career coaches at PACE since the program began.

Changes in staffing, administration, and/or governance of the partnership

- An employer partner was added (Direct Tire and Auto) and an intentional effort was put into expanding the number of employers that would hire PACE graduates, even if they did not necessarily want to become employer partners.
- At the beginning of 2007, La Alianza Hispana (LAH) decided that it would discontinue its participation as a partner. During Years 1 and 2, LAH was partially responsible for participant outreach and recruitment. The decision to leave the partnership was motivated by a combination of factors including a change in organizational leadership and the board's decision to focus more intently on mission-critical programs; PACE was a small part of their overall portfolio. The other two community-based organizations, AACA and Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts (ULEM), will recruit more heavily in the future to cover the gap. All other partners remained the same.
- The PACE Governing Board was founded in Year 3. The principal members include management members from four partner employers (Bridgestone Firestone, Direct Tire and Auto Service, Sullivan Tire, and Village Automotive Group) the three CBO executive directors, and the president of Ben Franklin Institute of Technology.
- As alluded to above, PACE experienced significant staff turnover in Year 3. The program director left in the fall of 2006 and an interim director, Beverly Wing, oversaw the project until the new director, Sarah Kingsbury, was hired in early 2007. Additionally, three different people have held the career coach position (since initial project implementation in 2005). To combat the negative effects of this turnover and to strengthen PACE's project management structure, PACE has consolidated the operational structure of the partnership somewhat in Year 3. One concrete step has been the creation of a staff position, the Director of Operations, to assist with enrollment logistics, data management, and overall program operations.

Who Is the Project Serving?

Has the Project Met its Enrollment Goals?

In Year 3, PACE expected to serve 30 individuals through its pre-employment Module 1 training, 15 new incumbent enrollees (employer incumbents) through its Module 2 training, and 20 incumbents with ASE Test Prep courses. PACE was able to exceed its enrollment goals for the pre-employment program and the ASE Test Prep courses (Table 5.1). PACE also has an implicit goal that all individuals who complete Module 1 continue into Module 2 and graduate from the PACE program. In Year 3, 85% of those eligible to enroll in Module 2 did so—a significant achievement.⁶¹

⁶¹ Thirteen individuals completed the Fall 2005 Module 1 course in January 2006; twelve enrolled in Module 2 in Spring 2006. Thirteen individuals completed the Spring 2006 Module 1 course in June 2006; ten enrolled in Module 2 in Fall 2006.

Table 5.1: Total Enrollments						
	Year 1*	Year 2	Year 3	TOTALS	Goal Yr 3	Goal Overall
Pre-employment (Module 1)		33	34	67	30	60
Module 2 - New Incumbent Worker Enrollments		8	1	9	**	73
Incumbent Workers - ASE Test Prep		33	33	66	20	
Three-Year Total for Pre-employment and Incumbents				142	65	133

* PACE did not become operational until Year 2 of the SkillWorks initiative.

** PACE did not break out a goal for the number of new incumbent worker who would enroll in Module 2. When the goals were created in 2005, they projected that they would serve 15 new incumbents in Module 1 and Module 2 combined. Since that time, they realized that Module 1 was too basic for individuals already employed in the automotive industry. The goals were never revised, though, to reflect this reality.

PACE did not have an explicit goal for new incumbent worker enrollee in Module 2, though they only enrolled one new incumbent worker referred by a partner employer during Year 3 (Table 5.1 and Table 5.2). Over the two years of implementation, 76% of Module 2 participants were individuals continuing from Module 1, fewer than half of whom were employed while taking the course.

In general, PACE's programmatic emphasis continues to be on the pre-employment aspect of the program, investing the most time and program energy into those who enroll in Module 1 as *Pre-employment Enrollees* and then continue through training and into employment. Incumbent elements, including ASE courses and supervisory training, require less time to execute and therefore receive a smaller amount of staff attention. In Year 2, significant effort was invested, however, in increasing the number of *Employer Incumbents* enrolled in Module 2. Unfortunately, employers did not have workers at the appropriate levels to send to the course.

Table 5.2: Total Enrollments - Module 2				
	Year 1	Year 2*	Year 3*	TOTALS
Pre-employment Enrollees (Pre-employment participants who were not placed in jobs before Module 2)		1	9	10
PACE Incumbents (Pre-employment participants who were placed in jobs before Module 2 began)		6	13	19
Employer Incumbents (did not take Mod 1)		8	1	9
Three-Year Total for Module 2 Enrollees				38

* This refers to when individuals actually took the Module 2 class. For example, if an individual enrolled in Module 1 in the Fall of Year 2 and Module 2 in Spring of Year 3, he/she would be listed under Year 3.

The majority of PACE's pre-employment participants (including *Pre-employment Enrollees* and *PACE Incumbents*) have a high school diploma or a GED, with a slight increase in the number of individuals with GEDs and a decrease in the number of high school diplomas in Year 3. The number of individuals whose primary language is something other than English also increased. There was no

change in the recruitment strategy that intentionally resulted in these changes. One possible explanation was offered by a CBO staff member—individuals with higher levels of English language skills tend not to be as attracted to the program because they feel that they have more employment opportunities available to them.

Data on the incumbent population served is largely unavailable. Demographic data is only available for Module 2 participants, and since there was only one participant in Year 3, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the individuals being served by the PACE program.⁶²

⁶² In Year 2, demographic data was available for about half of the ASE Test Prep participants. Unfortunately, this data was aggregated with Module 2 participant data and therefore cannot be presented. No demographic data is available for Year 3 ASE Test Prep participants.

Table 5.3: Pre-Employment Demographic Data				
	Year 2		Year 3	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Enrollment				
Total Number Enrolled	33		34	
Boston Residency				
Yes - Boston resident	26	79%	28	82%
No - Not Boston resident	7	21%	6	18%
Missing	0	0%	0	0%
Total	33	100%	34	100%
Highest Educational Level and Certification at Enrollment				
Neither GED or high school diploma	3	9%	2	6%
GED certificate	5	15%	8	24%
High School diploma	18	55%	20	59%
Some college / technical school	5	15%	2	6%
Associates degree	0	0%	0	0%
4-year undergraduate degree	0	0%	1	3%
Post-graduate degree	0	0%	1	3%
Certificate from technical or vocational training program	1	3%	0	0%
License to practice vocational trade	0	0%	0	0%
Missing	1	3%	0	0%
Total	33	100%	34	100%
Primary Language				
English	20	61%	10	29%
Not English	13	39%	24	71%
Missing	0	0%	0	0%
Total	33	100%	34	100%
Employment at Enrollment				
Total employed at enrollment	19	58%	18	53%
Full-time workers	2	D/U*	12	D/U
Average hourly wage	\$9.50		\$10.00	
Part-time workers	6	D/U	3	D/U
Average hours worked	22		18	
Average hourly wage	\$8.50		\$11.00	
With employer-sponsored benefits	D/U		D/U	
Without employer-sponsored benefits	D/U		D/U	

*D/U, or *Data Unavailable*, indicates that the partnership was unable to provide this information to the evaluation team.

Table 5.4: Incumbent Demographic Data*				
	Module 2 - Employer Incumbents			
	Year 2		Year 3	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Enrollment				
Total Number Enrolled	8		1	
Boston Residency				
Yes - Boston resident	2	25%	0	0%
No - Not Boston resident	6	75%	1	100%
Missing	0	0%	0	0%
Total	8	100%	1	100%
Highest Educational Level and Certification at Enrollment				
Neither GED or high school diploma	0	0%	0	0%
GED certificate	1	13%	1	100%
High School diploma	6	75%	0	0%
Some college / technical school	1	13%	0	0%
Associates degree	0	0%	0	0%
4-year undergraduate degree	0	0%	0	0%
Post-graduate degree	0	0%	0	0%
Certificate from technical or vocational training program	0	0%	0	0%
License to practice vocational trade	0	0%	0	0%
Missing	0	0%	0	0%
Total	8	100%	1	100%
Primary Language				
English	2	25%	0	0%
Not English	6	75%	1	100%
Missing	0	0%	0	0%
Total	8	100%	1	100%
Employment at Enrollment				
Full-time workers	5	63%	1	100%
Average hourly wage	D/U		\$0.00	
Part-time workers	3	38%	0	0%
Average hours worked	20		N/A	
Average hourly wage	\$11.66		N/A	
With employer-sponsored benefits	D/U		0	0%
Without employer-sponsored benefits	D/U		0	0%

* PACE only was able to provide data for incumbent participants that enrolled in the Module 2 training course. Data was unavailable for ASE Test Prep Participants in Year 3.

Participant Outcomes

Employment Outcomes for Pre-Employment Participants

The rate of completion for Module 1 decreased slightly in Year 3 despite efforts to improve applicant screening (Table 5.5). However, the actual program graduation rate (individuals that completed Module 1 and 2) did improve during Year 3 (Table 5.5). Roughly 55% of those eligible to graduate (i.e., they enrolled in Year 3 and had sufficient time to complete Module 1 and Module 2 trainings) did so.⁶³ Some of the barriers to participant completion mentioned in PACE’s Application for Refunding included personal sickness, family sickness, childcare issues, and transportation issues.

There were mixed opinions from staff, instructors, and employers about whether the intensified recruitment process had resulted in a pool of enrollees who were better able to finish the coursework. Some felt that it had made a difference and that the dropouts were related to individuals dealing with unexpected personal crises. Others felt that there were still participants enrolling in the course who were unqualified or unable to adhere to the academic discipline required for the program.

	Enrollment	Program Completion			
	Enrolled	Completed Module 1	% of Enrolled	Graduated (Completed Modules 1 and 2)	% of Enrolled
Year 2	33	27	81.8%	16	48.5%
Year 3	34	26	76.5%	10	58.8%*

* The Year 3 Graduation Rate calculation (% of enrollment) only includes those individuals who were eligible for graduation (i.e., could have completed Module 2 before December 2006). Seventeen individuals enrolled in Class 3 and 10 graduated (58.8%).

The goal of the PACE partnership is to place its pre-employment participants into employment within three months of completing Module 1. Table 5.6 has been modified to reflect this goal, calculating the placement rate by using the number of individuals who completed Module 1 during Year 3 rather than the total number of program graduates (those who completed both Module 1 and 2). For Class 3 participants, PACE was able to nearly meet its goal of placing 70% of completers.⁶⁴

⁶³ Eighteen Year 3 enrollees were not eligible for “program graduation” during Year 3 because they had not yet completed Module 2 (graduation: June 2007).

⁶⁴ Placements rates were not calculated for Class 4, Module 1 participants since this course was not completed until December 2006.

	Enrollment	Mod 1 Completion		Placement					
	# Enrolled	# completing Mod 1	% of Enrolled	# Placed in Partner Employer	% of Mod 1 Completions	# Placed in Non-Partners	% of Mod 1 Completions*	Total Placed	% of Mod 1 Completions
Class 3	17	13	76.5%	5	38.5%	4	30.8%	9	69.2%
Class 4*	17	13	76.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Placement activities for the 13 individuals who completed Class 4, Module 1 (December 2006) had only just begun by year's end. As of December 2006, 3 of the 13 completers had been placed.

In addition to the nine Year 3 participants placed in Year 3, **eight Year 2 enrollees were also placed** in the automotive industry in Year 3 (Table 5.7). By placing 17 individuals in Year 3 (eight from Year 2 and nine from Year 3), PACE doubled the number of placements made during the first year of implementation. The improvement is significant but the overall placement rate is still low, only 50% of all enrolled.

According to PACE representatives, the low placement rates were caused by a combination of factors: (1) the economy had slowed considerably, resulting in employer partners hiring fewer entry-level workers or no workers at all; (2) a mild winter which affected the employers' workloads (particularly the tire dealers) and constrained hiring; (3) participant issues (illness, death of a parent, mental health crisis, family crisis, pregnancy, injuries sustained in a street shooting) that affected their ability to be successfully placed; (4) the relatively low skill level of Module 1 completers;⁶⁵ (5) the departure of the PACE career coach when Module 2 graduates were ready for placement ; and (6) participants' unrealistic expectations of what an entry-level position would pay, despite warnings provided by the PACE outreach specialists. The last two issues resulted in individuals either not accepting employment at all, or finding employment in other industries.

⁶⁵ There were very diverse perspectives on the skill level of Module 1 completers and the effect that this skill level had on employers. One employer from a dealership expressed his opinion during a Strategic Planning Interview that he had other applicants that were more qualified to choose from; another employer said that participants do not come in with an understanding of the auto industry or job requirements. On the other hand, supervisors interviewed for this report explained that they were satisfied with the PACE participants they had hired and would hire other PACE participants if they had the opportunity. The contradictory nature of these responses makes it difficult to isolate the extent to which individuals' abilities and training have hindered or enhanced placement rates.

YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		TOTALS	
Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled	Placed in Jobs*	% of Enrolled	Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled**	Placed in Jobs	% of Enrolled^
		16	48.5%	9	52.9%	25	50.0%

* Eight of those placed were placed in Year 2, as reported in last year's evaluation report. The other nine individuals were placed during Year 3.

** Only enrollees from Class 3 (17) were included in the total number of enrolled since Class 4 participants were not eligible for placement before December 2006.

^ Total enrollees included all Year 2 enrollees (33) plus enrollees from Class 3 (17).

A little over half of the individuals placed in Year 3 were placed at employer partners (Table 5.8). Although employer partners are the first source that PACE refers participants to and hopes to place them with, the partners' demand is not sufficient to generate all necessary placements for pre-employment participants.⁶⁶ Because of this, PACE has been expanding its network of potential employers to increase the likelihood that participants will find placements in the industry.

The effects of the low partner employer placement rate are mixed. On the one hand, the low placement rates have not caused employer partners to withdraw from the program, primarily because their needs are being met by the small number of placements that have been made. For example, one employer has hired three PACE participants in one year and two in another. However, as a company, that employer only hires seven to ten apprentice-level individuals per year in all of its locations combined. Given this ratio of PACE hires to total hires, the partner is content. On the other hand, the downside of external placements are the financial implications of placing individuals at non-partner employers, since partner employers had agreed to pay for their employees' participation in Module 2. The cost of the training for all individuals placed at non-partners must be covered by PACE directly.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ One limitation on employers' demand is the fact that PACE primarily serves Boston residents. Most of the partner employers have a regional presence but can only place PACE graduates in the shops within reasonable proximity to Boston.

⁶⁷ While non-partner employers do not pay for the cost of new hires' Module 2 training, they do commit to supporting new hires as they work to complete Module 2 through flexible scheduling.

Table 5.8: Pre-employment Placement (participants enrolled in Year 3)				
	Initial Placements		Year-End Status	
	Placed in Jobs	% of Module 1 Completions*	Placed in Jobs	% of Placed
Placed with partner employers	5	19.2%	3	60.0%
Full-time jobs (at least 30 hrs/week)	5	100.0%	3	100.0%
Part-time jobs	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Permanent positions	5	100.0%	3	100.0%
Temporary positions	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
With benefits	5	100.0%	3	100.0%
Without benefits	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Placed with non-partner employers	4	15.4%	4	100.0%
Full-time jobs (at least 30 hrs/week)	4	100.0%	4	100.0%
Part-time jobs	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Permanent positions	4	100.0%	4	100.0%
Temporary positions	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
With benefits	4	100.0%	4	100.0%
Without benefits	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	9	34.6%	7	77.8%

* Instead of calculating the placement rate by using the total number of graduates, we used the number of individuals who completed Module 1 during Year 3 (26), since Module 1 completion is the starting point for placement activities.

As Table 5.8 demonstrates, all individuals, regardless of location or employer type, were placed into permanent positions with benefit eligibility.

PACE has been very successful in its retention performance. Eighty-eight percent (seven of eight) of those placed in jobs who were eligible to reach 12-month retention did so. The quality of the placements, the level of instruction, and the commitment of employer partners were all cited by PACE staff as factors contributing to this successful outcome.

In addition, for Year 3 placements, 78% of those placed were still retained at year's end. Two individuals were laid off during an employer's downsizing because they had the least seniority.

When asked how the retention rate for PACE employees compared with other entry-level or recently trained individuals, most employers said that it was about the same. This response is somewhat surprising, given the apparent high retention rates and PACE's working assumption that turnover rates in the industry are high. In the next round of the SkillWorks evaluation of PACE, it will be important to monitor the 12-month retention for Year 3 placements and for the Year 2 placements that occurred in Year 3 to see if the high levels of retention continue.

Wage gains were minimal for pre-employment participants placed into jobs (Table 5.8). The average placement wage actually fell between Years 2 and 3 by more than a dollar. PACE representatives could offer no clear explanation for this decline in starting wage rates, other than lower employer demand for entry-level workers. The total average wage gain for Year 3 participants was \$0.41 per hour. Although there is no formal, quantitative documentation, interviews with PACE staff revealed that placed PACE pre-employment high performers are getting regular/weekly bonuses (an industry practice in lieu of regular wage increases).

Table 5.9: Pre-employment Average Wage At Placement and Average Hourly Wage Increase Realized			
	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
Pre-employment average wage at placement		\$ 11.07	\$ 10.00
Average hourly wage increase from last job held, for those pre-employment enrollees who were employed at (or immediately prior to) enrollment		\$ 1.76	\$ 0.41
Number of pre-employment participants included in this calculation			8

In terms of education gains, evaluation interviews revealed that three program graduates have used the credits they earned from the PACE program to enroll in an Associates degree program at Ben Franklin Technical College. Additionally, the 26 individuals that have graduated from the PACE program have accomplished a significant step in their education attainment.

Employment Outcomes for Incumbent Workers

The two elements of the incumbent-focused portion of the PACE program are Module 2 and ASE test preparation courses.⁶⁸

The ASE test preparation courses are short-term engagements where participants have very little interaction with the overall PACE program; these courses are provided by PACE-funded contractors to individual employer partners and are not tied into PACE’s reporting or coaching systems, though ASE participants do receive career coaching when requested by an employer. Because of this lack of connection, limited data are available on course participants.⁶⁹

As was mentioned previously, enrollment figures for Module 2 were minimal in Year 3. Looking back at Year 2 participants, Table 5.10 illustrates that the retention rates are reasonable for incumbent employee participants of partner employers, especially when considering that eight of the nine had the potential to experience at least 12-month retention.

⁶⁸ For Module 2, only new incumbent workers referred by partner employers (Employer Incumbents) are considered in this portion of the report since all other Module 2 enrollees were counted in the Pre-employment Enrollment figures.

⁶⁹ In 2007, steps are being taken to increase the data available about ASE Test Prep participants. PACE is creating a standardized form that employers will be asked to complete on all incumbent participants, including those that only participate in the Test Prep courses.

Table 5.10: Incumbent Year-End Job Status at Employer Partners						
	Total Number of Incumbent Enrollees				Number of Incumbent Enrollees Still Employed at Employer Partners	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL	End of Yr 3	% of Total
Module 2 - New Incumbent Worker Enrollments (Employer Incumbents)		8	1	9	6	67%
ASE Test Prep Participants		33	33*	74	D/U	D/U

* The thirty-three individuals completed a combined number of 45 courses.

PACE was unable to report systematically on any wage increases or promotions for incumbents that resulted from Initiative efforts. Employers, however, provided examples during evaluation interviews of different individuals receiving raises and promotions, as a result of either completing Module 2 and improving their performance, or passing ASE certification exams.⁷⁰

Skill Enhancement Outcomes

The main quantifiable interim outcomes data for incumbents provided by employers and PACE staff was relative to the number of individuals who have demonstrated increased skill levels. For PACE this increased skill is defined as passing an ASE certification exam. Twenty individuals in Year 2 and 13 individuals in Year 3 were able to pass one or more ASE exams following their participation in an ASE prep course (Table 5.11).⁷¹

Table 5.11: Received Credential or Relevant Degree (for sectors where jobs providing FESS wages require licensing, a credential, or degree)			
	Number of Incumbent Enrollees Who Have Received an Industry-Recognized Credential or Relevant Degree		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
PACE		20	13

PACE was unable to report on any other skill enhancement outcomes. For the outcome, “number of individuals who had defined a new career goal,” interviews with staff revealed that the target career goal leading to FESS wages was defined as becoming a master technician. Unfortunately, data collection by PACE this year was insufficient to verify who had actively established this goal and/or was working toward it.

⁷⁰ Examples of employer compensation awarded for ASE certification earned: Sullivan Tire awards employees an annual \$100 bonus for each ASE certification they have earned; Firestone awards employees a one-time bonus of \$200 for each ASE certification they earn.

⁷¹ One of the thirteen individuals passed two exams.

Employer Outcomes

For PACE's partner employers, the key goals for program participation were to:

- Hire entry-level technicians and begin moving them toward master technicians;
- Help the community—get adults into careers to help support families; and
- Retain and promote employees and new hires.

Using these goals as a reference point, one can evaluate the extent to which PACE has met the employers' expectations and needs. First, related to hiring entry-level technicians, employers agree that they have been able to hire the number of technicians they need. In fact, one employer stated that PACE opened up a whole new pool of candidates. For employers, an additional bonus of hiring PACE enrollees/graduates is knowing that PACE coaches are engaged and ready to help individuals deal with personal issues that might distract from their employment. The only complaint voiced by PACE's employer partners relative to access to new workers was the fact that many of their locations are too far away for PACE graduates to travel to, and therefore do not represent good employment matches.

The PACE employers expressed satisfaction with being able to work with and support individuals who would not otherwise be employed in the auto industry. One supervisor expressed his belief that it would be a shame if the PACE program did not continue, because the program was able to take individuals without a clear direction for their futures and train them to take the first steps into a new career. He had hired two individuals who fell into this category and had watched them develop into successful employees on the verge of advancement. Other HR directors and supervisors made similar statements, believing that involvement in the PACE program was changing the lives of those participants who made it through the program.

Employer opinions regarding retention and advancement were somewhat more complicated. Employers had mixed opinions about whether PACE program graduates had had an impact on their ability to retain employees. Some employers reported higher than expected retention rates for PACE graduates, others said that the retention rate for PACE graduates was similar to their average retention rate. The small number of placements at employer partners has resulted in limited impact on overall employer turnover rates.

Related to advancement, the pace of advancement for pre-employment participants placed into jobs is slower than employers had expected at the outset. The slower pace is due to the low skill level of Module 1 completers; one employer explained that Module 2 graduates were qualified at the most basic level they would expect for trained entry-level workers. From this more limited starting place, skill and wage advancement takes longer than what was anticipated. To date, improvements in worker performance or productivity have not been seen directly as a result of the training, but employers do compliment the program on the teachability of its graduates and their interest in improving and learning.

There have been a few promotions for PACE graduates—a couple of apprentices advancing to technicians. But overall, the impact has been too small to be seen as a real impact on their employers' bottom lines.

When asked about the perceived return on their investment, some employers expressed a reluctance to calculate the time and learning that they have invested into the program, especially in light of the placement and retention outcomes that have been achieved to date. Accordingly, although the supervisors who were interviewed spoke very highly of the individuals that they employed through PACE, they feel that the economic impacts have been negligible.

System Change Outcomes

Enhanced Capacity of Service Providers

AACA, as the primary coordinator of PACE services, has seen the most enhanced capacity as a service provider. It has increased the flexibility with which it meets employers' needs—designing curricula that respond to employers' needs and helps train adult learners with limited educational backgrounds and English proficiency, developing trainings for employers and supervisors on interviewing skills for managers, and expanding diversity training, particularly around the subject of communications with non-native English speakers.

PACE's approach to sector projects serves as a broader model for AACA in terms of fostering meaningful employer engagement (through enhanced employer recruitment and advisory committee participation), and has helped AACA become a more effective organization relative to workforce development. Workforce development has become an area of growth and expansion for AACA; within the last two years, the organization has received multiple grants to support workforce efforts, including funding to add post-employment support services to other job training programs. Post-employment support services are a program feature that PACE has employed from its inception, and AACA is building on this programmatic expertise.

Impacts on the Sector

Thus far, the PACE project has resulted in one opportunity at the industry sector level. PACE was invited to join an advisory board of a new truck repair program being developed by Massachusetts Bay Community College. If the new initiative is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, PACE may play a role in outreach, recruitment, and assessment for its implementation.

In addition to this new opportunity, meaningful institutional changes have occurred at the employer level as the result of PACE. Employers are making investments in new employees (hired through PACE) at an earlier point than is typical in the auto industry. Immediately upon placement, PACE graduates are eligible for company-paid training (Module 2). Other concrete changes have involved: one company now reimbursing ASE test fees regardless of outcome to encourage employees to persevere with retests when necessary; one employer expanding the career planning process for widespread use among staff; and employers becoming more engaged with ESOL needs—including asking for referrals from PACE for staff members not eligible for PACE's module-related ESOL courses.

The PACE program is the first time most of the involved employers have worked directly with non-profits in an organized way to try to design and implement a program. Employers took the proposed PACE training content to their service managers, and gathered feedback on whether the individuals who graduated from the proposed training would be employable. The employers then provided the feedback from the service managers to PACE, which led to refinements in the program's curricula. This relationship of employers with PACE has led to new ways for the service providers to meet the employers' needs, including using PACE to recruit for other non-technical positions and to provide additional training.

Impacts Related to Public Policy

At a policy level, PACE's staff and partner employers were involved in supporting the passage of the Workforce Solutions Act/Economic Stimulus Bill. Organizational leadership testified in front of the joint committee and a partner employer testified at the House working sessions.

Conclusions

Outcomes to Date: Summary

At the end of SkillWorks' Year 3 (which represented the second implementation year for PACE), significant participant outcomes are just beginning to emerge. Employee retention rates are good, continuation of participants between Module 1 and Module 2 is respectable, and placement rates for those completing both Module 1 and Module 2 trainings are improving.⁷² Moreover, while there is still significant room for improvement in performance indicators, PACE is working to enhance its staffing approach to allow more time to be dedicated to partnership building, placement, and coaching for retention.

From the perspective of the employer partners, the "employer outcomes" have been minimal to date. The most noteworthy accomplishment, in terms of employer outcomes, is the increased awareness of and adaptation to the needs of a diverse, multilingual workforce. Additionally, employers have achieved their goal of making a difference in the lives of a group of Boston community members who need a little help in entering a career. Each individual success story is an achievement for an employer.

Key Learnings

Staff stability is critical to program momentum and success

PACE has experienced substantial turnover during the first two years of program implementation. At least three people have held the director position and multiple individuals have served as career coach and as outreach specialists. The turnover has created an atmosphere of crisis management rather than one of ongoing strategic thinking and program refinement. Each time staff has changed, the new staff person has had to learn the program's operations and history, interpret roles and responsibilities, and manage operations, simultaneously. Until recently, there were no written policies to orient or direct the new staff, so processes and data collection methods have had to be communicated verbally by

⁷² Eighty-three percent of those that began Spring 2006 Module 2 training unemployed were placed in employment upon graduation. This is an increase from 50% from the Fall 2005 cohort.

AACA senior staff (Deputy Director and Executive Director). The verbal form of communication has caused some confusion, evidenced by PACE's outcomes reporting, where many of the quarterly reports seem to have slightly different ways of defining incumbent programs and participants.

Particularly in the career coaching position, effectiveness has been compromised by the staff turnover. First, a new coach is not able to easily form relationships with those who graduated Module 1 before the coach began work. Therefore, too frequently a new coach has a tendency to primarily maintain contact with those PACE enrollees/graduates who began Module 1 after the coach's start of employment. As a result, not all those pre-employment participants enrolled during Year 2 are receiving proactive coaching assistance. Second, employer support for career coaching has diminished as a result of career coach turnover. Employers are not as interested in incumbent participants working with coaches, because they are not convinced coaches will be employed with PACE long enough to make a difference in the work life of the participants.

Training participants is not enough; employers also need to change the work culture

During the evaluation team's interviews, instructors, HR directors, and supervisors all discussed the challenges that new employees experience when entering the automotive industry. Given the diversity of the PACE population, the "auto culture" is not necessarily a natural fit for the PACE graduates, nor is every employer fully prepared to take on such job candidates. For the new employees, there are communication challenges, perceptions of responsibility, and roles that must be learned and implemented, as well as the stigma of being hired from a "non-profit" training program. To combat these challenges and increase the effectiveness of the hires and the workplace, employer partners began requesting additional courses from PACE (such as supervisor communication training to help managers understand how their verbal and non-verbal communication translates to non-native English speakers). PACE provided these trainings and has seen positive benefits as a result.⁷³

The state of the economy is as significant to achieving outcomes as employers' commitment

PACE is fortunate to have a group of very committed employer partners. They have participated actively in program and curriculum design, applicant screening, and program management. They have agreed to fund incumbent training and support their employees through the process of attaining additional certifications. However, none of this was sufficient to combat the downturn in their business cycle or the economy. Despite employers' commitment to the program, they were unable to hire sufficient numbers of employees to facilitate PACE's achievement of its placement targets. There has been a disconnect between the amount of effort the employer partners have invested in PACE and the return they have seen in new hires and incumbents trained, partially due to the challenging business environment the employers find themselves facing.

⁷³ Benefits from this supplementary training have included increased manager support of hires, improved communications between staff and PACE students, and overall employer support of employees' additional training needs (e.g., ESOL).

Critical Challenges

Challenge #1: The level of effort required to enroll the target number of pre-employment participants

PACE outreach staff screen hundreds of individuals before each Module 1 class in order to fill the 20 available spots. In a recent application round, the results of this outreach were 75 applicants, 34 interviewees, 25 accepted applicants, 18 enrollees, 13 completions, and 10 graduates. This type of return on investment (hundreds of outreach conversations for 10 graduates) is difficult to sustain indefinitely. The significant attrition from candidates' expression of interest to enrollment shows that PACE has high standards of acceptance and/or that it is serving challenging populations that require remediation, particularly in terms of educational skills or criminal record expungement, before applying.

The strenuous recruitment process became increasingly challenging in 2007 with the departure of La Alianza Hispana as a CBO partner. Without the third recruiter, ULEM and AACA will have to recruit additional individuals to fill the available training slots.

Challenge #2: Participants' inexperience with the auto industry and low skill levels

In interviews, the PACE employers described the first year of PACE's program implementation as a time to understand how "green" PACE graduates really were, and to work with supervisors and managers to adjust their expectations. This is not to say that there were no outstanding qualities of PACE placements. One supervisor described the PACE enrollees he worked with as having less technical knowledge than graduates of other programs but higher quality, in terms of understanding what employers are looking for and receptivity to instruction/training. However, it is a reality that Module 1 completers were being placed with skills that could be described "at best" as entry-level for the automotive industry.

Employer partners have adjusted to the skills of Module 1 completers, the point at which PACE is initially trying to place individuals, but the question is, do the employers want to do this in the long term? Fundamentally, from the employer's perspective, Module 1 completers do not significantly meet their employment needs for skilled workers, though program graduates (Module 1 and 2) come closer. To the extent that employer partners are hiring Module 1 completers, they seem to be driven by their desire to be responsible corporate citizens; this is especially true in light of the changing landscape for hiring entry-level workers.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, a motivation of corporate responsibility is not a reliable bedrock for a dual-customer training program and may be unsustainable long-term, as corporate priorities change or the economy continues to fluctuate.

Challenge #3: Increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of career coaching

Career coaches have been described as a central piece of the PACE training model. In a recent document, PACE stated that "coaching" relationships are integral to our retention strategy and the Career Coach strives to be the first person either party will call when a problem emerges before it escalates." The ideal PACE model of coaching has the coaches meeting with each participant once a

⁷⁴ Employers have articulated that they are seeking highly skilled, dependable entry-level workers. Most of the employer representatives who were interviewed doubted that this could be done within the Module 1 timeframe.

week during placement, maintaining contact monthly during the first year after placement and quarterly in the second year (visiting the place of employment) in order to help participants achieve career advancement. The reality seems to be much different from this ideal, however. Staff turnover has left many participants without a coach for extended periods, and the coach's job responsibilities grew to include significant administrative and placement activities, taking away from the time that the coach could actually be working with incumbents on retention and advancement.

The turnover in the coaching position and the resulting lack of coaching for PACE incumbents (those that were hired by employers after completing Module 1) who started with a different coach has led to employers' disillusionment with the coaching process. During evaluation interviews the general consensus among HR directors and supervisors was that the PACE coaches' level of engagement had been minimal during Year 3. Despite this conclusion, employers continue to view coaches as critical to participant success. Employers are hoping for increased involvement on the part of the career coach in Year 4; for example, one employer expressed a desire for the coach to check in more often and focus on individual employee needs, and another encouraged more direct interaction between the coach and managers/supervisors, rather than going through HR.

PACE, seeing that the career coach did not have sufficient client time because of his administrative responsibilities, expanded the job description of the new Director of Operations position to include coaching responsibilities that primarily focused on participants' pre-enrollment, and post-completion, pre-employment administrative needs. The expectation is that this revised structure will relieve some of the burden on the existing coach by create more time to follow up with placements and to help mediate between PACE participants and employers.

A final consideration is the extent to which the coaching process should focus beyond retention to advancement. Currently, the coaching focus seems to be on securing and retaining the initial placement, with less emphasis on career advancement opportunities. If coaching remains predominately focused on retention, it is unclear how PACE will be able to help support and motivate graduates to pursue career advancement opportunities that lead to FESS-level wages, a significant SkillWorks objective.

Challenge #4: Expanding the employer network

A critical issue brought up during the PACE 2006 strategic planning process was the need to expand the network of partner employers. There are not enough placement opportunities easily available for PACE graduates across the current set of employer partners. When a Module 1 class completes, for example, everyone is competing against fellow graduates for the few available positions.

There is general consensus among existing partner employers and PACE staff that a diversity of employer types (e.g., dealers, comprehensive repair shops, fleet managers) is needed to round out the list of employer partners. A more diverse base would increase the likelihood that graduates with different levels of aptitude will be able to find employment. For example, currently, a Module 1 completer found to "not have the hands" for mechanics is unable to be placed at any of the employer partners. If the partner base were increased to include an employment opportunity for a parts management position, for instance, this person might be employable in the industry.

The biggest challenge PACE sees in increasing the employer network is the lack of awareness among non-participant employers about the program and the potential that a partnership might bring them. PACE is currently struggling with how to best communicate with the different types of employers, determining the most effective methods and messages.

Challenge #5: Data collection and management

PACE faces the dual challenge of increasing the amount of data collected and managing the way the data are stored, organized, and analyzed. PACE partner employers have expressed deep concerns about sharing confidential employee information with PACE and evaluators. PACE has worked to negotiate a workable solution, but this does not include data on ASE preparation course participants, a significant portion of the incumbent population served. Additionally, very limited data are being collected on individuals placed at non-partner employers. As the rate of placement at non-partners continues, PACE will be challenged to devise ways to gather these data in order to present a complete picture of program outcomes.

The second data challenge is data management. PACE has a centralized system data system that is currently being underutilized. When it was designed, it was created to focus on participant intake data rather than outcomes reporting. As a result, the system does not seem to be meeting the program's needs or the requirements of the SkillWorks evaluation. PACE is using an Excel spreadsheet to monitor outcomes data and is challenged to do so efficiently. With the addition of the Director of Operations, whose responsibility includes the management of the data collection and reporting process, there is potential for improvements in data collection, data entry, database management, and reporting. Already, the director has gone through the case files one by one and gathered all available data about participant accomplishments. In the coming months, she hopes to design tools and a reporting system that are effective and manageable. The only foreseeable challenge to this goal is availability of time and resources to invest in MIS enhancements.

Challenge #6: Demonstrating the cost-effectiveness of the PACE program

PACE is currently able to document only outcomes for pre-employment participants, retention rates for Employer Incumbents that enroll in Module 2, and the skill gains of incumbent workers who take the Test Prep Course. Given the limited number of pre-employment participants placed in Year 3 and the very small number of incumbent enrollees that receive PACE-provided intensive services (nine incumbent individuals over two years), it is difficult to demonstrate the full results and benefits of the program intervention.

PACE may be able to make a more substantial claim of cost-effectiveness if all program effects are included in the calculation. Key additional data might include information on the educational outcomes that are achieved as a result of coaching and employer investment, outcomes that can be attributed to the PACE-provided supervisory and diversity trainings in terms of changes in employer working environments, and the wage and advancement gains experienced by all incumbents, including Employer Incumbents, PACE Incumbents, and those who participated in the Prep courses.

Chapter Six SkillWorks Public Policy Component

Introduction

With much of the work in designing and advocating for the Workforce Solutions Act (WSA) taking place in Year 2, the Workforce Solution Group's (WSG) Year 3 work plan focused on continuing to build its regional partnerships, increasing the engagement of employers in its public policy work, raising the profile of workforce development in the gubernatorial race, better engaging the SkillWorks partnerships in the development of its agenda, and ensuring the effective implementation of the elements of the WSA. While WSG developed an ambitious agenda, the reality was that the Economic Stimulus Bill, which included the WSA, got stalled in the legislature and did not finally pass until July 2006, nine months into Year 3 of its SkillWorks grant.

The final passage of the legislation was a significant win for WSG, SkillWorks, and their workforce development constituency in the Commonwealth. The passage of the WSA infused the system with \$24.5 million in funding, created the potential to leverage significant federal funding for the system through the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program, and created a new vehicle for system change in the Commonwealth with the creation of the Workforce Accountability Taskforce. WSG spent a considerable amount of time and resources during the year shepherding the bill through the legislature and ensuring an override of the governor's veto. As a result, it was not really until the fourth quarter of the grant period that WSG was able to shift its focus entirely from advocacy to implementation.

Year 3 of the SkillWorks public policy work also saw a slight shift in the overall approach. During this period, the SkillWorks funders and staff became more engaged in the public policy work, partially in concert with WSG and partially as an independent voice in the public policy arena. As a result, this year's evaluation looks beyond just the activities of WSG and considers the larger public policy work of SkillWorks overall.

Changes in Partnership and Approach

Role of SkillWorks Staff

The biggest change during Year 3 of the public policy component of the SkillWorks Initiative was the increased involvement of the SkillWorks staff in the public policy activities. While the SkillWorks funders have always had a very active Public Policy Committee that oversaw the work of the Workforce Solutions Group, during Year 3 SkillWorks staff and funders have become much more engaged in the public policy activity.

In the past, the focal point of all of the public policy activities associated with SkillWorks was the work of WSG. During the strategic planning session held in May 2006, concerns were expressed by some of the partnerships and funders that there was a need for a stronger SkillWorks voice in the public policy work. The partnerships, in particular, felt they had not been sufficiently tapped as part

of WSG’s public policy efforts. The evaluation team also noted in the Year 1 and Year 2 reports the need to better integrate the three “legs” of SkillWorks—the partnerships, the capacity building, and the public policy. With new staff capacity at SkillWorks, there was an opportunity for SkillWorks to play a stronger role in linking together these three different components of the initiative.

A second issue that emerged was the need to have some SkillWorks branding of the public policy work. WSG was an independent grantee of SkillWorks that was building its own constituency and developing relationships with state legislators. This conformed to the original intentions of SkillWorks in supporting WSG. In some ways, WSG was so successful in its advocacy work with the legislature that it became identified as the workforce development policy leader. For many, the connection between WSG and SkillWorks was lost. The result is that some of those involved in SkillWorks believed it was important to have an identity amongst state political leaders that built upon the WSG “brand” but was somewhat independent of it.

As a result of this shift in thinking, the director of SkillWorks, Loh-Sze Leung, has started to play a much more active role in the public policy work. During this time period, she was engaged in a range of activities including planning the Gubernatorial Forum, helping to articulate a public policy agenda for SkillWorks as a whole, and providing support and advice on the implementation of elements of the WSA. In addition, she was involved in the planning related to an increased public policy advocacy capacity for SkillWorks and has developed a much closer day-to-day working relationship with Dan Kobayashi, the project manager for WSG.

The result of some of this work was the decision by the funders to hire the Public Policy Institute to help with convening WSG funders and grantees around a public policy agenda, to provide coaching and assistance for the SkillWorks director, and to facilitate meetings between SkillWorks staff and funders and state political leaders. The objective of this work is to help SkillWorks develop a more visible profile with state legislators. While planning for this contract occurred during Year 3, activities associated with the Public Policy Institute commenced in Year 4.

Changes in the WSG Executive Team and Partners Group

Year 3 was a period of transition for WSG. The Executive Team went through a transformation because of the loss of two individuals who had been key players since the establishment of WSG. Both Harneen Chernow from the AFL-CIO and Mary Lassen from WEIU left their positions with the partner organizations. This loss was huge in terms of expertise in workforce development and of their role in the larger workforce development system. Both of these members were replaced with individuals who while active during Year 3, are also no longer involved in WSG. In the case of the WEIU, it had been going through an intensive organizational transformation due to its merger with Crittenden House. Alison Stanton, the staff person assigned to WSG by WEIU, did not have the same leadership role within the organization as had Mary Lassen and has since left WEIU.

The AFL-CIO assigned an interim replacement for Harneen Chernow, Richard Marlin, who had significant lobbying experience. While Richard did not have workforce development expertise, his experience working with the legislature was very important and came at just the right time. More recently, a new staff person, Jeff Soothe, has been assigned to represent the AFL-CIO on the

Executive Team. Jeff has extensive experience with workforce development outside of Massachusetts and brings an important new perspective to the Executive Team.

WSG also expanded its Partners Group during Year 3. New members of the group include Jobs for the Future, the Massachusetts Association of CDCs, SEIU 1199, SEIU 615, the Mass Federation of Independent Business, and MassINC. In addition, WSG added the SkillWorks partners into the Partners Group.

Two meetings were held with this group during Year 3 of the grant. The first meeting, held in April 2006, focused on the research reports by Andy Sum at the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern. At the second meeting of this group during Year 3, the SkillWorks director made a presentation on the lessons learned from the SkillWorks partnerships.

Year 3 Activities and Achievements

Getting the Legislative Package Passed

A significant amount of time was spent in the first half of Year 3 of the WSG grant in statewide organizing and lobbying around the WSA. During this time period, WSG staff and members focused their attention on working to ensure that the Economic Stimulus Bill, which had become stalled in Conference Committee, included elements that were considered fundamental to the workforce agenda of WSG. Areas of potential conflict concerned the funding for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, the level of funding for Adult Basic Education and the Educational Rewards Grant program, the language used for the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program, and the makeup of the Accountability Task Force.

WSG organized a number of meetings with legislators and their staffs involved in the Conference Committee. It was very strategic about organizing meetings between individual legislators and constituents. In many ways, this is where WSG's regional organizing activity paid off in terms of lobbying and advocacy. In addition to these meetings, WSG staff sent out e-blasts to all of the groups and individuals who had attended its regional meetings and kept them up to date about the progress of the WSA and the Economic Stimulus Bill. WSG was also involved in a media and messaging campaign aimed at the local media.

In June 2006, the Economic Stimulus Bill finally emerged from the Conference Committee. The bill from the legislature included:

- \$11 million for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund;
- \$3 million of Adult Basic Education and ESOL;
- \$3 million in additional funding for school to career connecting activities;
- \$2 million in increased funding for the One Stop Career Centers;
- \$4 million in increased funding for science, technology, engineering, and math education;
- the creation of the Accountability Task Force;

- the Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) Program; and
- \$1.5 million for the Educational Rewards Grants Program.

The bill was immediately vetoed by the governor. At this point, WSG again went back to its constituency and waged an aggressive effort to override the veto. On July 24, 2006, the legislature voted to override the veto.

In the end, most of what was initially included in the WSA, as authored by WSG, was included in the Economic Stimulus Bill. The major difference was the reduction in funding for the Educational Reward Grant program, from \$12 million to \$1.5 million in the final bill.

Implementation Activities Related to the WSA

Once the legislation passed, WSG spent time during the second half of Year 3 working on implementation activities that involved the design and implementation of the FSET program, the Educational Rewards Grant program, and the Competitiveness Trust Fund. This primarily involved meetings with relevant state agency staff. In keeping with the new approach to the SkillWorks policy component, the director of SkillWorks was also involved in much of the implementation activities.

As part of the implementation activities, WSG again held regional forums at the end of Year 3. These were very successful meetings throughout the state. The purpose was to inform the regional stakeholders about how the WSA would be implemented. WSG walked through the specifics of the legislation and also prepared these groups to start thinking about the next year's budget, particularly the recapitalization of the Trust Fund and the need for expanding ABE funding.

Other specific implementation work included:

1) The design of the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program

WSG has been very actively engaged in efforts to get the FSET Program implemented. This effort hit some significant snags after the legislation was passed. Bureaucratic issues arose between the State Department of Human Services and the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). Members of WSG have been involved in trying to iron out some of the issues between the state departments that have proven to be a barrier to implementation.

Two design issues also emerged. First, there were different ideas about how to define eligibility. Second, questions developed about how the new money will flow—directly through CBOs or through municipalities. This last issue has become a major concern of the City of Boston.

To address these potential barriers, WSG convened a small working group that met with the Department of Transitional Assistance and with UMass Worcester, the institution assigned to oversee the implementation of FSET for DTA. WSG and its allies have also met with community-based organizations and local governments. This effort has engaged organizations involved with SkillWorks including the Asian American Civic Association, HCRTI, Project Hope, and Sue Beaton of One Family, Inc., who represents the Paul and Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation on the SkillWorks Public Policy Committee.

2) Easing the bureaucratic logjam affecting the implementation of the Educational Rewards Program

The implementation of the Education Rewards Program was also seriously stalled by largely bureaucratic issues involving the state. Some of the language in the bill made the program very difficult to implement and created interagency issues between the Board of Higher Education and the Department of Workforce Development. In response, WSG has sent letters to key leaders in the state in an effort to get over some of the bureaucratic infighting.

The issues that have stalled the implementation of this program are seen by WSG and others as a prime example of some of the larger workforce development issues in the state. In some ways, the difficulty in getting two separate state agencies that are involved in workforce development to cooperate and to develop a streamlined process for getting the funding out is seen as a good example of “system” issues in how workforce development and training is structured in the Commonwealth. For some, the response to this should be reorganizing how the workforce and training “boxes” in the state are organized.

On the other hand, from the state’s perspective, the problems are due to insufficient involvement of the state agency staff in the design of the legislation. State workforce development officials have a better understanding of how state agencies operate and what some of the administrative requirements would be in distributing educational grants. There is some belief that if WSG had met with staff from the state agencies, some of the implementation issues would have been avoided. For some workforce development leaders, this is a good example of how the lack of involvement of individuals with nuts and bolts experience in designing and operating public workforce programs in the design of the WSA became problematic.

3) Helping to shape the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund

SkillWorks staff, its partnerships, funders, and WSG have all played a role in providing advice on how the new \$11 million in funds for the Trust Fund should be used. SkillWorks staff organized and hosted a planning session on the use of the Trust Fund. A list of recommendations, based on the learnings from SkillWorks, was also presented to the staff of Commonwealth Corporation, the entity assigned to oversee the RFP process. In addition, both the director of SkillWorks and two members of the WSG Executive Team were appointed to the advisory group involved in the design of the RFPs for funding through the Trust Fund. Finally, there were representatives of the SkillWorks partnerships and staff.

The issues that had to be resolved included: how to define regions; how to define targeted critical industries and occupations; questions of whether or not the projects had to be sector-based; the procedures for weighting and scoring the proposals; and the timing of the release of the RFP. The RFP for the grants through the Trust Fund was released in January 2007.⁷⁵ Some of the learnings related to SkillWorks partnerships were incorporated in the RFP.

⁷⁵ Applications were due in April 2007 and the selections were announced in May 2007. Commonwealth Corporation received over 60 applications from throughout the state. Two of the SkillWorks grantees—

4) ABE Funding

WSG members were also involved in discussions about how the additional ABE funding should be used. WSG held meetings with state agencies and ABE advocacy groups to promote a process for getting the money out quickly. WSG also wanted to ensure that the new funding would directly address the large waiting lists throughout the state. Finally, WSG advocated for getting more money into work-based ABE.

How the new funding for ABE is being implemented is a source of some frustration amongst WSG members. There was concern that the new money could go to pay for some of the administrative costs of the ABE programs, not to reduce the waiting list. WSG made a strong case to the legislators that reducing the waiting list was critical to meeting the workforce development needs of employers in Massachusetts. It would be difficult to return for increased funding in future years if there is not evidence that the funding is being used effectively to address this critical need in the state.

Gubernatorial Forum

The successful effort to sponsor a forum for all of the gubernatorial candidates is considered by some to be the signature event of Year 3 of the SkillWorks public policy work. The planning and execution of the forum was the first effort during the SkillWorks Initiative that has involved representation from all of the components of SkillWorks. It was the first strong team effort between WSG and the SkillWorks director and a good example of engaging the individual partnerships in the public policy work.

The idea for a forum emerged as part of the WSG planning process. The hope was that through the forum it would elicit some commitments from the candidates that, in turn, would help WSG once a new governor was elected. A planning committee was created to oversee the development of a forum. The team involved WSG staff, SkillWorks staff, Lew Finfer from the Executive Team, the Boston Foundation, Jobs for the Future, and representatives from two of the SkillWorks partnerships.

One of the initial steps in raising the profile amongst gubernatorial candidates was to meet individually with each of the campaigns. WSG developed a “Vision for Gubernatorial Leadership” that it utilized to engage the candidates.

The forum was held at the end of June 2006 in Boston. It was the first event attended by all of the gubernatorial candidates, and it demonstrated the growing credibility and clout of SkillWorks. The

PACE and the International Institute—were part of teams that received funding under the grant. This evaluation is being completed six months into Year 4 of the WSG grant. The focus of this evaluation remains on what has occurred during Year 3, which ended December 1, 2006. As a result, for the most part, the analysis does not include a discussion of activities related to the Competitiveness Trust Fund or the other implementation activities during 2007.

forum was successful in securing some commitment from the candidates related to workforce development, including from Deval Patrick, who went on to win the governorship.⁷⁶

One area of tension that arose in the planning of the forum was a tension between public policy activities being branded as WSG activities vs. SkillWorks activities. There was considerable back and forth about the branding and how to share credit and attribution. In the end, it was primarily branded as a SkillWorks event, though there were some documents clearly associated with WSG.

Development of a SkillWorks Public Policy Agenda

As noted, the SkillWorks director played a much more active role in the public policy component of the initiative during Year 3. Much of this work focused on increasing the visibility and awareness of SkillWorks amongst the political leadership in the Commonwealth and in articulating a clearer public policy agenda for the initiative overall.

While the new administration did not take office during Year 3 of the public policy work, efforts were made to ensure that the new governor was aware of SkillWorks. The SkillWorks director spoke as part of the Patrick/Murray Workforce Development Transition Working Group and submitted a memo on the lessons learned through the initiative.

More importantly, the SkillWorks director has played a very important role in trying to better articulate the overall system change agenda for the initiative. This effort started with the retreat in May and continued through the second half of Year 3. During this time period, a number of memos were developed and meetings were held with WSG staff to further refine the agenda. This activity has continued into Year 4 of the initiative.

Progress in Achieving Outcomes and Addressing Challenges

Progress on Outcomes

A number of stakeholders in the workforce development system noted that in some ways WSG was more successful than they had anticipated in terms of increasing the level of funding for workforce development and raising the visibility of workforce development as an issue in the state. However, there is also wide consensus that there have been very limited outcomes related to achieving the broader system change objectives of the SkillWorks Initiative.

More Money into the System

Throughout the first three years of the public policy work, the primary goal has been to increase funding for workforce development-related activities in the Commonwealth that meet the overall goals of SkillWorks. WSG played a significant role in getting increased funding for workforce development in both the FY 05 (\$6 million) and FY 07 Economic Stimulus Bills (\$24.5 million); in total, WSG played a role in infusing about \$30.5 million into the workforce development system in the state over a three-year period.

⁷⁶ Unfortunately, the governor's FY 08 budget does not reflect some of the workforce development commitments made at the forum.

Clearly, this is the greatest outcome to date of the public policy work. The final passage of the WSA in July 2006 has created a significantly larger pool of funding for workforce development activities. There is also consensus that the advocacy and lobbying work of WSG was essential to the legislative success.

Raising the Profile of Workforce Development as a Public Policy Issue

Through the combined work of WSG and the SkillWorks staff, there is a growing awareness in the Commonwealth of the critical workforce issues facing Massachusetts. As a result of the gubernatorial forum, the legislative lobbying, and the media and messaging work throughout the state, there is growing awareness that the state's economic future will depend on upgrading the skills of its adult workforce.

While the importance of workforce as an issue has been raised, the failure of the new Patrick administration to maintain the increases in workforce development funding that had been achieved through the WSA raises some questions about how deep the interest is in workforce development as a public policy priority.

Building a Strong Constituency for Public Policy Changes Related to Workforce Development

WSG has successfully built a statewide constituency that it can call on to lobby for workforce-related priorities with the legislature. However, it is important to note that this constituency has not been tested when it comes to some of the more controversial public policy issues that might be addressed by the Accountability Task Force. When lobbying for more dollars, there was essentially a benefit to everyone involved. It is still not clear whether this constituency will hold together as WSG and the public policy works get engaged in more specific policy issues.

Progress on Addressing Ongoing Challenges

During Year 3, some progress has been made on some of the challenges that were noted in previous evaluations. However, at the end of Year 3, SkillWorks still faced many of the same challenges as it tried to achieve system changes in the workforce development area through its public policy activities.

Building Relationships with the SkillWorks Partnerships

As noted, both the evaluation and the retreat raised ongoing concerns related to the involvement of SkillWorks partnerships in the public policy work. During Year 3, there was considerable progress on this front, partially due to increased efforts on the part of WSG and partially due to the growing involvement of the SkillWorks staff director.

In terms of WSG, all of the partnerships are now members of the WSG Partners Group that meets quarterly. There is relatively good representation at these meetings. There has definitely been a stronger relationship between the staff of some of the lead organizations of the partnerships and WSG. The Voices and Futures Fund, the Asian American Civic Association, and Project Hope (part of the Partners partnership) have been involved in advocacy efforts focusing on the passage of the WSA. Some of the partnerships have also been active in efforts to implement the Food Stamp Demonstration project. Staff from HCRTI and PACE were actively involved in this process.

A good example of the benefits of working with the partnerships emerged after the governor vetoed the Economic Stabilization Bill. WSG developed a strong collaboration with the Asian American Civic Association, the CBO that is the lead partner in PACE, and took advantage of the fact that the organization was in the speaker's district. This provided the opportunity to talk directly with the speaker.

Developing Improved Relationships with Other Statewide Workforce and Educational Advocacy Groups

There are a number of organizations in Massachusetts that are involved in areas that overlap with SkillWorks. When WSG began its work three years ago, there were considerable tensions with some of these groups. Over the three years of the initiative, there has been some progress in building relationships with some of these organizations. For example, in 2007 SkillWorks played a more active role in the annual workforce development conference that is put on by the Commonwealth Workforce Coalition (CWC). SkillWorks has also collaborated with the CWC on training and is in discussions about further collaboration on capacity building. In addition, over the last two years WSG has built stronger relationships with the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance and the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education.

However, the Massachusetts workforce development system still has a number of different coalitions and groups that are working on similar workforce issues, and are not necessarily collaborating to the extent possible.

The Massachusetts Workforce Alliance, for example, a coalition of workforce-related coalitions, has developed the PEER Project. This project “builds the active engagement of community-based workforce development practitioners and program participants/graduates in policy issues — in order to build a strong, more effective workforce development system.” This group has a very similar mission, focused on building a statewide advocacy network to work on state public policy issues involving workforce development.

The Commonwealth Workforce Coalition, which is largely overseen by the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC), focuses on capacity building and training. In 2005, it held listening sessions around the state and heard from approximately 450 people. It continues to hold these regional networking meetings throughout the state and meets with 15 to 25 people each month.

There is some confusion in the field surrounding these different groups. For example, someone involved in workforce development, when interviewed about his involvement with WSG, reported on a set of meetings that were, in fact, organized by the CWC.

Managing the Leadership Transition in the Executive Team of WSG

The stability and leadership strengths of the WSG project manager have been particularly important as the individuals involved in the Executive Team shifted. The project manager has played a critical role in keeping the partnership on track and managing what is a complex collaboration with diverse organizations and individuals.

Maintaining Momentum in Light of Long Delays in Passage of the Legislation

WSG was able to keep its partners and constituents informed and engaged throughout the six-month timeframe in which the WSA was stalled in the legislature. It continued to hold regional meetings to keep those involved informed about progress and has also played a role in keeping its constituency informed as implementation moves forward. Finally, it has kept up momentum by preparing for a new budget battle related to FY 2008 funding. Keeping this momentum once the focus turns to specific policy issues may be more difficult.

Keeping the Coalition Together as WSG Develops a More Specific Policy Agenda

There is clear consensus by everyone involved in WSG and SkillWorks that the budget work that has been the focus of WSG to date has been a unifying element and that the system change piece will be the divisive element. This may be the reason why it has been so difficult to focus on any very detailed policy recommendations that will involve changes in how the system currently operates. Some hints at this tension emerged around composition of the Accountability Task Force. While WSG did not have much control over this process, a number of issues developed, and are still simmering, about who did get a seat and who did not. Another area in which this tension always emerges is around the administration of ABE in the Commonwealth. There is an ongoing disagreement over how these funds are spent. Specifically, the issues involve the degree to which ABE funds should be workplace- and vocationally-based. If ABE funds are going to be used to address adult literacy issues in the workplace, the question arises about why the funding is housed in the Department of Education. There are also questions about the performance of many of the providers in the system and their success in addressing the waitlist. There is a very strong constituency of adult education providers and organizations that represent them that have very strong views on these issues. If and when WSG or SkillWorks takes a public stand on some of these issues, the strength of the coalition may be threatened.

Holding the coalition together once WSG starts advocating for specific public policy changes is probably the greatest challenge that WSG and SkillWorks face as they move ahead on a public policy agenda that goes beyond getting more money into the system. There is some hope that working through the Accountability Task Force may deflect some of these tensions. However, once WSG and SkillWorks have to lobby for any policy in which there will be winners and losers, keeping their own partnership together, as well as the broader coalition, will become more difficult. The other possibility is that to avoid these tensions WSG will never get into the detailed policy items that may lead to more sustainable system changes that meet the SkillWorks goals.

Balancing the Individual Interests of Members of the Executive Team and WSG as a Whole

For the most part, the individuals and organizations involved in the Executive Team of WSG have held together and have been able to maintain a strong collaboration. However, there have been some continual tensions within WSG. Since it operates on a consensus model, it has had to deal with instances where members changed their minds after the consensus was reached. The project manager, Dan Kobayashi, has played a strong role in enforcing rules, which has been effective in managing the team.

There has also been some continuing tension between the public policy advocacy positions taken by some of the members of the WSG leadership group and WSG as a whole. To outsiders it is often unclear when individuals associated with WSG are speaking for their own individual organizational

interests, and when they are advocating for the WSG agenda. In addition, some of the conflicts that individual members of WSG have related to their own organizations have carried over into WSG.

Tension Between City of Boston Focus of the Partnerships and Statewide Focus of Policy Work

There have been some ongoing tensions related to the Boston focus of the partnerships and the statewide focus of the public policy activities. From the perspective of the city of Boston, there are some workforce development issues that might be a priority in other regions of the state, but are not critical in Boston. Some of the policy positions taken by WSG based on statewide issues have conflicted with the perspective of those involved in workforce development in the city of Boston. This has created considerable tension between WSG and representatives of the City of Boston who sit on the SkillWorks funders group.

On the other hand, WSG was very clear when it was hired by SkillWorks that it would be engaging in a statewide advocacy campaign. WSG believes that it should be advocating for investments in activities that represent the learnings from all of the sector-based workforce partnerships throughout the Commonwealth, not just the Boston-based SkillWorks partnerships. Moreover, WSG believes it would compromise its statewide position if it was advocating for disproportional funding for the Boston-based workforce activities.

Deepening the Engagement of Employers

WSG continued to see engaging employers in efforts to support a stronger workforce development system for low-income residents as one of the greatest challenges that it faces. During Year 3, no progress was made in this area.

However, during Year 3, WSG did develop a research agenda that focused specifically on better understanding why employers are or are not using the public workforce development system. It applied for a grant to the SkillWorks Capacity Building program to support this research and is undertaking the research during Year 4.

Linkage Between the Policy Agenda Work of WSG and its Research

WSG did not get any funding for research during Year 3. However, the research reports funded during Year 2 were released early in Year 3. According to most of the individuals interviewed for this evaluation, these research reports did not have any significant impact on either the lobbying activity or the design of the Competitiveness Trust Fund.

As noted, WSG did spend time developing a proposal to use SkillWorks Capacity Building funding to support two new research projects aimed at addressing its concerns around employer engagement. While these research projects may yield some interesting insights, the direct connection between the results of this research and the public policy agenda of WSG remains somewhat unclear.

Overall, the experience over the three-year grant period raises questions about whether allocating a specific research budget for WSG yielded any relevant outcomes from the perspective of SkillWorks.

New Challenges Emerging in Year 3

The Role of Public Sector SkillWorks Partners in the Policy Development Agenda

One of the biggest issues to arise in Year 3 involved the role of the public sector SkillWorks partners in the public policy component of the initiative. Representatives from both the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts believe that their lack of involvement in the development of the policy agenda has had some potentially negative outcomes. Specifically:

- The City of Boston believes that in focusing on the statewide agenda, some of the specific policy and funding priorities of the city were negatively affected.
- The lack of involvement of the state agency staff in any of the thinking related to the development of the WSA led to some of the bureaucratic snares that have tied up both the Education Rewards and the Food Stamp programs.
- The lack of a representative of the state's mayors on the Accountability Task Force is seen as a problem.

The city and state, while members of the SkillWorks Funders Group, have not used their funds to support the public policy component of SkillWorks and do not have seats on the Public Policy Committee. As initially designed, the thought was that there would be a conflict if the public agencies were involved in the efforts to change the system. Moreover, they could not fund these types of activities. However, there was a clear intention at the beginning of the initiative to build a coalition that would include all of the partners in SkillWorks. While there were some early efforts made by WSG to engage the city in the policy process, this was not sustained once WSG began to design the WSA and lobby for its passage.

In hindsight, there is some thought that more attention should have been given to getting the input of public sector funders into the actual policy agenda and the specific language in the legislation. In other words, even if they could not fund these activities, SkillWorks and WSG staff could have been more effective at reaching out to city and state workforce agency staff to get their ideas and input into the policy agenda.

Developing the Specific Workforce Development Change Agenda

By the end of Year 3 of its work, WSG had still not developed any specific recommendations about how the workforce development system in Massachusetts should be changed to better meet the goals of the overall SkillWorks agenda. Part of this is due to its tactical approach to the issue. WSG believed that by infusing more money into the system, it would gain credibility and be able to build a broad constituency that would be important once it focused on specific policy issues. As the WSA process developed, WSG also began to look to the Accountability Task Force as the focal point for developing a system change agenda. However, there are some concerns that while WSG has been extremely effective at lobbying, it is not as strong on the nuts and bolts of workforce development policy and that this has also contributed to the lack of a more targeted policy agenda.

WSG was initially chosen by the funders as the public policy grantee because of its expertise in organizing and advocacy work. While there were some members of the Executive Team who also had very extensive expertise in the design and operations of the workforce development system in

Massachusetts, two of these individuals are no longer with WSG, leaving a gap in the coalition's capacity. Without this internal capacity, it may be increasingly difficult for WSG to have the credibility needed to set the stage for some of the specific public policy changes that it is hoping will emerge from the Accountability Task Force.

Role of SkillWorks in the Policy Work

One of the tensions that emerged in Year 3 involved the development of a distinct role for SkillWorks in the public policy arena. As noted, there was some concern amongst the funders, most notably from the Boston Foundation, that state policy leaders were not making the direct connection between the work of WSG and SkillWorks overall. Moreover, as an independent grantee, WSG did not always reflect the specific interests of SkillWorks funders or its partnerships. The result was that SkillWorks hired the Public Policy Institute to build the capacity of SkillWorks staff and funders to work on policy work.

Part of the cause of this tension is that it remains unclear about to whom WSG is accountable. It was funded with a clear mandate to use its organizing skills to build a statewide workforce development constituency. From the WSG perspective, it has built this grassroots constituency and it is partially accountable to this group in terms of its priorities. On the other hand, the funders are providing the resources and they believe that WSG also must be accountable to them and their public policy priorities.

A second issue that has emerged is the role of the funders in directly advocating and supporting the public policy agenda of WSG. There were a number of discussions over the three years of the grant about how to engage the funders more directly in the public policy work. And, while there had been some idea of involving the boards of some of the funders in these activities—in some of the advocacy—this never materialized.

Sustaining State Budget Commitment to Workforce Development

Shortly after the major legislative victory, WSG had to begin to focus attention on the next year's budget and sustaining funding. While WSG believed that it had received commitments from the new administration, the governor's budget did not include the level of funding for workforce development for which WSG and its constituency had hoped. The current priorities of WSG in the 2008 budget process are to get another round of funding for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund and to increase funding for Adult Basic Education.

Conclusion

Summary

In general, WSG has been successful in terms of what it proposed to do for SkillWorks. From the start, it said that its focus would be on statewide policy, that it would spend considerable time building a statewide constituency, and that its initial priority would be to increase the level of funding going into the workforce system. On each of these counts WSG has been effective. In fact, many of the stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation reported that in terms of the increased funding for workforce development, the work of WSG has exceeded expectations.

The bigger question is whether or not the overall public policy component of SkillWorks has been effective in achieving the goal of longer-term system changes in Massachusetts' workforce development system. Until recently, the SkillWorks Initiative largely depended upon WSG to set the public policy agenda related to system change. However, WSG has spent most of its time and effort lobbying for increased funding for workforce development and has deferred taking any strong stand on any more controversial public policy issues.

With the SkillWorks director more actively involved in the public policy work, increased attention has been focused on potential public policies that could lead to system changes. However, by midway through Year 4 of the initiative, there were still limited details about the specific type of policy changes that would be needed to achieve any real changes in the state's workforce development system.

The experience over the first three years points to some questions about how the SkillWorks public policy component was initially structured. Some of the funders have questioned whether, in hindsight, they should have supported a grantee that was more of a "think tank" in the workforce policy area and perhaps had partners with less of an interest in how the current system is structured. As noted, some of the funders have also begun to rethink the role of the public sector funders (both from the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) in the public policy activities. While it made sense to keep some distance between the public funders and the public policy grantee, this has also led to some tensions and, in some cases, to less than optimal policy.

In short, the jury is still out. A lot will depend on the work of the new Workforce Accountability Task Force that was created through the WSA, but still not implemented close to one year after the Economic Stimulus Bill was passed (as of June 2007). It remains to be seen whether or not WSG and SkillWorks will be successful in helping to set the agenda for the Task Force and if the Task Force will design policy changes that could lead to longer term system changes in how workforce development in the Commonwealth is structured and delivered.

Emerging Public Policy Issues

During the end of Year 3 and ongoing into Year 4, both WSG and the SkillWorks staff have focused increased attention on developing a specific public policy agenda. Key workforce development stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation noted the following public policy issues that they believed deserve increased attention as the public policy work of SkillWorks advances:

- federal WIA reenactment;
- the role of the state Workforce Investment Board;
- developing a more effective childcare delivery system;
- improving the connections between the ABE system and the workplace;
- addressing how public agencies at the state and city levels execute workforce development vs. how the workforce development system in the state is organized;
- examining the apprenticeship system in the state; and

- exploring employer engagement through more focus on who sits on regional and statewide WIBs.

In addition to these specific issues, during Year 3 of the public policy effort, the effectiveness of the state's community colleges has become a major area of concern and attention. There have been a number of research reports, including a report by the Boston Foundation, that have looked at some of the challenges that the community colleges in Massachusetts face. Each of these reports concludes that community colleges are one of the most critical components of the state's workforce development system and are particularly important in terms of serving the needs of the state's low-income adults interested in career advancement. The need to improve the performance of some of the city of Boston's community colleges has also been the subject of numerous news articles and a priority of the mayor of Boston. As SkillWorks moves forward on its public policy agenda, it needs to consider what, if any, role it will play in addressing community college policy in the Commonwealth.

Chapter Seven The Initiative at Year 3 – Cross-site Findings

This chapter summarizes the Year 3 findings across the Implementation Partnerships and across the various SkillWorks components. It begins with an overview of the characteristics of the participants in the Implementation Partnerships, and the outcomes they have achieved. It then looks at employer outcomes, and the institutional and systems changes that have been fostered by the SkillWorks activities. This discussion also examines the activities and accomplishments of the Workforce Solutions Group and SkillWorks funders and staff relative to their public policy advocacy.

The chapter then looks at some of the factors that led to the outcomes observed, or challenged the SkillWorks grantees in attempting to achieve those outcomes. The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations relative to possible future investments by SkillWorks that could build on the learning and capacity that has been created over the past three years.

Characteristics of Participants

Participant Targeting, Enrollment, and Engagement

Through Year 3, the Implementation Partnerships generally met or exceeded their SkillWorks formal enrollment goals. That is, most of the Implementation Partnerships served as many or more individuals as they had proposed to serve in their funding applications to SkillWorks.

For each partnership, the numbers of new pre-employment enrollments generally has remained fairly steady from year to year. In other words, most of the partnerships have maintained the size of their pre-employment components, but not increased the annual volume of participants.

HCRTI is somewhat of an exception to this general pattern, however. The numbers of participants in HCRTI's pre-employment *training component* have declined each year, although the numbers of pre-employment “walk-ins” have increased.

The experience with new incumbent enrollments for the three years is more mixed across the Implementation Partnerships. One partnership had substantial increases in the numbers of new incumbent enrollees per year (BSCPP), one had significant declines in new incumbent enrollees over the three years (PCWD), and three partnerships stayed at about the same level from year to year (HCRTI, HCC and PACE).

As suggested by the comments above, it is important to acknowledge that the definition of “participant” varies from partnership to partnership, and to a certain extent within partnerships. In some cases, the participants included individuals getting no or very limited services from the partnership (e.g., the Building Services workers at Harvard, PACE's enrollees in the ASE prep courses, or the “walk-in” pre-employment participants at HCRTI). In the discussion of participant outcomes (below), we will examine some of the implications of these less intensive service approaches.

In terms of the characteristics of Year 3 participants, as in previous years for most Implementation Partnerships the majority of new enrollees were Boston residents and individuals falling below the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency index.⁷⁷ In Year 3, HCC was able to substantially improve the percentage of new incumbent enrollees who were Boston residents. PCWD experienced a small decrease in Year 3 in the percentage of new pre-employment participants who were Boston residents; HCRTI had a similar experience relative to its new incumbent enrollees. For both these partnerships, though, the majority of participants were Boston residents at the time of enrollment.

In Year 3, BSCPP had a sharp decline in the percentage of new incumbent enrollees who were Boston residents (from 61% in Year 2 to 32% in Year 3); in part, this appears to be the result of the characteristics of individuals enrolling in BSCPP's new HVAC class. And PACE's incumbent component continued to have a low percentage of Boston residents enrolled, which is largely a consequence of the locations of the employer firms.

During Year 3, some Implementation Partnerships saw changes in the percentage of new enrollees who were non-English speakers or for whom English was not their primary language. These changes went in both directions. For example, although the vast majority of BSCPP incumbent participants continue to be individuals whose primary language is not English, the percentage declined from 92% for Year 2 enrollees to 73% for Year 3 enrollees. In contrast, PACE experienced a significant increase in the percentage of pre-employment enrollees whose primary language is not English (from 39% in Year 2 to 71% in Year 3). One possible explanation for this shift was offered by a staff member of a PACE partner—individuals with higher levels of English language skills may not be as attracted to the PACE pre-employment program because they feel they have more employment opportunities available to them.

These changes relative to the primary language of enrollees were not necessarily sector-specific, however. For example, PCWD's percentage of new pre-employment enrollees whose primary language is not English increased from 14% in Year 2 to 31% in Year 3, whereas HCRTI's percentage for its pre-employment enrollees decreased from 43% to 19% during the same period.

In Year 3, some partnerships also saw increases in the baseline educational levels for particular subgroups of enrollees (e.g., the HVAC training component of BSCPP). But for the majority of new enrollees in Year 3, the highest educational certification at the time of enrollment was either a GED or a high school diploma.

Participant Assessment and Job Readiness

During Year 3, several of the Implementation Partnerships implemented procedures for more rigorous screening of applicants, in order to foster a better “fit” with the training curricula, target career paths, and/or employer hiring requirements. However, this more rigorous screening did not necessarily result in better graduation or placement rates, at least in the short term. For example, PACE's

⁷⁷ Some partnerships were only able to provide limited information on their participants' household incomes and household sizes, particularly for incumbent workers. Such data are essential for assessing participant income against economic self-sufficiency levels, and therefore the evaluation team's FESS assessments were based on whatever data were made available by each partnership.

Module 1 training completion rate declined somewhat in Year 3, despite improved candidate screening, although the combined Module 1 and 2 graduation rate improved. And, despite the more stringent screening criteria being used by Project Hope⁷⁸ for PCWD, one-third of pre-employment enrollees had either dropped out or were terminated by the end of Year 3, many for poor performance.

Moreover, the providers found the screening processes to be very resource intensive and time consuming. (For instance, Project Hope screened 150 individuals to identify 12 qualified candidates for PCWD.) In addition, most potential candidates get screened out (because of inadequate skills or experience) or drop out (because of insufficient interest or motivation); this raises questions about how the partnerships might do a better job of reducing such attrition and/or meeting the needs of candidates who initially do not meet threshold requirements.

In response to this situation, PCWD has concluded that more basic job readiness and remedial training (along with supportive services) are necessary for many pre-employment participants. Through a Neighborhood Jobs Trust grant, Project Hope is developing such “pre-pre-employment” training. This training is viewed by the PCWD partners as a first step in the process of moving disadvantaged job seekers to FESS and an essential element of the continuum of services for disadvantaged job seekers. However, some stakeholders caution that one should have little expectation that such services will generate big results, at least in the short term.

Ongoing Incumbent Engagement

Across the partnerships, the numbers of incumbent enrollees increased considerably over the first three years of the SkillWorks initiative, from 445 new enrollees in Year 1 to 588 new enrollees in Year 3. However, a number of Implementation Partnerships experienced difficulties in maintaining the engagement of some of their incumbent participants over time.

In some instances the problem was structural, in that the partnerships offered one-time or short-term training opportunities (such as the ASE prep classes of PACE, or the financial literacy sources offered by BSCPP), and the participants in those courses did not see themselves as enrolling in an ongoing set of activities.⁷⁹

Most of the partnerships concluded that, in general, an intensive and nurturing coaching style was necessary to maintain incumbent engagement and to assist workers in moving along their career path. However, there is an inherent tension in this approach because it is hard to maintain the intensity of coaching as the numbers of incumbents increase over time. There was also considerable variation in the amount of coaching desired or needed by individual employees. The individuals that are the most job-ready or promotion-ready may need or want little in the way of coaching; whereas individuals that may be years away from a significant advancement step may desire (and require) very intensive coaching services.

Given the limits of staffing resources, the partnerships had to address the question of how to provide the most effective coaching services and, as part of this, how best to allocate the time of coaches.

⁷⁸ Project Hope is the new name for Transition to Work (TTW).

⁷⁹ A representative of PACE also indicated that the partnership’s goal was not necessarily to establish long-term engagement with all incumbent enrollees.

BSCPP indicated that it wants to be careful to avoid over-committing its coaching resources to individuals for whom advancement or a career change is several years away.⁸⁰ PCWD concluded that coaching should be provided in-house; moreover, Brigham & Women’s Hospital (part of the Partners system) believes coaching should only be available for those enrolled in formal training programs.

For its part, PACE has decided to focus incumbent coaching only on those workers enrolled in Module 2 training, and not to automatically provide coaching to the employees enrolled in the less intensive ASE prep courses unless the employee requested such services. However, to better meet the needs of its employers, PACE has agreed to coach up to an additional ten employees not enrolled in the Module 2 training.

HCC has integrated the career coach and instructor roles into a single position. The partnership feels that this is the best way to ensure the relevance of the training materials, and to promote the sustainability of HCC’s staffing over time.

Outcomes to Date

The following sections highlight some of the SkillWorks outcomes that have been achieved to date. The report first focuses on outcomes realized by participants in the training and career advancement activities of the Implementation Partnerships. However, SkillWorks was originally envisioned as impacting larger numbers of job seekers, workers, and employers (that is, reaching “scale”) primarily through its public policy and systems change activities. Accordingly, the discussion then turns to the progress that has been made by SkillWorks in promoting policy, institutional, and systems changes.

Outcomes for Participants

To date, the Implementation Partnerships have provided significant help to nearly 400 participants in achieving entry-level jobs. They have also assisted over 1600 incumbent workers in enhancing their skills and/or in beginning the climb up a career ladder.

Pre-employment Placements

In the aggregate, the number of placements for pre-employment participants increased from Year 1 to Year 2, but then declined somewhat in the third year. In Year 3, the partnerships placed a total of 99 individuals, including 11 placements associated with HCRTI “walk-ins.” The Year 3 placement rate for pre-employment participants graduating from the partnerships’ various formal training programs (which does not include the HCRTI walk-ins) averaged 58% across partnerships.⁸¹ It also is worth noting that only 11 of the 89 HCRTI walk-ins achieved placements (12%), compared to 21 of the 38 HCRTI training graduates (55.3%). This suggests that there value in the more intensive skill-building and coaching services received by the latter group (although some of the differences in results may be due to the characteristics of the individuals in each group).

⁸⁰ Similarly, in designing its Opportunity Program component, BSCPP has made the fact that an individual has previously completed a class to demonstrate his/her commitment a key basis for eligibility.

⁸¹ For several partnerships, graduation occurred late in the program year, and/or there was a lag between graduation and placement. Accordingly, it is reasonable to expect that the final placement rates for the cohort of Year 3 participants will increase over time.

It is also important to point out that many of the placements for the pre-employment graduates continue to be outside of the partnerships' formal employer partners. This pattern is particularly striking for HCC and HCRTI.⁸² Despite this distribution, employer partners for these partnerships report that they have been able to hire enough graduates to fill their needs. Partnership staff also explained that they have been expanding the reach of their placement efforts due to the slowing economy and lower demand for entry-level workers by some partner employers.⁸³

In Year 3, placement wages tended to range from \$10.00 to \$12.15 per hour. On average, pre-employment Year 3 enrollees who were working prior to enrollment and subsequently were placed in jobs achieved an hourly wage increase of between \$0.40 per hour and \$3.51 per hour in their first job placement. Two things need to be noted about this statistic, however: (a) except for PCWD, this calculation is based on limited samples for each partnership; and (b) in some cases, the average is lowered because some enrollees were leaving a relatively high paying job (such as in construction) that they could not maintain, for a lower-paying but more stable job (such as in the healthcare field).

A couple of other aspects of the Year 3 placements are worth mentioning. For the PACE pre-employment participants, the initial average placement wage decreased from Year 2 to Year 3 (from \$11.07 to \$10.00 per hour). This reflected the general downturn in the automotive services industry during that period.

Most of the partnerships placed individuals almost exclusively in full-time jobs with benefits in their initial job placements. However, PCWD initially placed a substantial number of its pre-employment graduates in temporary or per diem jobs without benefits (although many of these individuals moved on to full-time positions and/or positions with benefits at Partners institutions). This pattern may in part be the result of the particular job categories or departments in which PCWD was making placements—e.g., in higher end or more administrative jobs that are more likely to start individuals as temps. But it also raises an important question about whether workforce development initiatives should be explicit in the standards that they use for what constitutes an acceptable job placement.

Retention for Pre-employment Placements

The results relative to one-year job retention for the pre-employment enrollees were somewhat mixed, but generally positive. HCRTI and PACE each reported one-year retention rates of 88%; PCWD reported a one-year retention rate of 63% for its Year 1 enrollees, and 78% for its Year 2 enrollees.⁸⁴

⁸² HCRTI Year 3 enrollees were fairly evenly distributed between employer partners and non-partners. However, the placement distribution for Year 2 enrollees was more heavily weighted toward non-employer partners (65%).

⁸³ Additionally, the placement pattern may represent the beginning of a more intentional strategy by HCRTI to find employers where the “fit” of participants’ skill levels is better.

⁸⁴ HCC only tracks retention for placed participants for 9 months, and reported a 9-month rate of 66% to the evaluation team.

These figures compare very favorably, for example, with the AECF Jobs Initiative, which achieved a one-year retention rate for its placed participants of 54%.⁸⁵

Incumbent Retention

According to the available data, most of the partnerships are showing a high percentage of their incumbent enrollees still retained at the employer partners. In terms of the Round 1 SkillWorks grantees, PCWD reports that approximately 81% of its incumbent enrollees from Years 1 through 3 are still with their Partners employers, and HCC reports that 78% of its incumbent enrollees from the three years are still employed at the Hilton hotel properties.⁸⁶ HCRTI's data on incumbent retention are incomplete; for HCRTI incumbent participants whose employment status is known, the end of Year 3 retention rate for enrollees from Years 1-3 is about 70.9%.⁸⁷

In terms of the Round 2 SkillWorks grantees, PACE has reported that 67% of its Module 2 incumbent enrollees from Years 2 and 3 are still employed with partner businesses,⁸⁸ and BSCPP reports that 97% of its incumbent participants have been retained.

Although these retention rates generally appear to be quite positive, to date we have not had success in obtaining precise data on the “typical” retention performance of most of the employer partners, and therefore it is hard to say how these rates compare to the “norm” for the employers or industries for similar positions. In addition, as will be discussed below, the significance of a worker being retained by a specific employer is affected by the extent to which the employer provides advancement and promotion opportunities.

Advancement and Promotions

Based on the information provided by the partnerships, there have been some positive indicators relative to the skills offerings of the Implementation Partnerships. Graduation rates for the skills courses offered by the partnerships generally have been high. In addition, BSCPP appears to have had significant success in improving English skills of its participants within a relatively short period. And at PACE, 33 participants have passed one or more ASE certification exams, and 3 graduates have used credits from PACE to enroll in an Associates' degree program at Ben Franklin Technical College. Overall, however, relatively few individuals across the partnerships have achieved an industry-recognized credential or degree to date.

⁸⁵ Note: it is also important to keep in mind that the methods for calculating 12-month retention rates have differed between the Jobs Initiative and the SkillWorks partnerships (and among the partnerships), and these differences in methodologies can contribute significantly to the apparent differences in results.

⁸⁶ This metric is different from 12-month retention measure that was used for the pre-employment participants. The duration of employment being measured for the incumbents depends on when the incumbents enrolled in the SkillWorks activities.

⁸⁷ This percentage is based on the number of employees known to be retained (360), divided by the total number of incumbents that enrolled from Year 1 through Year 3 employed at the four reporting employers (508). HCRTI had a problem with some employers failing to respond to its survey on participant retention. Since the four employers employ 74% of the incumbent population, the retention rate for their employee participants was considered as a proxy for the overall incumbent population.

⁸⁸ PACE has limited demographic or tracking data on incumbents who only participate in the ASE prep classes (i.e., data from one of the participating employers for one year's participants).

According to the information reported by the partnerships, 336 incumbent participants achieved wage increases and 203 incumbents enrollees were promoted through the end of Year 3. Despite our attempts to pursue this issue in interviews with partnership staff and employer representatives, it is very difficult to determine to what extent these advances were specifically due to the training and services offered by the partnerships.

However, relative to the entire enrollee population, the available data suggest that the SkillWorks skills training so far has not led to significant wage or career advancement for many incumbent enrollees. The reasons for this appear to be myriad, and vary somewhat by the sector or employer.⁸⁹ Some of the most common reasons include the following:

- The very low skill levels of many of the incumbent participants (especially relative to English language skills);
- The fact that the career advancement goals of some incumbents, or the certifications involved, may require several years (or more) of training to be achieved;
- Immigration issues that make workers reluctant to switch jobs, even if they offer advancement opportunities;
- Transportation issues, family responsibilities, and/or competing demands of working other jobs that make it difficult to switch employment location or shift, despite the potential for economic gains;
- The level of comfort that workers experience in their current employment setting, even if promotion potential may not be available in those firms;
- In the hospitality sector, ostensibly higher paying front desk positions may reduce the opportunity to receive tip income (which can be a substantial portion of take-home pay); and
- Supervisory positions are often non-union (and union workers may fear leaving the security of a union position).

Employer Outcomes

The motivation for employers to be involved in the Implementation Partnerships is more complex than originally thought. According to the employer interviews, to date the main benefit for many of them has been the indirect economic benefits of improved community relations or public relations (for example, by being a “good neighbor,” the hospitals are earning good will with city officials and

⁸⁹ For PACE, participants are achieving skill advancement and their supervisors speak highly of them; however, this does not necessarily translate into advancement. The industry requires that there be significant skill advancement before actual promotions occur. At HCC, there is limited room for advancement within the same location. Generally, personal barriers (kids, transportation, fear of the unknown) inhibit transferring to new locations for advancement. Additionally, lateral moves that position employees for eventual advancement are not considered advancements by employers. HCRTI participants are challenged by the combination of very low skills and very long pathways.

neighborhood groups). HCC is a notable exception—the Hilton Corporation sees a direct and identifiable benefit in their operations as a result of the training.

Although there have been some limited efforts by partnerships to look at quantitative employer outcomes, to date there is still no *systematic* hard evidence across partnerships demonstrating increased productivity, reduced turnover, an improved ability to fill hard-to-fill positions internally, or other types of employer benefits that were cited at the beginning of the Initiative. There is, however, anecdotal evidence from various employers about the positive effects of the SkillWorks partnership experience, as well as insights relative to the challenges entailed.

PCWD had hoped to be able to fill some hard-to-fill allied health positions through PCWD, but discovered that working with large numbers of employees with diverse skill levels was more complicated than anticipated. PCWD also found that moving employees with limited skills on a path to nursing, radiology tech, or surgical tech positions takes much longer than originally thought.⁹⁰ On the other hand, PCWD feels that there is some evidence that its pre-employment activities are providing some Partners employers/departments with a new pipeline for entry-level workers. In addition, the PCWD experience is seen as having opened up a greater dialogue between the supervisory staff and the training staff and HR managers across the Partners hospitals.

Employer representatives of the Hilton properties have also reported that the employees participating in HCC activities were “better employees” as a result; they have better morale, operate better in a team environment, are better able to communicate with clients and other team members, are willing to exercise more initiative, and have raised the level of team performance.

In interviews with the evaluation team, a few employers have said that they were not impressed with the quality of the typical SkillWorks pre-employment participant referred to them, compared to candidates identified through other channels. Other employers, however, highlighted the quality of soft skills that the pre-employment participants bring with them to their jobs, including communication skills and commitment to their work. They also appreciate that the career coaches are available to resolve problems that may crop up, particularly with new hires.

As previously noted, at PACE only a small number of the pre-employment Module 1 graduates have been placed with the employer partners. However, according to the employer interviews, most of those partners did not have a lot of openings and therefore view PACE as having met their needs for entry-level hires. And at least one employer partner sees PACE as opening up a whole new pool of candidates for the firm.

⁹⁰ Another partnership that hopes to help employers fill hard-to-fill positions is BSCPP, with its new HVAC training component aimed (in part) at meeting Boston University’s needs for HVAC technicians. These positions are expected to pay at least \$20,000 more annually than what the BSCPP participants are currently earning. Interestingly, the HVAC component is expected to result in a “win” for Boston University as well. Boston University currently has trouble competing with construction contractors (who pay higher wages for such positions), but the university hopes to retain the BU employees that receive their HVAC licenses through the BSCPP program.

Another interesting aspect of the feedback from the PACE employer partners is that most see the retention rate of PACE pre-employment placements as merely meeting the norm in the industry for newly hired or recently trained employees. This view was unexpected, since the retention rate for PACE placements was quite good, and the PACE service providers had originally thought that the typical turnover rate in the industry was high.⁹¹

In terms of the training and services provided to incumbent participants, employers have been most positive about the workplace ESOL classes. For example, HCC representative reported that the contextualized English courses were highly valued by employers, and some employers indicated that this was the most important part of the program. While such training may not be sufficient in itself to prepare the participants for promotion, it is seen as an important prerequisite to equip the individuals to participate in subsequent technical training. Moreover, the increased communications skills, confidence, and ability to interact with customers and fellow workers that participants derive from the ESOL classes help to make them more effective in their current jobs.

The SkillWorks experience also has sensitized a number of employers about the benefits of investing in their workforce. In response to this heightened awareness, for example, HCC partners are providing more flexible tuition reimbursement for worker educational needs identified through coaching. And PACE's partner employers are investing in training for new hires much earlier than in the past.

At least in part, the increased attention to workforce development has motivated some employers to expand their in-house training services. In some cases, however, these in-house training services are competing with the services that the SkillWorks partnership is (or would like to be) providing.

Institutional and Systems Change

Workforce Solutions Group: Activities and Accomplishments

Passage of the Workforce Solutions Act in July 2006 as part of the Economic Stimulus Bill represented a significant win for Workforce Solutions Group (WSG). It added \$24.5 million in funding for workforce development activities, created the potential to leverage additional federal funding through the Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) program, and established the Workforce Accountability Taskforce. The latter is seen as a mechanism to promote broader changes in the Massachusetts workforce development systems.

When the 2006 win is added to WSG's earlier success in 2004 in securing \$6 million in supplemental funding for workforce development, it is clear that WSG has been very effective, at least in the short term, in achieving additional funding for workforce development services. WSG has also been active in influencing how some of the elements of the Workforce Solutions Act were implemented, including the Educational Rewards Program, the Workforce Competitive Trust Fund, and the Accountability Taskforce. It has also been active in the design of the FSET in Massachusetts, in how the additional Adult Basic Education funding will be used, and in helping SkillWorks to organize and conduct the gubernatorial forum.

⁹¹ It is possible that the slowing of the economy has increased employee retention rates since the program was designed.

On the other hand, WSG has made less progress to date in promoting a specific policy or systems change agenda beyond the implementation of these items. In part, a tactical decision was made to wait until the Accountability Taskforce was established, viewing this entity as the mechanism through which WSG could promote a systems change agenda. However, WSG still faces the challenge that such an agenda might divide its various constituencies. Also, with the departure of some of the initial WSG leadership, its expertise in the “nuts and bolts” of workforce development has decreased, which may negatively affect its credibility in pushing for specific changes.

Moreover, although more effort has been expended by WSG in Year 3 to reach out to the Implementation Partnerships and to involve them in WSG activities, there is still little evidence that the partnerships’ experience is being incorporated by WSG in framing a specific policy or systems change agenda.

SkillWorks Staff and Funders Group Involvement in SkillWorks Public Policy Activities

In addition to the activities conducted by WSG, during Year 3 there was increased involvement of SkillWorks staff and funders in public policy activities, beyond the oversight role that the Public Policy Committee has conducted since the commencement of the initiative.

For example, the SkillWorks initiative director and some of the funders were active in organizing the gubernatorial forum, as well as in trying to better define the public policy agenda of SkillWorks beyond increasing the funding available for workforce development activities. This has included encouraging WSG to articulate the details of a policy and systems change agenda. It has also involved deciding when SkillWorks will itself pursue policy items that are more focused on issues specific to the initiative or to Boston (since WSG primarily focuses on issues that are relevant to its statewide constituency, which are not always the same concerns as those of the SkillWorks funders or partnership grantees).

The Broader Influence of SkillWorks on Funders Group Members

There is considerable variation among members of the Funders Group in terms of how their SkillWorks experience has influenced the activities of their organizations relative to workforce development.

Some of the funders have stated that that the experience has had no effect on their organization’s funding priorities. But even in a case where SkillWorks has not affected funding activities, one program officer reported that the experience has influenced how she evaluates programs for her trustees – she and her organization’s trustees are now more realistic about the length of time to move individuals up a career ladder; this is seen as particularly important because the foundation primarily focuses on hard-to-serve groups. Others indicate that while the SkillWorks experience has not changed the activities that they fund (because they were already investing in similar activities), it has increased their contact and opportunities to partner with other funders. In particular, representatives of public sector funders discussed their increased relationships with private funders, and indicate that they are now more likely to consider public-private initiatives for future projects.

Others funders indicate that SkillWorks has helped them to re-shape their investment strategies. SkillWorks is seen as providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for creating

sustained impact and systemic change in workforce development. One funder reported that her organization is now taking a more long-term, integrated, and comprehensive approach to address sustainable employability and economic mobility. Through the SkillWorks experience, this organization better understands the importance of working for more public funding for skills training, and has set aside a percentage of funds for public policy work in this area, focusing specifically on increasing the ABE line item. Another funder noted that SkillWorks has influenced the focus of the Commonwealth's Trust Fund and the workforce development RFPs that have come out from the State.

Another program officer reported that, for her organization, SkillWorks has reinforced the importance of human capital development, and the critical issues around basic skills attainment. Accordingly, the organization has strengthened its focus on pre-pre-employment needs in Boston.

Partnership Contributions to Promoting Institutional and Systems Change

As we have previously noted, the SkillWorks partnerships have played a key role in helping to raise employer awareness of the value of investing in workforce development. This has led to changes in the practices of some employers, such as the expansion of training and supports for workers that the HCC and PACE employers (mentioned above) have adopted.

In the healthcare sector, SkillWorks was not the only catalyst fostering greater investment in workforce development,⁹² but it has been a very important one. SkillWorks has been particularly important in encouraging hospital employers like Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) to appreciate that their training mission extends beyond their critical staff, which had been MGH's traditional focus.

This influence has led to some significant cultural changes in the healthcare institutions. It has also encouraged the development of some new affiliated training programs, such as Partners' respiratory training program at Bunker Hill Community College. In addition, some hospital employers have incorporated this new awareness of the importance of workforce development internally, through creating new in-house training programs.

This kind of development represents both a victory and a continuing challenge for a partnership like HCRTI. That is, although the hospitals' commitment to providing more training in house may better meet the needs of some workers, it also means that the nonprofit service providers must constantly be reassessing their niche and readjusting the array of services that they offer.

In terms of the role of the partnerships in promoting institutional and sectoral changes, BSCPP has helped to shape the career path programs for workers at Boston University and Harvard University. BSCPP's efforts relative to the HVAC course for Boston University workers were noted earlier in this chapter. And at Harvard, BSCPP encouraged development of a broader career path program than the university was originally contemplating; the Harvard program also added a career coach to work specifically with SEIU employees who are part of program, and BSCPP helped to orient the new coach. BSCPP also fostered the commitment of the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority to

⁹² As discussed in the PCWD chapter, over the past five years there has been an environment of growing interest in and experimentation with training and workforce development activities within Boston hospitals.

add to its agreements with building services contractors a requirement that the latter offer ESOL classes to their workers.

BSCPP hopes to generate additional changes in employer practices in 2007, when Boston's master commercial contract is negotiated. For these negotiations BSCPP expects to offer tangible examples of employer-sponsored training that could be secured in the master contract; it also has identified key gaps in current building services job categories that could be addressed in the contract negotiations.

The SkillWorks experience has also helped the nonprofit partners to increase their capacity in some important ways. They are thinking more strategically about their workforce service portfolio or market niche. They have substantially improved their understanding of industry needs and their ability to work effectively with employers. Several of the nonprofit partners (Project Hope and AACA, for example) have parlayed this increased capacity into new relationships with employers and additional workforce funding opportunities. The nonprofits are also developing new organization-wide capacities as a result of the lessons learned from the SkillWorks experience. Some of these lessons have emerged from the trial and error process that each partnership has gone through. Other lessons and guidance on capacity building have been provided by the SkillWork technical assistance consultants, and still others have come through the peer learning opportunities that the SkillWorks activities have fostered.

SkillWorks as an Inspiration and Source of Learnings for Other Initiatives

Among its institutional and systems outcomes to date is the role that SkillWorks has played in stimulating the establishment of other initiatives and workforce partnerships around the country. SkillWorks served as a primary model in the establishment of the Bay Area Workforce Funding Collaborative (BAWFC), in terms of BAWFC's focus on sectoral partnerships, an emphasis on both direct service delivery and policy advocacy, and the use of a private-public funding collaborative to finance and guide the initiative. The state of California is now in the process of replicating the BAWFC effort in several other regions around the state.

Closer to home, the SkillWorks model played a similar catalytic role in encouraging United Way of Rhode Island to establish its SkillUp-Rhode Island initiative. The lessons from the SkillWorks effort were also instrumental in guiding the design of The Boston Foundation's Allied Health Workforce Project, which makes employer-specific grants.

In addition to the above efforts, the SkillWorks initiative has served as a source of information and peer support to a wide variety of other workforce efforts around the country, including the grantees of the national Initiative for Workforce Intermediaries sponsored by the Ford, Annie E. Casey, and Hitachi foundations.

Factors Affecting Outcomes

Over the past three years, the SkillWorks grantees (both the Implementation Partnerships and Workforce Solutions Group) have built some significant relationships and infrastructure, achieved some noteworthy participant and employer outcomes, and fostered some key institutional changes and legislative wins. However, the participant and employer outcomes to date are more modest than

perhaps was originally anticipated, and overall the initiative has not yet reached the scale or guarantee of sustainability that some had hoped for. Below, we examine some of the reasons for this situation.

Partnership Capacity and Relations

Core Capacity and Staff Turnover

Despite some of the improvements noted above, most of the Implementation Partnerships are still challenged around basic capacity issues, and most (if not all) are still fragile. These challenges have included a high level of staff turnover at all levels in most of the nonprofit leads and many of the partner organizations. In fact, PCWD (which was the sole Implementation Partnership with an employer in the lead role) was the only partnership that did not experience significant staff turnover or leaves of absence in the lead entity.⁹³ Larger financial or leadership issues facing the CBO lead or partners also have affected the SkillWorks partnerships, as has the departure of employer champions.

In some ways, the organizations leading the SkillWorks partnerships should be among the strongest in the system. The continued capacity needs of these organizations may point to issues that go beyond the specific types of SkillWorks capacity building assistance that have been provided to them to date, and raise issues about the ability to expand the SkillWorks model more broadly throughout the system.

On the other hand, not all of the turnover that has occurred should be viewed in a negative light. Some of the leadership and staffing changes that have occurred in the nonprofits over the last year offer the promise of the affected partnerships emerging stronger than they were before, in terms of strategic thinking, management oversight, and technical capacity.

Meeting the Training Needs of Low-skilled Job Seekers and Workers

The need of pre-employment participants for basic skill-building is greater than many of the partnerships originally anticipated, and some employers believe that longer training programs (and better screening and coaching) are needed.

In considering lengthening the training, however, it is important to consider the burden on low-income individuals of attending an unpaid training program. HCRTI has found that the length of their training is already a deterrent to enrollment to some degree, because it is unpaid. Representatives of several partnerships also indicated that by the time people graduate from their pre-employment programs, they desperately need work and therefore accept the first job offered, rather than wait for the right position.

Training stipends, some level of paid release time, and on-site classes, are therefore crucial to facilitate workers' pursuing education, but employers are often reluctant to allow a group of employees from the same department to leave for classes at the same time. Employers also feel that release time works best if someone is willing to pay for replacement employees to backfill for the workers attending classes.

⁹³ It should be emphasized that leadership turnover was not confined to the Implementation Partnerships. As we have previously noted, the Workforce Solutions Group lost two of its founding leaders during Year 3.

The SkillWorks experience to date also has revealed the need for customized training for small groups of participants with similar skill levels. However, it is hard for anyone—but particularly nonprofits—to achieve any sort of economies in providing such training. Moreover, the partnerships have found that there are often no guarantees that openings will be available for participants at the time that they graduate. Accordingly, it may be more appropriate for employers to create such customized training efforts (such as through TBF’s Allied Health Initiative), when they know they will have specific openings available.

Strengthening Coaching Services

The coaches appear to be a key variable in the success of the partnerships. The nature of the work in sectoral partnerships (with career ladders) is about building and maintaining trusted relationships. This is true both for the job seekers who need coaching and encouragement over time, and for employers who need reassurance that providers understand and can respond to their needs. Variation in the quality of coaches, and the disruptions (for both participants and employers) resulting from turnover in these positions, are continuing capacity issues for the partnerships. For example, PACE has had three different individuals in its career coach positions over the two years of program operations.

In addition, we have mentioned that as the incumbent components expanded, they outpaced the capacity of the coaches to provide services to the growing participant population. The partnerships attempted to become more intentional in how they allocated coaching resources, but this still left the large numbers of participants receiving little or no coaching services to support them along their advancement pathway.

Building-out of Partnership Capabilities in a Strategic Manner

The Implementation Partnerships have generally shown responsiveness to requests from participants or employer institutions, and demonstrated a genuine willingness to (attempt to) address deficiencies in training or services as they are identified. For example, in response to participant feedback, PACE added “hands-on” automotive maintenance experience earlier in its Module 1 training, and revised the scheduling of the Module 2 training. HCC adapts course content for each round of new students; additionally, HCC provides small courses or trainings as needed to meet employee needs (e.g., a workshop on college funding).

The expansion of the partnerships’ portfolios of training and services was often in response to specific employer requests, or at times merely opportunistic. However, particularly in the early stages of these partnerships, the expansions were not necessarily undertaken in the context of a comprehensive, coordinated plan, or did not represent the most viable long-term niches for the partnership to pursue. In fact, some of the expansion projects undertaken by the Implementation Partnerships revealed that the members of the partnerships had far less awareness of industry characteristics (i.e., employer needs and their willingness to support training or hire graduates) than what one would have anticipated.

Nonetheless, through a trial and error process, over time the partnerships became much better at strategic planning, and at identifying the niche that they could occupy.

Another issue in building partnership capacity relates to outsourcing and strategic partnerships. Workforce providers frequently are encouraged by funders to avoid trying to be all things to all people, and to form strategic partnerships to deliver services. However, a couple of the Implementation Partnerships had difficulties when they tried to partner (outsource) service delivery. Both PCWD and HCRTI were disappointed with the quality of the resulting services. PCWD felt the pre-employment coaching services were not adequate, and brought certain direct services in-house; HCRTI felt that some of the training services were not adequate and chose to contract with individuals rather than large training providers in order to better control for individual teacher quality.

On the other hand, the SkillWorks experience also provides some evidence that—without a lot of outside support and encouragement—it is very hard to achieve the desired level of strategic coordination between partnerships or among nonprofit providers, even when such coordination appears in the self-interest of the entities involved. This is true even when the entities are working in the same sector or with the same employers. Again, this seems to be a result of limited staff capacity; the entities have the best of intentions, but have difficulty allocating the staff time necessary to ensure that the desired coordination occurs.

Increasing Employer Engagement

The SkillWorks experience highlights the distinction between true sectoral strategies versus working with groups of employers. Most of the Implementation Partnerships called themselves “sectoral,”⁹⁴ but for much of the first three years of SkillWorks largely focused their intensive services (particularly incumbent services) on a limited set of employers.⁹⁵

The partnerships found that working with a distinct set of employers often did not generate enough placement opportunities for pre-employment graduates, or promotion and advancement opportunities for incumbents. The partnerships tried to address these issues, initially through their employer partners but then through reaching out to a wider set of employers. For example, PACE sought to add employers, even if they did not become active “employer partners,” in order to increase the number of firms that would be willing to hire its Module 1 graduates. (However, connecting with employment locations outside of Boston has seemed to challenge PACE’s ability to focus on serving Boston residents in its incumbent component.)

In a number of the partnerships, the level of employer engagement is not as strong as hoped for at this point, though employers themselves perceive their level of engagement to be significant. The limited number of placement openings or promotion opportunities is just one indicator of employer engagement. Employer roles differ across the partnerships; nonetheless, relatively few are playing strong leadership roles in the partnerships (the PACE employers and Hilton management representatives are among the notable exceptions). And fewer still are making major financial

⁹⁴ Although BSCPP is more occupational than sectoral in its orientation.

⁹⁵ It is somewhat ironic that while the Implementation Partnership focused their services on a limited set of employer partners, some of the partnerships ended up placing most of their pre-employment graduates with other employers.

investments in the partnerships. The partnerships seem to be successful enough to keep employers from walking away, but not successful enough to get them to fully invest in the efforts.⁹⁶

BSCPP's experience in trying to foster employer-based advancement activities provides a good example of the variation in the extent of engagement and responsiveness across employers. BSCPP has achieved some success with universities (most notably Harvard) in establishing worker advancement programs. However, its effort to develop contextualized language and supervisory training at the Hancock building was delayed during Year 3, in part due to tense relations between the building services contractor and SEIU, and turnover in the building manager of the target building. The program is finally being implemented in 2007, but language suggesting the possibility of promotions was removed from the agreement with the building services contractor at the latter's request. Similarly, BSCPP has 14 employers participating in its new HVAC component, but they are not financially supporting the training or offering release time to participants, or any guarantees of promotion or increases in pay to graduates. (BSCPP is relying on market forces—the shortage of licensed HVAC technicians in Greater Boston—to help to ensure that graduates find placements and opportunities to achieve higher wages.)

Improving MIS Capacity

There is limited institutional learning within the partnerships because there is little institutional memory (too much turnover) and inadequate infrastructure. Most partnerships also continue to struggle with data collection, analysis and reporting. This has been the case even though a well-designed system to document and analyze efforts and outcomes is critical to program oversight and continuous improvement, and significant SkillWorks funding has been expended to boost management information system (MIS) capacity.

The initial decision of the Funders Group against mandating a common set of outcomes measures, or requiring partnerships to track participants that took jobs at non-partner employers, hampered the evaluation team's ability to access data from the partnerships on a common set of metrics for all participants during Years 1 and 2 of the initiative.

By Year 3, the Funder Groups had come to fully recognize the value of a core set of uniform performance measures across partnerships. Yet even when the evaluation team tried to clarify and improve the outcomes measures—with the Funders Group's explicit endorsement—and work with the partnerships to improve their reporting capacity, the response of the partnerships generally was disappointing. This was the case even though the evaluation team was seeking to establish interim participant progress metrics and broader institutional change measures that would improve the ability of the partnerships to show the full range of their impact.

The disappointing response of a number of the partnerships relative to reporting capacity was partly a result of staff turnover, and partly due to a lack of in-house technical staff. Also, some partnerships

⁹⁶ However, it should be noted that representatives of the Hilton Corporation have indicated that they would consider funding some sort of alternative program if it turned out that the HCC program would not continue. Also, the employer partners in HCRTI have provided substantial financial contributions over the three years of SkillWorks; however, both they and HCRTI are currently reassessing what will be the role of the Institute for these LMAA institutions in the future.

did not embrace the new measures, and/or (given the level of work required to report on them) did not feel it was an absolute priority.

Among the partnerships, PCWD exhibited the best MIS capacity during Year 3. As an employer, PCWD's ability to access its People Soft HR database allowed much more nuanced analysis of participant pathways and achievements. Ironically, the other partnerships were unable to replicate PCWD's analysis because their employers were unwilling to provide access to such detailed, participant-specific data. (This is perhaps another indicator of the lack of complete employer engagement in these partnerships.)

WorkSource is one example of a nonprofit partner that came to understand how important it was to upgrade its tracking system in order to enhance service quality (in this case, coaching services). It has since developed a customized on-line tracking system.

MIS for performance tracking takes substantial time and effort, both to develop and maintain. Usually it takes several years to develop the reporting capacity, and then another year or two to really begin to learn how to use the data for self-assessment and mid-course corrections. Acknowledging the substantial financial cost of setting up and staffing an adequate MIS, the evaluation team raises several questions for the Funders Group (and other workforce development funders) to consider:

- Would a dedicated partnership staff member, or additional financial accountability around performance reporting, improve the partnerships' ability to report?
- Should there be additional emphasis on adoption of a uniform data collection *system* across partnerships?
- Is there efficiency for small CBOs to run these systems, or should this be an intermediary function?

Factors Relating to the Skillworks Model (and Its Implementation)

Implications of the Focus on Disadvantaged Individuals

As the preceding discussion indicated, the partnerships continued to focus primarily on serving disadvantaged job seekers and workers. The experience to date shows the inherent tensions between focusing on the lowest-skilled, low-income job seekers or workers, and (a) meeting the needs of employers, or (b) expecting to see substantial economic success within a few years.

SkillWorks was expected to be a win-win situation for both employers and low-income participants/communities. The experience across partnerships over the first three years of the initiative demonstrates, however, that the types of situations in which this model can be realized can be difficult to find, and may be more rare than originally anticipated.

Moreover, there are really three types of participants being served by SkillWorks—entry-level, pre-college, and college-bound. Although most of these are low-income individuals or have wages below the FESS level, there is wide variation in the skill levels among participants. If there is an expectation that participants achieve FESS levels, there is an inherent conflict in focusing resources on the lowest-skilled employees where advancement to a FESS job may take over six years. There is

also tension in deciding how to divide resources between those with greatest needs versus those that require some less intensive skill enhancements to prepare them for higher level occupational skill training or college.

Ensuring an Emphasis on Career Pathways

Many of the Partnerships did extensive planning around career pathways within their sector, and yet this information has not driven the programs and services once they began implementation. Although the initial applications laid out some pathways to occupations that pay FESS wages, it is not clear these pathways have been guiding the activities of the partnerships. Some contributing factors for why the pathways have not been as clearly directive are the fact that “career path” positions may not be available when a person is ready to advance (e.g., HCC), individual skills are too low (all partnerships), or individual preferences and constraints inhibit the use of the path (all partnerships). Additionally, for many pathways it takes participants years to advance to the next level, either due to low individual skill levels or educational requirements. This has led some partnerships to focus (at least partially) on activities that make workers more effective in their current positions, as a way to demonstrate value to employer partners.

Pre-employment Versus Incumbent Components

For several of the Implementation Partnerships, there was a gap between the pre-employment and incumbent components. For example, there was no formal transition between these program components at PCWD. For others, such as HCC and HCRTI, the fact that many pre-employment graduates were placed outside of the employer partners made the coordination between the pre-employment and incumbent components more challenging.

Having the same partnerships design and implement both pre-employment and incumbent training programs does not necessarily make sense. They are too different, they often serve very different types of clients, and they take different capacities:

- Pre-employment programs generally serve as a community funnel. As such, CBOs that can access an extensive labor pool, provide connections to a range of employers and job options, and mobilize an array of job readiness and support services may be in the best position to carry out such programs.
- Incumbent programs generally need to be employer-specific (or at least employer-driven). It is unclear, in fact, whether CBOs can effectively provide incumbent worker training. Such training does not seem to be mission-driven for most CBOs or play to their strengths, unless they are primarily providing the coaching/wrap-around services for those programs.

The Partnerships as Nimble, Entrepreneurial Intermediaries

Though the Implementation Partnerships were supposed to be sensitive to the economic environment, and be nimble and entrepreneurial, generally they have not been so.⁹⁷ In some cases, the lead entities didn't have the staff capacity and/or strategic vision to do so, at least initially. In other cases (even though this was not intended by the Funders Group), the partnerships' perceptions of the SkillWorks's program requirements may have discouraged them from adjusting their approaches.

In addition, although the partnerships were expected to act as sectoral intermediaries, for the most part they served as service providers to specific employers. In part, they may not have fully understood the broader role envisioned for them (since it was not particularly explicit in the SkillWorks RFPs). In other cases, the partnership staff may not have had the skill sets required to serve as "sectoral brokers," or their ongoing administrative and programmatic duties did not afford them time to commit to the this broader role.

It should be noted that some of the partnerships are moving into stronger "sectoral" roles. For example, as a result of expanding its services to non-Hilton hotels and establishing a partnership with the Massachusetts Lodging Association, HCC is becoming increasingly sector-focused. The new grant that IIB has received (from the Workforce Competitive Trust Fund) will help HCC to expand even further into the broader sector to meet hospitality needs.

The Interrelationships of the Three Components of the SkillWorks Model

As the evaluation team pointed out in our Baseline/Year 1 report, one of the unique features (at the time) of the SkillWorks initiative was that it had the three distinct components—Capacity Building, Implementation Partnerships, and Public Policy Advocacy—that were expected to complement each other. Our Year 2 report suggested, however, that these components were still functioning largely independently of each other through the second year of initiative operations. Over the course of Year 3, there was much more emphasis on trying to integrate the three components. In particular, the SkillWorks capacity building activities have been focused to a much greater extent on improving the key capacities of the partnerships and their lead organizations. During Year 3, the Workforce Solutions Group (WSG) has also reached out to the Implementation Partnerships to a much greater extent. However, as we pointed out in the public policy discussion above, to date there is still little evidence that WSG has incorporated the partnerships' particular needs and experience in framing a specific policy and systems change agenda.

Recommendations: (Options for) Future Investments

The following are a set of recommendations for future SkillWorks investments suggested by the experience over the first three years of the initiative.

- **Invest in "best practices" relative to assessment tools and methods:** Given the importance of effective candidate assessment, and the difficulties that the partnerships

⁹⁷ For example, even though employer demand for entry-level workers in several industries has decreased due to economic changes, the partnerships are still largely providing the same products. If the programs were truly flexible, they might have made more significant programmatic adjustments rather than simply expanding the employer pool.

experienced in conducting such assessments in an efficient manner, it would be worthwhile to identify best practices, particularly those that can be applied across employers/sectors.

- **Support the development of more “pre-pre-employment” training:** The partnerships and their employers have identified the need for more remedial and other forms of prerequisite job readiness training. These are seen as crucial to preparing disadvantaged job seekers to be successful subsequently in more demanding pre-employment and technical training programs and in entry-level positions.
- **Use financial literacy training more extensively to promote FESS:** BSCPP has found that financial literacy training can be an important tool to motivate participants and help them get on a pathway to reach FESS. This finding is consistent with the experience of a number of other workforce development initiatives around the country.
- **Provide resources for additional coaching services:** The partnerships have found coaching often to be an essential factor in promoting participant movement along career and advancement pathways. However, most of the partnerships did not have the resources to provide such services in a consistent, intensive manner to many of their incumbent participants.
- **Offer support and technical assistance to build the capacity of the Implementation Partnerships to act more as sectoral intermediaries, and to engage in advocacy to promote sectoral or systems changes:** It is important to acknowledge that serving as sectoral brokers and promoting broader sectoral and systems changes require different sets of skills than does service delivery. During the first three years of the initiative, the partnerships were led to believe that they were primarily being judged on their ability to deliver direct services to a distinct set of participants. They did not get the full extent of the guidance they would need to understand the importance of focusing on sectoral and system change activities, or the support required to be able to carry out these functions effectively. If the Funders Group wishes the partnerships to be more active in such activities, it should provide them with appropriate supports.
- **As part of the SkillWorks policy agenda, call for greater, ongoing investment on a regional and statewide level in building the capacity of workforce training and supportive services providers:** The experience of the first three years with the Implementation Partnerships has shown that, if the SkillWorks practices and principles are to be adopted more broadly throughout the workforce development system, significant capacity building in the network of providers will need to occur.
- **Promote better connections with the community college system:** In terms of building the capacity of the workforce development system, it also will be important to foster greater connections to the training resources and employer relationships that exist in the community college system.
- **Address the immigration issues of participants in a more focused manner:** Across partnerships, a substantial portion of the SkillWorks participants are immigrants whose primary language is not English. We have also seen that immigration issues, as well as low levels of English language skills, appear to act as significant barriers to career and economic advancement for many of these individuals. SkillWorks should explore what

greater role that it can play in addressing the immigration issues faced by participants, as well as in expanding the ESOL services available to workers.

- **Set clear and uniform data collection and performance reporting standards:** The Funders Group should be more explicit in its standards for data collection and reporting. It should not only communicate its views about the importance of MIS and reporting capacities; it should also increase accountability by indicating that SkillWorks funding availability will be directly tied to timely and complete reporting by grantees.