



# **Baseline Report Of the SkillWorks Initiative**

**Prepared for the SkillWorks Funders Group**

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# Table of Contents

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<b>Introduction and Overview .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Summary of Year 1 Progress of the Partnership Implementation Grantees .....	1
The Organization of the Rest of the Baseline Report .....	6
<b>Part One: The “System Change” Baseline Analysis.....</b>	<b>7</b>
A. Framework for the System Change Evaluation .....	7
B. SkillWorks’ System Change Goals and Strategy .....	7
What are the goals of the Initiative? .....	7
What long-term changes are needed in the workforce development system? .....	8
What is the strategy that SkillWorks has adopted to achieve this system change? .....	9
C. The Historical Context for SkillWorks – The National Perspective .....	9
Welfare Reform .....	10
The Federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA).....	10
Economic Cycles and Shifts: Moving from Boom to Recession.....	11
The Response of Innovative WFD Practitioners, Advocates and Funders.....	13
D. The Context for SkillWorks at the State and Local Levels .....	15
Projects Involving Partnerships, Sector/Occupational Approaches and Career Ladders that Pre-dated SkillWorks.....	16
Other Policy and System Change Efforts That Pre-dated SkillWorks .....	22
Efforts on Capacity Building that Pre-dated SkillWorks .....	24
Other On-Going Workforce Development Initiatives in the Commonwealth.....	25
Baseline and Existing Activities in Targeted Sectors.....	27
E. Innovative Features of the SkillWorks Model.....	28
<b>Part Two: Year One Activities and Accomplishments of SkillWorks Grantees.....</b>	<b>33</b>
A. Partners in Career and Workforce Development (PCWD).....	33
Partnership Description .....	33
Characteristics of PCWD Participants at Baseline .....	35
Year 1 Activities .....	41
Accomplishments .....	46
The Participant Perspective .....	53
Addendum: Progress Since November 30, 2004, and Plans for Year 2. ....	56
B. Health Care and Research Training Institute.....	58
Partnership Description .....	58
Characteristics of HCRTI Participants at Baseline.....	60
Year 1 Activities and Accomplishments .....	66
The Employers’ Perspective.....	74
The Participant Perspective .....	77
Addendum: Progress Since November 30, 2004 and Plans for Year 2 .....	80
C. International Institute of Boston/Hilton Hotel Industry Training Program .....	82

Partnership Description .....	82
Characteristics of Participants at Baseline.....	84
Year 1 Activities and Accomplishments .....	90
Activities Related to Program Development and Administration .....	93
Accomplishments .....	95
Participants’ Perspectives .....	101
Employers’ Perspectives.....	102
Addendum: Progress Since November 30, 2005 and Plans for Year 2 .....	104
<b>D. Workforce Solutions Group (WSG).....</b>	<b>106</b>
Partnership Description .....	106
WSG’s Year 1 Activities and Achievements.....	108
An Assessment of Initial Outcomes .....	111
Continuing Challenges .....	112
Addendum: Activities Between the End of Year 1 and March 2005 - <i>The Beginnings of the Legislative Campaign</i> .....	114
<b>Part Three: Continuing Challenges in Pursuing System Change .....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Appendix A. Partners in Career and Workforce Development (PCWD)</b>	
<b>Appendix B. Health Care and Research Training Institute (HCRTI)</b>	
<b>Appendix C. International Institute of Boston/Hilton Hotel Industry Training Program (IIB)</b>	

# Introduction and Overview

This report presents the baseline assessment of the SkillWorks Initiative, focusing on the activities and accomplishments of the three Implementation Partnerships (the International Institute of Boston, the Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute, and Partners in Career and Workforce Development). It also assesses the activities and accomplishments of the Public Policy Advocacy grantee (Workforce Solutions Group).

Because this is a lengthy report, we begin it with a summary highlighting some of the key accomplishments of the Implementation Partnerships, framed around the following questions:

- Have the Partnerships achieved their Year 1 targets in terms of the number and types of individuals that they are serving?
- Have the Partnerships been successful in retaining participants and graduating them from their training activities?
- Have the Partnerships been successful in helping participants achieve employment and/or wage objectives?
- Have the Partnerships achieved documented employer outcomes?
- Have the Partnerships been successful in helping participants to make progress along a longer-term career or educational pathway?
- Are there elements of the Partnership projects that have longer-term institutional or system related implications?

After this summary, we describe the structure of the rest of this Baseline Report.

## Summary of Year 1 Progress of the Partnership Implementation Grantees

*Have the Partnerships achieved their targets in terms of the number and type(s) of individuals that they were serving in Year 1?*

In Year 1, all of the Implementation Partnerships exceeded the enrollment goals that they set, both for pre-employment participants and for the incumbent workers that they would serve:

<b>Exhibit 1. Year 1 Enrollment Goals and Performance</b>			
	<b>Year 1 Goal</b>	<b>Year 1 Actual</b>	<b>Percentage of Goal</b>
<b>Pre-Employment</b>			
International Institute of Boston (IIB)	48	52	108%
Health Care and Research Training Institute (HCRTI)	100	125	125%
Partners in Career and Workforce Development (PCWD)	40	44	110%
<b>Incumbent Worker</b>			
IIB	30	49	163%
HCRTI	150	208	139%
PCWD	130	165	127%

For the most part, the pre-employment efforts were successful in targeting the types of individuals that were anticipated by the SkillWorks funders (see Exhibit 2, below). Almost all of the pre-employment participants could be considered low-income and low-skilled. In the case of both HCRTI and PCWD, the vast majority of the pre-employment participants are residents of the city of Boston, while in the case of the International Institute only 50% of participants were Boston residents at the time of enrollment. Other noteworthy characteristics of the pre-employment participants are the large percentages that were women and the large numbers of participants in HCRTI and the International Institute for whom English was not their primary language. The small percentage of participants in the PCWD project whose primary language was not English was somewhat surprising.

<b>Exhibit 2. Characteristics of Pre-Employment Participants</b>				
	<b>% Boston Residents</b>	<b>% Primary Language Not English</b>	<b>% Female</b>	<b>Estimated % Below MassFESS Standard at Enrollment</b>
<b>Pre-Employment</b>				
IIB	50%	88%	56%	96%
HCRTI	96%	57%	82%	83%
PCWD	80%	15%	98%	100%

There was a big difference between the characteristics of the pre-employment participants and those of the incumbent workers (see Exhibit 3). To a certain extent, such differences might be expected because an incumbent worker program has the potential for dealing with a much more diverse workforce population – in terms of skill levels, income levels, and residence. Compared with the pre-

employment participants, our analysis found that a substantially higher percentage of incumbent workers came from households that met or exceeded the Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency (MassFESS) standard at enrollment -- although between 43% and 67% of the incumbent workers' households fell below that standard, depending on the project. In addition, a significant proportion of the incumbent workers were not residents of Boston at the time of enrollment.

<b>Exhibit 3. Characteristics of Incumbent Worker Participants</b>				
	<b>% Boston Residents</b>	<b>% Primary Language Not English</b>	<b>% Female</b>	<b>Estimated % Below MassFESS Standard at Enrollment</b>
<b>Incumbent Worker</b>				
IIB	57%	80%	65%	47%*
HCRTI	60%	58%	77%	43%
PCWD	52%	51%	81%	67%

\* This is the number of participant households that can be determined definitively to be below the MassFESS standard. Because Year 1 participants have identified their household incomes within certain income *ranges*, we are not able to estimate with certainty for all households. The actual percentage for IIB incumbent participants falling below the MassFESS may be much higher (as high as 86%), depending on their specific household incomes.

*Have the Partnerships been successful in retaining participants and graduating them from the SkillWorks-funded training programs?*

Most of the Year 1 participants who enrolled in either the pre-employment component or the incumbent workers component in the Partnerships have continued to remain in these programs. With the exception of the pre-employment program of the IIB, the percentage of participants that could be considered terminated was small (see Exhibit 4).

<b>Exhibit 4. Year 1 Termination Rates</b>	
	<b>% Terminated</b>
<b>Pre-Employment</b>	
IIB	25%
HCRTI	4%
PCWD	14%
<b>Incumbent Worker</b>	
IIB	2%
HCRTI	0.5%
PCWD	14%

Although there is not consistent data on the number of participants who enroll and graduate from all of the training programs<sup>1</sup> provided by the Partnerships during Year 1, the preliminary evidence indicates that, in general, the graduation rates for the pre-employment training courses were high:

- PCWD: 86% of pre employment participants graduated from the training program
- IIB: 81% of pre-employment participants graduated from training
- HCRTI: At the time of this report, only limited information was available on HCRTI’s pre-employment training experience. However, 74% of the participants (14 of 19) in the third cycle of HCRTI’s 12-week Pre-Employment program graduated, and all 19 of the pre-employment participants in the ESOL program finished the course.

The vast majority of those participants enrolled in the incumbent programs received coaching services that helped them to identify relevant training opportunities. These incumbent workers enrolled in and graduated from a wide range of skill enhancement classes. In the case of HCRTI, 154 of the 208 incumbent participants completed the training courses in which they enrolled, representing a 74% completion rate. The Year 1 PCWD training programs for incumbent workers had a more disappointing graduation rate, however, with only 10 of 22 participants (or 45%) completing the training.

*Have the Partnerships been successful in helping participants achieve employment and wage objectives?*

For the Implementation partnerships, the first major “outcome” relative to their pre-employment participants is the programs’ success in placing such individuals in jobs. The actual Year 1 placement rates varied considerably among the partnerships. For example, in the case of IIB, the percentage of pre-employment participants who were placed in jobs was very high. Placement rates were lower in the case of PCWD and HCRTI, however. Exhibit 5, below, assesses the Year 1 experience in terms of each Partnership’s placement goals

<b>Exhibit 5. Employment Placement Rates and Percentage of Placement Goal Achieved</b>		
	<b>% of Graduates Placed in Jobs</b>	
		<b>% of Goal</b>
<b>Pre-Employment</b>		
IIB	83%	100%
HCRTI	57%	71%
PCWD	52%	n/a

<sup>1</sup> At the end of this report, we discuss the issue of inconsistency in outcome measures and data availability across the Partnerships in more detail.

It is really too early in the process to expect any significant wage and career advancement outcomes for the pre-employment participants, and data to date on these measures have been very limited. Increased attention will be devoted to assessing the outcomes in this area during Year 2, however, particularly as some pre-employment participants transition to the incumbent programs of their respective Partnerships.

*Have the Partnerships led to any documented employer outcomes?*

To date, the documentation that has been available relative to employer outcomes is also limited. There is some anecdotal evidence of supervisor satisfaction relative all three Partnerships (including the results of the evaluation team's interviews with employer representatives), but this evidence has not been collected in a systematic way for either IIB or PCWD. HCRTI, on the other hand, is in the process of reviewing the results of a survey of supervisors, and this information should be available in the near future.

One thing that has become clear in our interviews with employer representatives is that there is considerable variation in the outcomes that are of interest to the various employers. Accordingly, during Year 2 more attention will need to be devoted to specifying employer outcomes in a way that both reflects the particular interests of each institution, while permitting some commonalities in the metrics used across partnerships.

*Have the Partnerships been successful in helping participants make progress along a career or educational pathway?*

PCWD seems to have documented the most progress to date in terms of assisting incumbent workers in taking concrete steps along an educational pathway. According to PCWD: 60% of participants were considered on-track relative to career goals; 19% took the College Placement Test; 7% applied to a nursing program and 5% were accepted into a nursing program; 3% were accepted to another certificate or college-level program; and 5% completed a college semester.

In terms of the progress reported by HCRTI, about 57 of the 208 incumbent workers (or 27%) were judged as having taken multiple steps toward their career goals. Eight of the 208 incumbent enrollees (4%) have entered college or a course of study during Year 1.

The incumbent worker program of IIB is focused more on addressing participants' immediate language and basic computer skill needs, and is less focused on formal educational advancement at this stage. IIB feels this is the best approach to help incumbents take more immediate steps along their career paths, such as achieving wage increases or promotions. In Year 1, 29% of IIB incumbents received a wage increase.

*Have elements of the Partnership projects emerged that have longer-term institutional or system related implications?*

Each of the Partnerships has some elements that could present an opportunity in terms of longer-term institutional or system related outcomes:

- In the case of IIB, the expansion of the program to include additional hotels provides some evidence of potential longer-term sector impacts as more employers in the hospitality sector recognize the benefits of the effort;
- In the case of HCRTI, the new “single point of contact” referral system for the HCRTI’s pre-employment component provides great potential for the institutionalization of a feeder system to health care entry-level positions for all neighborhoods contiguous to the Longwood Medical and Academic Area (LMAA). The Institute has also developed standardized assessment protocols for career coaches that could have wider system implications. Finally, both the development of a new, on-site nursing program in the LMAA, and the commitment from the employer partners of cash contributions and space for the HCRTI operations, provide evidence of the potential “institutionalization” of the Institute.
- There are two areas of potential institutionalization and “system impact” resulting from the PCWD activities. The first involves the serious efforts of PCWD to engage senior management and supervisors in the program and, through this process, to actively change the “cultures” of the institutions in terms of their workforce practices. The second area relates to the broader system-related impacts of the PCWD activities. These include: the development of a new model of working with community-based organizations; bringing together the higher education community in Boston around a set of common issues; and developing curriculum for pre-college and health care professions that could be more widely used in the health care field.

## **The Organization of the Rest of the Baseline Report**

The rest of this Baseline Report is organized into three parts. Part One describes the larger “context” for the SkillWorks Initiative, providing historical information on national, regional, and local workforce development trends. This portion of the report concludes by identifying the features of the SkillWorks model that are most innovative and appear to represent the most “added value” for the workforce development field.

Part Two of the report takes a close look at the experience of each of the three Implementation Partnerships and the Public Policy Advocacy grantee during Year 1. Both qualitative and (when available) quantitative data are presented to document the implementation process, activities, and accomplishments of each of these entities.

Part Three presents the evaluation team’s initial thoughts on the continuing challenges facing SkillWorks as it pursues its system change agenda.

# Part One: The “System Change” Baseline Analysis

## A. Framework for the System Change Evaluation

An accurate assessment of the SkillWorks Initiative’s effectiveness in achieving its system change outcomes is the highest priority of the evaluation. Although some of the goals of the Initiative are shorter-term and more targeted to specific stakeholders, overall there was recognition that for the full impact of SkillWorks to be realized, there will need to be broader and longer-term, sustainable changes in how the workforce development system operates. Thus, the evaluation of the system change outcomes requires answering four fundamental questions:

1. *What are the types of system changes that SkillWorks would like to see result from the Initiative?*
2. *Has the overall workforce development system changed over the period in which SkillWorks has been operating?*
3. *Do the changes in the workforce system reflect the intended goals and outcomes of SkillWorks?*
4. *Have the changes in the system been significantly attributable to the activities of SkillWorks?*

To answer these questions at the end of the five-year term of the Initiative, it is important that there is clarity about the type of system change activities that SkillWorks is hoping to see achieved and its strategy for achieving this change. In addition, it is critical to understand the system baseline. That is, what was the historic context to the SkillWorks Initiative and what specifically has been the “added value” of the SkillWorks Initiative in this context. Finally, it is important to track what other activities are occurring in the state and locally that are independent of SkillWorks, but which are also influencing the direction of the workforce system. This is important in order to understand the multiple forces that are operating which are affecting how the workforce system operates within the city of Boston, the Boston region, as well as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

This section seeks to lay out this context, to better understand what is the “added value” of SkillWorks in the larger workforce system, and what are some of the other activities that should be tracked as we examine system change activities over the life of the Initiative.

## B. SkillWorks’ System Change Goals and Strategy

### What are the goals of the Initiative?

Specifically, the SkillWorks Initiative seeks to:

1. *Help low-income individuals in Boston attain “family supporting” jobs with adequate benefits and opportunities to build assets;*

2. *Provide accessible pathways to advancement for low-income job seekers and low-wage workers, particularly those in the greater Boston labor market;*
3. *Increase the resources available for education and training services; and*
4. *Meet the human resources needs of employers, so that they can be more productive and more competitive.*

To achieve any degree of scale in the above outcomes, SkillWorks also sets out the following goal:

5. *Support long-term changes to the Greater Boston workforce development system to meet the goals of the Initiative on an on-going basis.*

### **What long-term changes are needed in the workforce development system?**

In its early reports and descriptive materials, SkillWorks has set out some initial “examples” of what it sees as potential areas of “system change.” These include:

- **Workforce service providers would be transformed, becoming more effective by:**
  - Providing longer-term engagement with low-wage workers;
  - Screening for and simplifying access to support services and income supplements;
  - Better linking low-income residents to specific jobs with specific employers and training people with marketable credentials;
  - Having enhanced flexibility and responsiveness in their efforts to increase the ease of working adults’ access to training and services;
  - Providing a continuum of services – literacy, basic skill development, and increasing occupational skill development – that is linked to a career ladder; and
  - Using data to promote continuous improvement.
- **A large number of employers would adopt changes in their human resources, hiring, training, retention, and promotion practices** that support career development and advancement of their workforce, and will increase their overall investment in workforce development and training for lower-skilled workers.
- **Strong partnerships will be created and will become institutionalized and supported in the workforce development system.** These partnerships will involve employers, community-based organizations and other service providers, and educational institutions. Ideally, providers will be linked in a way that each will perform the role(s) where it has comparative advantage.
- **The workforce system will be improved through:**
  - Increased and sustainable public investment in workforce development;
  - The incorporation of a “dual customer” approach – working to meet the needs of both job seekers/workers and employers;
  - The use of the family economic self-sufficiency standard as a key performance metric throughout the system;

- Simplified access to workforce development services for low-income individuals, regardless of where they are on a career ladder, by having an adequate supply of services and training, by making it easier for individuals to enroll in a progression of skill development training and services over a period of time, and by making training and services physically more accessible (together, these features are referred to as “multiple access points throughout the system”);
- Institutionalizing the support of industry- and occupation-based partnerships within the system;
- Reducing the “silo”-oriented funding within the system and increasing the use of blended funding; and
- Making public institutions such as community colleges more effective at meeting the workforce development needs of working adults and local employers.

### **What is the strategy that SkillWorks has adopted to achieve this system change?**

Basically, the designers of SkillWorks believe that achieving the Initiative’s system improvement objectives requires a three-pronged approach:

- Supporting model partnerships, through both planning and implementation grants, that demonstrate improved service designs;
- Promoting public policy advocacy that removes the barriers to institutionalizing the improved service designs; and
- Fostering capacity building that helps the delivery system implement the improved service designs within the partnerships and across the sectors and the system.

An essential, underlying assumption of SkillWorks is that, to increase the likelihood of meaningful and sustainable system improvements, it is essential that each of these three components interact with the others in mutually reinforcing ways. That is, these three components (implementation of enhanced service delivery models by partnerships, public policy advocacy, and capacity-building) are intended to work both independently and collaboratively to promote system improvements.

In the following sections, we see how the SkillWorks program design emerged from national workforce development trends, and how it relates to other recent efforts in Boston and Massachusetts.

## **C. The Historical Context for SkillWorks – The National Perspective**

Over the past ten years, there have been a number of major forces that have influenced workforce development policy and practices across the U.S. It is worth examining these historical forces because they helped to create the conditions leading to the establishment of the SkillWorks Initiative and, to a significant degree, have shaped the focus and the core design features of the initiative.

## **Welfare Reform**

One factor was enactment of federal welfare reform in 1996 with passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. This legislation replaced the principal federal welfare entitlement program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF mandates work requirements and, as its name implies, five-year term limits for most recipient households. Federal welfare reform also gave the states (and, in the case of federal Welfare-to-Work dollars, county and local governments) much greater discretion in how they could support poor families and link job training and welfare efforts.

The impact of welfare reform on workforce development services has varied by state. Part of this variation reflects whether a state counts time spent in training or job search activities as “work.” Another source of variation is whether participating in these activities counts against a household’s lifetime 5-year term limit for receipt of benefits. For several years, welfare reform also resulted in a dramatic spike in the amount of federal funding that states and localities had available to devote to workforce development activities, if they so chose. However, passage of federal welfare reform had been the result of Congress’s belief in the efficacy of “work first” as an approach to break welfare dependency. According to the “work first” philosophy, having a job – any job – is better than welfare receipt because it helps to foster a work ethic, marketable work experience, and a sense of individual self-reliance. This prevailing philosophy was enthusiastically embraced by many state administrations, which competed with each other in terms of percentage reductions in their welfare rolls. Consequently, despite the short-term infusion of federal welfare-to-work funds for training activities, for the first few years following passage of welfare reform, there was reluctance on the part of many states to support training that would defer employment by welfare recipients, other than as a last resort.

Another significant way in which welfare reform impacted workforce development activities is that it resulted in large numbers of low-skilled individuals entering the labor market over a relatively short period of time. The implications of this sudden infusion of low-skilled labor are examined in the discussion of economic cycles, presented later in this section.

## **The Federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA)**

A second major factor reshaping workforce development services around the country was passage and implementation of the Workforce Investment Act. In August 1998, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) replaced the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) as the principal legislation governing federally-assisted workforce development activities. In order to qualify for the funding under WIA, states were required by mid-2000 to revise their workforce development plans and programs to reflect the new federal WIA guidelines. Under WIA, universal eligibility for adults<sup>2</sup> replaced the categorical eligibility of JTPA, meaning that more individuals qualified for federally-funded employment-related services. Unfortunately, the annual federal appropriations for WIA programs have significantly declined since passage of the legislation, resulting in more competition among potential client groups

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<sup>2</sup> WIA does retain separate block grant programs for dislocated workers and youth, however.

for the reduced funding. In addition, like “work first” under welfare reform, WIA rules also tend to emphasize job search activities over training, particularly long-term training. When training services are made available, they are offered through “market based” vouchers (called “Individual Training Accounts,” or ITAs) that can be used by individuals with any WIA-certified provider, rather than through contracted slots with training entities as had been done under JTPA. Moreover, WIA requires the workforce boards of states and localities to establish clear performance standards, and provider organizations can only maintain their WIA certification by meeting these standards.

The reduced funding levels and WIA rules have had a number of undesirable effects on workforce development activities in many communities around the country, in terms of the availability of services for disadvantaged job seekers. For example, the WIA performance measures have had the (presumably) unintentional effect of pushing many providers to serving the more job-ready, in order to more easily achieve the specified performance standards. Moreover, without an upfront guarantee of a set number of paid training slots (as was the case under JPTA), providers must either schedule trainings on a speculative basis, defer classes until course enrollments are completely filled, and/or use other funding sources to underwrite a course’s costs. Community colleges and large training providers generally can handle these “bridge financing” challenges. But small and mid-sized community-based providers have found it increasingly difficult to effectively compete for and use WIA funds.

These smaller community-based organizations, however, often possess the strong neighborhood networks that are essential for reaching and recruiting disadvantaged job seekers. Because of their community- and/or faith-based focus, these organizations are also more likely to be committed to maintaining the long-term case management and support that many disadvantaged job seekers require if they are to succeed. Accordingly, these organizations potentially can play an important role in local workforce development systems, but one that the WIA systems in many parts of the country do not acknowledge.

## **Economic Cycles and Shifts: Moving from Boom to Recession**

A third major factor influencing the workforce development landscape was changes occurring in the overall economy. When the federal welfare reform legislation was first enacted in 1996, the United States was in the midst of an unprecedented economic boom. As a result, many metropolitan areas around the country were experiencing extremely tight labor markets and low unemployment rates. Although much of the job growth was occurring in the suburbs, urban areas were benefiting as well. From 1993 to 1999, for example, urban unemployment fell by almost 40% nationally.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, declining unemployment was experienced throughout most segments of the labor force. For instance, unemployment rates for African-Americans in 2000 were the lowest that they had been since the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics had begun tracking such data in 1972, although the rates were still nearly twice as high as for Whites.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Katz, Bruce and Katherine Allen, “Help Wanted: Connecting Inner City Job Seekers with Suburban Jobs,” *Brookings Review*, Fall 1999, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Economic Policy Institute, “Low Jobless Rate, Moderate Wage Growth Last Month,” *Jobs Picture*, October 6, 2000.

Despite the general trend of job growth and declining unemployment rates during the 1990s, other trends in the labor market over the decade weakened the position of low-wage and entry-level workers and their chances for economic advancement. These trends included the continuing decline of employment opportunities in manufacturing, as a variety of influences (including NAFTA and outsourcing, among others) resulted in an increasing number of manufacturing operations moving out of the US. Another was the growth in the service sector (which generally has low starting wages and rarely offers its workers systematic advancement comparable to what happens in the manufacturing and construction sectors) and decreases in average firm sizes (with fewer opportunities for internal advancement). A third factor was growth in the use of temporary staffing agencies, particularly by the service sector. Research has shown that many workers from such agencies remain temporary over the long term, in part because their short-term assignments deny them opportunities to demonstrate themselves as consistent, dependable workers within a specific firm,<sup>5</sup> or they lack access training to improve their skills.

Accordingly, despite the booming economy for much of the 1990s, wage gains for low-skilled workers were modest relative to the labor force as a whole during that period. The recession that had ended in the early part of the decade of the 1990s had resulted in the loss of one million low-wage jobs. This created a relative oversupply of workers for many of the remaining low-wage and entry-level jobs for much of the balance of the decade. The addition of large numbers of low-skilled individuals into the labor market due to welfare reform only served to exacerbate this situation. As a result, while many workers were realizing substantial economic advancement from the boom of the late 1990s, by 2000 the low-skilled work population had only made enough gains to bring their real wages back to the levels that had existed in 1989.<sup>6</sup>

When a new recession hit in 2000, and its impact was heightened by 9/11, the prospect for low-skilled workers further deteriorated. Overall job growth stalled. In fact, some sources estimate a net loss of jobs occurred during the period 2000-2004. In this economic environment, employers – if they were hiring at all – were able to increase their minimum requirements for the openings that did occur. There also was significantly less pressure on them to deliver wage gains to their existing workers in order to retain employees.

Moreover, in an effort to increase their competitiveness in an increasingly global economy, many employers sought to cut their costs. One effect of this was a reduction in employee benefit packages by many corporations, particularly employer contributions to health insurance, tuition reimbursement options and pension plans.

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<sup>5</sup> Dresser, Laura, and Joel Rogers, *Rebuilding Job Access and Career Advancement Systems in the New Economy*, Center on Wisconsin Strategy, December 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Bernstein, Jared, “Slowed growth threatens continued wage gains,” *Quarterly Wage and Employment Series*, 2000:3, Economic Policy Institute.

## The Response of Innovative WFD Practitioners, Advocates and Funders

The preceding discussion highlights an array of challenges that have confronted the workforce development field nationally during the past decade. These include the infusion of large numbers of low-skilled workers into the labor market due to welfare reform. It also includes shifts in the structure of the economy and a major recession that have contributed to a downward push on wages and the erosion of benefits and advancement opportunities. There have also been cuts in the funding for public workforce development programs, and the imposition of a presumption of “work first” over training in many of these programs. In other words, during a time when there were more disadvantaged job seekers than ever in need of workforce development services, the resources for these services have become increasingly constrained in several important ways.

Over the decade, various workforce development practitioners, advocates and funders have responded to these challenges and constraints with innovative thinking and a series of creative initiatives. They have found ways to constructively respond to the constraints imposed by the new WIA rules, for the benefit of their clients. And when conventional approaches to service delivery have proven inadequate, they have developed new approaches. They have also identified alternative sources of financing to supplement (or in some cases, supplant) their traditional federal funding sources.

Through a trial and error process, these innovators have identified and demonstrated more effective workforce development practices, particularly in terms of meeting the needs of disadvantaged job seekers and workers. Using the evidence gleaned from these demonstrations, these practitioners, advocates and funders have sought to redefine how workforce development is viewed and conducted across the country. A few national foundations – including the Anne E. Casey Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Mott Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation – have played particularly important roles in supporting the multi-site demonstration efforts and disseminating the lessons learned. Some local funders, including some progressive Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), have also been instrumental in supporting the work by innovative practitioners.

The following are the set of operating principles and/or core elements of effective workforce development practice for disadvantaged job that have emerged from these varied initiatives and experiments from around the country:

- **A dual customer orientation:** Although out of necessity workforce development providers for decades have maintained some level of communications with employers, traditionally most providers have viewed job seekers as their principal clients. One result of principally focusing on job seekers is that many providers have had limited familiarity with the specific needs and requirements of employers, and the dynamics of relevant industry sectors. Consequently, there have often been disconnects between the timing and content of workforce development programs on the one hand, and the requirements of employers and availability of employment openings on the other. By formally adopting a dual customer approach, under which the needs of both jobs seekers/workers *and* employers are explicitly addressed and a balance achieved, these disconnects can be avoided.
- **The use of intermediaries:** The dual customer model has given rise to organizations that serve as brokers, balancing the interests of employers and those of workers.

Sometimes these organizations are direct service providers themselves. Often, however, they merely serve as intermediaries between the direct service providers and employers. They work with providers to ensure that their training and services meet the needs of the employers, and advocate with the employers to generate more employment and advancement opportunities for disadvantaged job seekers and incumbent workers. Intermediaries frequently also play a major role in advocating for changes in the policies and funding of the public workforce development system to increase the system's responsiveness to the needs of disadvantaged job seekers and workers. They are "generators of ideas and innovation about what workers, firms, and communities need to prosper."<sup>7</sup>

- **A focus on longer-term retention and advancement:** In many communities, the WIA standards have encouraged workforce development services providers to look beyond their traditional practice of measuring success solely relative to training completion and/or job placement, and to consider short-term employment retention (that is, 90 days) as well. However, research and the experience of many practitioners have demonstrated that this is not enough if the goal of workforce development services is to foster the economic self-sufficiency of disadvantaged job seekers and workers. Instead, practitioners must be concentrating on delivering services that promote long-term retention and advancement. This focus on longer-term outcomes significantly affects how practitioners must approach designing each element of their service delivery systems, including outreach, assessment, training, job placement, supportive services, case management and coaching.
- **The availability of soft skills and hard skills training:** Admittedly, it is important for disadvantaged job seekers to obtain work experience as soon as feasible. However, research has also shown that pre-employment training is often a critical factor in ensuring successful job placements, employment retention, and advancement. For example, the evaluation of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jobs Initiative found that the provision of job readiness/soft skills training was the most significant factor associated with disadvantaged job seekers achieving short-term (i.e., 3-month) employment retention milestones. This study also found that the single most important factor associated with longer-term (i.e., 12-month) retention was the provision of "hard skills" vocational training.<sup>8</sup>
- **The importance of supportive services, case management, and coaching:** Supportive services (such as child care or transportation assistance) and coaching have been shown to make a significant difference in the likelihood that disadvantaged job seekers are able to complete their training programs, secure a job, and stay employed. These supportive services help job seekers avoid situations that would lead to absenteeism or otherwise

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<sup>7</sup> Giloth, Robert P., "Introduction: A Case for Workforce Intermediaries," in *Workforce Intermediaries for the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Robert P. Giloth, Temple University Press, 2004, p.7.

<sup>8</sup> Hebert, Scott, Anne St. George, and Barbara Epstein, *Breaking Through: Overcoming Barriers to Family Sustaining Employment*, report prepared for the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Abt Associates, February 2003), p. 2.

negatively impact their attention to training or work responsibilities. Coaching can also help workers to make better career choices and to deal more effectively with conflicts that occur in the workplace. In order to maximize positive client outcomes, workforce development programs need to ensure the availability of supportive services and coaching for their clients, on both a pre-placement and post-placement basis.

- **An emphasis on quality jobs:** Not all jobs are equal. Research has demonstrated that jobs with good starting wages, access to benefits, and opportunities for career advancement are also more likely to promote employment retention. A focus on job quality is therefore essential if the goal of workforce development is believed to be helping families to advance toward economic self-sufficiency, as opposed to simply achieving a short-term reduction in welfare rolls. Accordingly, it is important for workforce development programs to identify and partner with “high road” employers and industry sectors that offer quality jobs and enlightened workplace practices.
- **Adoption of sectoral approaches:** In focusing on particular sectors, workforce practitioners can become more knowledgeable about specific labor needs and employment opportunities within industries, and develop stronger relationships with employers. This will help to ensure that the workforce development training programs are designed to meet the actual needs and expectations of employers. It will also enhance the job placement networks of the practitioners, and their capacity to identify and help their clients to access career ladder within the sectors.
- **Attention to cultural competence:** As the U.S. workforce becomes more culturally diverse, it is increasingly important for workforce development practitioners and employers to emphasize cultural competence. This is essential to allow employers to be more successful in hiring from population groups that have not been part of their traditional labor pool, as well as to ensure that job seekers do not face discriminatory behavior by firms or supervisors.

Workforce development funders and practitioners in Massachusetts and the Boston region were part of the innovation that was occurring over the last decade. In some cases, they were being influenced by initiatives going on in other parts of the country. In other cases, they were either on the leading edge or operating on a parallel track to others around the country – experimenting with new approaches to meeting the workforce development needs of low-skilled, low-income individuals. The following section looks more closely at the specific environment within Massachusetts and Boston that provided the foundation for much of the work of SkillWorks.

## D. The Context for SkillWorks at the State and Local Levels

In addition to the national influences, the planning for the SkillWorks Initiative was taking place during a period of considerable innovation and creative thinking by a broad set of workforce development actors in the Boston region, as well as in the state of Massachusetts. As was true in the rest of the country, much of the innovation within Massachusetts during the late 1990’s was in the area of welfare-to-work activities. This work in turn focused attention on the shortcomings of the workforce development system in serving the employment needs of low-income, low-skilled

individuals. Although many different individuals and organizations were involved, most shared the general belief that the current activities that defined what was occurring in workforce development were not effectively meeting the needs of either the low-income residents who did not have the skills needed to succeed in the workplace, nor the employers who were experiencing rapid turnover and difficulty in accessing the employees they needed. During the late 1990's and early part of the new century, the extremely tight labor market conditions brought these concerns about workforce development to a head.

By the point that the SkillWorks Initiative was announced on the fall of 2003, there was near consensus about the following "baseline" characteristics of the Commonwealth's workforce development system:

- There were a very large number of adults with limited skills whose needs were not being met by the resources available through the English as a Second Occupational Language (ESOL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) systems in the Commonwealth;
- The funding for workforce development was extremely fragmented, with many different "silos" within the state that did not share common goals or strategies;
- The quality of training programs that were being provided was uneven, and the system did not provide the full range of services needed to help a low-income, low-skilled individual to achieve a job with a family sustaining wage; and
- The needs of employers in the system were not receiving sufficient attention.

During the late 1990's and early 2000's, there were a number of state and local efforts that were designed to respond to some of these perceived "system" issues. To some extent, SkillWorks built off the learnings of these activities, and is trying to institutionalize some of these activities and bring them to "scale."

## **Projects Involving Partnerships, Sector/Occupational Approaches and Career Ladders that Pre-dated SkillWorks**

In the design of SkillWorks, there was an acknowledgement that its Implementation grants were meant to "bring to scale" existing career advancement and sector partnerships that were already established in the Boston region. Its RFP for the Implementation Partnership grantees assumed that there were pre-existing partnerships that, with additional resources, could broaden and deepen what they were doing.

The following provides an overview of the major "partnership" activities in Boston that preceded SkillWorks:

**1) Fleet Charitable Trusts Career Ladder Initiative:** In 1999, the BankBoston Charitable Trusts (which subsequently became the Fleet Charitable Trusts and now Bank of America) became interested in investing in a workforce development initiative within its broader vision of targeting family self-sufficiency. The Trusts asked The Philanthropic Initiative (TPI) to conduct research to identify any major gaps in the city's workforce development system, and to identify how the Trusts

could make a difference through a funding initiative in this arena. The TPI study, “*Workforce Development in Boston: Gap Analysis and Funding Recommendations*” provided an overview of funding sources for workforce development and of the training providers and intermediaries involved in workforce development in the Boston region. The research identified three major gaps in the workforce development system: the need for integration of services between training providers and the overall system; the need for models that emphasized career advancement and job retention; and the need for adult literacy training.

In August 1999, the Trusts announced the Career Ladders Initiative and issued an RFP targeting partnerships that included at least one employer and a community-based organization or other nonprofit, a labor union, or community college. The priority of this initiative was to fund projects that were experienced in placing low-income individuals in jobs, projects that took a sectoral approach to career pathway development, and projects that were able to implement their career ladder models within six to 12 months after they received the grant. The four partnerships receiving funding under the Career Ladders Initiative were:

- **Bridges to the Future:** This project was a collaborative of the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC), the Fenway Community Development Corporation (FCDC), Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BID), Children’s Hospital, New England Baptist Hospital, and Harvard Medical School/Harvard School of Dental Medicine. The project focused on strategies to identify and develop career pathways for existing entry-level workers. Over the three years of the Fleet funding, Bridges conducted “foundation skills” training classes for entry-level workers, provided participating workers with career coaching, and ran a training program for supervisors. During this time period, 99 lower-skilled employees received at least one cycle of training and 23 supervisors went through a training course. The Bridges project evolved into the broader healthcare partnership, the Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute (HCRTI) that was funded, first through the Building Essential Skills through Training (BEST) initiative (see below), and currently through SkillWorks.
- **Citizens Bank and Crittenton Hastings House:** This partnership between Citizens Bank and Crittenton Hastings House focused on building career ladders for entry-level workers in retail banking. Its goals were to improve the rate of retention amongst entry-level employees and to assist lower-level employees to obtain the skills required to achieve their career goals. The program ran two cycles of training on career development — serving about 19 individuals over the three-year period. The project is no longer operating, but elements of the project were incorporated subsequently into the financial services partnership overseen by the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC), which was funded through the State’s BEST Program (see below).
- **The Worker Education Program’s (WEP) Healthcare Career Ladder Program:** This project was a partnership of WEP, which is the education and training program of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and four partnering institutions — Boston Medical Center (BMC), Jewish Memorial Hospital, the Benjamin Health Care Center (The Benjamin), and the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU). Its focus was on developing career ladder models for home care, nursing home, and hospital worksites, resulting in increased opportunities for entry-level workers in the healthcare

industry. Most of the three-year period was spent in implementing an in-depth survey of entry-level workers in participating institutions. These surveys were followed up with a Career Exploration program that enrolled 15 workers, and the Bridge to College program that enrolled 25 workers. This project is no longer operating.

- **Partners in Care:** The Partners in Care project is a partnership of Brigham and Women’s Hospital, WorkSource Staffing, and Bunker Hill Community College. The partnership was established to help Patient Care Assistants (PCAs) and Environmental Service employees advance onto tracks in nursing, as well as to increase the quality of care delivered by the hospital’s entry-level workers. The project led to the creation of a new career step (Lead PCA), provided skill training workshops and career coaching to about 60 employees on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> floors of the hospital, developed a Lead PCA training course that served 20 employees, and established a Unit Assistant to PCA Certification course that served 30 employees by the end of the three-year period. This project was provided continuing support by Fleet Bank (now Bank of America), and components of it are also now part of a broader Partners workforce initiative under SkillWorks.

The Fleet Career Ladder projects shared many design components with SkillWorks, for example:

- The projects all involved career related “coaching” of employees;
- The projects involved partnerships between multiple employers, community-based organizations, and educational institutions;
- The projects had a dual customer focus;
- The projects had a sector focus; and
- The projects set as a goal achieving family self-sufficiency.

However, one way in which the Fleet Career Ladder projects differed from SkillWorks is that the focus was solely on incumbent workers; there were no pre-employment training or placement activities in any of the projects funded by Fleet.

**2) Building Essential Skills through Training (BEST):** The BEST Initiative was launched by the Commonwealth Corporation in the fall of 2001. Supporting partners included the Division of Employment and Training, the Department of Education, the Department of Transitional Assistance, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. These state agencies pooled \$3.5 million for the Initiative. The first RFP was issued on October 15, 2001 and, of the 26 proposals received, six projects were selected to start as of the spring of 2002. The six funded projects included the following two projects in Boston:

- **The Boston Financial Services Training Initiative,** led by the Boston PIC and with involvement from the Metro North Regional Employment Board, targeted incumbent workers in the financial service industry for training and career pathway development. The partnership included two of the members of the Fleet Career Ladders project - Crittenton Hastings House and Citizens Bank – and also included FleetBoston Financial,

Mellon Financial, the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern, the Tri-City Technology Education Collaborative, and One-Stop Career Centers.

- **Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute (HCRTI)** was an expansion of JPNDC's Bridges to Work project. BEST provided the support needed to allow JPNDC to expand their services to additional hospitals in the Longwood Medical and Academic Area and to increase the course offerings.

The BEST Initiative also shared many of the design elements of SkillWorks. According to the recently completed evaluation by FutureWorks, the BEST Initiative had two primary goals: to reform the workforce development system, and to meet industry need for higher skilled labor.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, the initiative was designed with a focus on an integrative approach, career advancement, the provision of capacity building, and promotion of sustainable investment. The projects were also dual customer-focused, with partnerships made up of multiple employers in the same industry, and also included career coaching support. The BEST projects did not have an explicit goal related to meeting the employment needs of low-income, low-skilled individuals, however, though many of the funded projects did serve this population. The evaluation of BEST completed in early 2005 concluded that the program did have significant system change implications. It found that:

“Through BEST, state partners articulated and formalized a new, higher standard for workforce development programs in Massachusetts. Programs that seek state funding must now demonstrate the following elements in order to qualify for consideration: employer-driven, data-driven, sector-focus, and career-ladder focused.”<sup>10</sup>

In addition, the evaluation concluded that working partnerships among state agencies had become “more routine.” According to the FutureWorks evaluation, subsequent initiatives by the state of Massachusetts have also reflected the new integrated approach to program development and funding. The evaluation cited BEST II, Reach Higher, and BEST III as examples. The evaluation also credited BEST with fostering a change within the workforce system, so that the system views the role of employers and employer demand as more fundamental to program design.

**3) The Extended Care Career Ladders Initiative (ECCLI):** In 2000, the Massachusetts legislature passed a \$50 million Nursing Home Quality Initiative and, as part of this program, created ECCLI. ECCLI is a workforce program focused on the dual goals of addressing issues related to recruiting and retaining Certified Nursing Assistance and addressing the quality of care. Commonwealth Corporation oversees the program. The seven funding rounds since 2001 have supported workforce advancement-related strategies, and have encouraged partnerships between workforce training partners and long-term care providers.

A number of the design components reflected in SkillWorks are also found in ECCLI projects. For example:

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<sup>9</sup> FutureWorks, *Building Essential Skills through Training: Final Evaluation Report*, September, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Commonwealth Corporation, “Lessons Learned from the Best Initiative,” *Research and Evaluation Brief*, Vol 2, Issue 11, March 2005, p. 4.

- Coaching support is provided in many of the ECCLI projects;
- Career ladders with basic educational and ESOL support are integrated into the projects; and
- Developing new curricula and certificate programs through community colleges has been part of many of the projects.

A number of the organizations that are involved in SkillWorks are also involved in ECCLI. For example, the ECCLI Advisory Committee includes the Boston PIC and members of Workforce Solutions Group (WSG), including the Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board Association. Organizations involved in SkillWorks have also received ECCLI grants are part of an ECCLI consortium. Most notably, WorkSource Partners is providing coaching services to many of the ECCLI grantees, Roxbury Community College and Bunker Hill Community College are involved in some of the ECCLI projects, and both JVS (a partner in the PCWD project) and WEIU (a partner in WSG) have been involved as ECCLI service providers.

One big difference between ECCLI and the SkillWorks Initiative is that the major goal of ECCLI involved quality improvements in the extended care workforce. In ECCLI, providing career advancement opportunities for low-skilled, low-income residents *per se* is more of a means to that end than an end in itself.

**4) Nursing Career Ladder Initiative (NUCLI):** Commonwealth Corporation is leading a partnership of industry, labor, education, and workforce development organizations to respond to the multiple challenges that healthcare institutions face in recruiting nurses. One part of that project has involved a regional initiative in Boston that is being led by the Boston PIC. This project has involved hiring a Nursing Career Coach for adults and another for youth. The adult coach is working in a number of sites, included Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and is supporting employees interested in pursuing a nursing career. It is in the coaching activities that NUCLI reflects the most overlap with SkillWorks’ design elements. In fact, one of the SkillWorks Implementation grantees noted that there was some confusion in the partnering hospitals related to the affiliation and role of the coach working as part of the NUCLI project versus the SkillWorks-supported coaches.

**5) The Boston PIC:** The Boston PIC is the Workforce Investment Board for the City of Boston. Unlike other WIBs in the state, the PIC has an expanded role, and is a more active intermediary in the Boston workforce development system. The PIC has a longstanding interest and commitment to addressing the needs of both low-income residents and employers, and a particular interest in sector-based approaches. Reflecting this interest, the PIC staff wrote a summary report on its “*Sectoral Approach to Workforce Development*”. This report traces its sector focus back to the PIC’s youth and adult initiatives in the early 1990’s, most notably the ProTech project, which was the first industry-driven school-to-career program. In addition, between 1997 and 2001, working with many employers with whom it had built relationships through ProTech, the PIC was involved in several welfare-to-work programs that involved partnerships with both community-based organizations (CBOs) and healthcare employers. Building on this experience, the PIC then worked with healthcare partners on incumbent worker training projects. One example is the PIC’s federal Department of Labor-funded

incumbent worker demonstration program that involved a partnership of SEIU, Northeastern University, Boston Academy of English, Bunker Hill Community College, Roxbury Community College, Quincy Community College, and the Higher Education Information Center. Employers involved in the project included Benjamin Health Care, Beth Israel Hospital and Partner's Healthcare Systems.

The PIC developed its sector approach based on deep knowledge of the sectors it was targeting. For example, in 2000 the PIC had the Center for Labor Market Studies (CLMS) at Northeastern University complete a report on "*Opportunities for Investing in Boston's Health Care Workforce*". The PIC has a formal relationship with CLMS to provide regular analysis of local labor markets and target sectors.

In addition to the NUCLI and BEST projects noted above, the PIC has also been involved in the following sector projects:

- **The Radiological Technologist Program:** Supported with a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Skills Shortage Grant, this program provides forgivable loans to employees of Partners Healthcare (a SkillWorks Implementation grantee) who are interested in pursuing further career advancement to become Radiological Technologists.
- **The Pharmacy Technician Program:** Also being supported with a DOL Skills Shortage Grant, the PIC has partnered with hospitals in the Longwood area to assist employees interested in pursuing a Pharmacy Technician certificate. Through this program, classes in developmental math and reading are supported, as well as a certificate program developed at Holyoke Community College and being offered through Bunker Hill Community College.

**6) Other Innovative Workforce Development Partnerships and Models in Boston:** In addition to the partnerships projects that were initiated by workforce intermediaries, a number of individual service providers have designed workforce programs that share many of the SkillWorks design elements. Examples include:

- **The Financial Services Academy** that was launched in 1999. This Academy involves local employers in the financial service industry and local community-based organizations, most notably Action for Boston Community Development, Inc. (ABCD), in a workforce program designed to create a more effective pipeline of entry-level workers for the industry. In addition, the Academy provides career opportunities for Boston residents through continuing education and career advancement training.
- **Center for Careers and Lifelong Learning:** In 2000, Jewish Vocational Services, Inc. (JVS) redesigned its workforce related services to better meet the career advancement needs of low-income residents, as well as the workforce needs of employers. Its Center for Careers and Lifelong Learning (CALL) is designed to provide a continuum of services focused on helping low-income residents rise to family self-sufficiency. JVS also incorporated a dual customer approach, developing specific partnerships with large employers such as the Massachusetts General Hospital.

## Other Policy and System Change Efforts That Pre-dated SkillWorks

In addition to the specific partnerships and career ladder projects that were taking place, a number of organizations in the state were working on broader workforce policy reform activities during the late 1990s and early part of the new decade. Examples of some of this policy work include:

**1) Boston Workforce Development Coalition (BWDC) – re Career Ladders:** Some of the early thinking in the Boston area about career ladders grew out of work of the Boston Workforce Development Coalition. This organization is a consortium of community-based organizations, City agencies, and community colleges. It was created to provide a coherent voice for the interests of diverse, low-income, disadvantaged populations about workforce development issues, and to provide a forum for initiatives by community-based organizations in policy development, legislative advocacy, professional development, and program development. This group formed a Career Ladders Committee in 1999 that conducted research focused on establishing career ladder programs in the Boston region. BWDC, in conjunction with the Center for Community Economic Development at the University of Massachusetts (Boston), prepared reports on career ladders in the financial services, health services, telecommunications, and long-term healthcare industries. These reports provided the research foundation for career pathways initiatives in the Boston region. This initial work has been followed up with two additional reports that provide case studies and lessons on the design and implementation of career ladder programs.

**2) MassINC – “New Skills for a New Economy” Awareness and Action Campaign:** In December of 2000, MassINC published a paper, *“New Skills for a New Economy: Adult Education’s Key Role in Sustaining Economic Growth and Expanding Opportunity”*. This paper documented workforce development needs for adults, and has been the research foundation for much of the workforce policy work in Massachusetts since that time. In addition, through their New Skills Campaign (launched following the publication of this study), MassINC took a number of actions to put the issue of adult education and basic skills on the public agenda. The focus of the organization’s activities has been on educating key decision-makers and the public, disseminating much-needed information and data, and, most importantly, promoting collective actions to address the challenges that the research has identified. As part of this work, MassINC has held forums throughout the state that brought key stakeholders together to discuss some of the challenges facing the workforce development system.

**3) Governor Jane Swift’s “Task Force to Reform Adult Education and Worker Training:”** This Task Force was formed, in part, in response to the MassINC report that had focused attention of the need for better statewide integration of adult basic education and job training programs. The Task Force had three working groups: Incumbent Workers, Performance Measures, and Resource Management. The Task Force issued a report in July of 2001, *“Climbing the Ladder: Expanding Opportunity through Training”*. In its report, the Task Force recommended the following:

- Commit to the goal of an integrated workforce development system in which each program and agency supports a common mission and strategic purpose, with funding resource aligned to shared, measurable objectives;
- Build the capacity of the State Workforce Investment Board;

- Launch the Building Essential Skills through Training (BEST) Initiative, designed to support regional proposals that give front-line workers a foundation of skills to achieve wage and career advancement;
- Create consistent and meaningful performance measures;
- Conduct a comprehensive review of existing workforce programs to evaluate their effectiveness; and
- Reduce the waiting list for GED and literacy programs.

The clearest outcome of the Task Force’s efforts was the development of the BEST initiative. With a change in state administration, some of the other recommendations were not actively pursued. Yet many of those in the Massachusetts workforce field refer back to and were influenced by the policy focus of the Task Force report.

**4) Massachusetts Workforce Alliance (MWA):** The MWA is a coalition of coalitions that was formed primarily to advocate for the important role of community-based organization in workforce development. The coalition includes: The Alternative Education Alliance, the Boston Workforce Development Coalition, the Job Training Alliance of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Alliance for Adult Literacy, the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations, the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education, the Massachusetts Community Action Program Directors Association, the Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Program, the Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable, and the Massachusetts YouthBuild Coalition. In 2003, MWA put out two publications that focused on workforce development system issues in the Commonwealth. The two publications were:

- *“Workforce Development: An Agenda for Massachusetts’s Next Governor”*. This publication has a very good detailed State budget for workforce development activities, and shows the various sources of funding. It details funding channeled through Commonwealth Corporation, Division of Employment and Training the Department of Education, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Executive Office of Public Safety, The Department of Housing and Community Development and the Board of Higher Education. The document also offers specific State policy recommendations including:
  - Invest in new skills by providing the full range of integrated education and skill training;
  - Implement system-wide meaningful benchmarks;
  - Expand career ladder and incumbent workers initiatives; and
  - Promote flexible models of learning.

The report also called for incorporating Family Economic Self-Sufficiency standards in State workforce development policies and programs. It also recommended funding coaching, counseling and other supportive services targeted to those in need, and implementing programs to facilitate labor market entry for immigrants. Finally, the report’s recommendations acknowledge a dual customer approach, and noted the

importance of targeting funding streams to meet employers' needs, focusing on certain sectors, and expanding the workforce development training fund.

- “*A Diverse Provider Network Meets Diverse Workforce Needs*”. This publication looks at the complexity of the workforce system, with a map of locally-based service delivery programs in the state. Its focus is on ensuring a diverse, competitive, locally-based and collaborative workforce development service delivery model.

## **Efforts on Capacity Building that Pre-dated SkillWorks**

Prior to SkillWorks, there also were a few efforts in the Boston region that focused specifically on capacity building of workforce development practitioners, and particularly community-based organizations. In addition to the Rockefeller Foundation's capacity building initiative<sup>11</sup> (which became part of the SkillWorks initiative), the following highlight some of the other groups in the region that have focused on providing technical assistance to and building the capacity of workforce development providers and/or partnerships:

**1) Commonwealth Workforce Coalition:** This is an initiative staffed by the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC) to provide professional development and networking to CBOs providing workforce development services in Massachusetts. Coalition members include: the Boston Workforce Development Coalition, CEDAC, the Job Training Alliance of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations, and the Massachusetts Association for Community Action Agency Directors. The project first started with a grant that CEDAC received in the 1990's from Public/Private Ventures to provide training to CDCs on economic development. In the process, many CDCs developed an increased emphasis on workforce development service delivery. In response, CEDAC provided additional technical assistance to those CDCs interested in expanding their activities related to workforce development.

With this effort as a base, in 2002 the Massachusetts Association of CDCs launched the Capacity Building Coalition (CBC) to build the capacity of community-based organizations to operate successful workforce programs. In 2002 and 2003, the Coalition provided structure training on such topics as case management and employer relations. The CBC organized and facilitated peer networking sessions to line staff at CBOs across the state. The group provided on-site technical assistance to the four CBO's that were part of the Rockefeller Foundation's capacity building effort (and subsequently part of SkillWorks). In the spring of 2004, the Coalition held a statewide conference that presented a broad set of panels and workshops oriented towards disseminating and sharing learning about effective workforce development practices. This was following in March 2005 with CBC's second statewide conference which had the theme of “Sharing Skills; Building Connections.”

**2) “Do You Know the Way to Self-Sufficiency? A Collaborative Study of CHCD, Commonwealth Corporation and MASSSCAP”:** The Massachusetts Department of Housing and

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<sup>11</sup> The formal name of this effort is the Rockefeller Foundation's Initiative to Strengthen Organizational Effectiveness in Workforce Development.

Community Development, the Commonwealth Corporation, and the Massachusetts Community Action Directors' Association partnered on a project to "design and disseminate training and technical assistance tools for community-based organizations and workforce development stakeholders to create better access to a continuum of integrated education, training, employment and support services." As part of this work, the firm FutureWorks was hired to prepare case studies to describe programs that are successfully delivering coordinated services to assist working families to move toward self-sufficiency. This group has put out a number of publications that have been distributed to community-based organizations in the state.

## **Other On-Going Workforce Development Initiatives in the Commonwealth**

In addition to the innovative and/or system change activities that *pre-dated* SkillWorks, there are a number of initiatives that are occurring on a parallel basis to SkillWorks. Some of these initiatives are promoting similar or complementary system improvement activities to those being advocated by SkillWorks. Although there is a degree of coordination between many of these efforts and SkillWorks, the existence of these on-going, concurrent initiatives complicates the task of assigning attribution for any system change that occur during the life of SkillWorks.

**BayStateWorks (BEST III):** Partially through the efforts of SkillWorks and its Public Policy Advocacy grantee (Workforce Solutions Group), the Massachusetts Legislature allocated \$6 million in supplemental funding for workforce partnerships as part of the 2003 Economic Stimulus Bill. Based on this funding, Commonwealth Corporation issued an initial RFP for workforce-related career advancement partnerships. However, there were some disagreements in the workforce field about the design of the RFP. The Massachusetts Workforce Alliance, advocating for community-based organizations, felt that the initial RFP, which required Workforce Investment Board involvement in all partnerships, did not provide sufficient opportunities for CBOs. As a result of such concerns, the program was redesigned and two separate RFPs were issued.

The first set of grants under this new funding, now called BayStateWorks, went to eleven projects. Two of the grants went to the Boston PIC. The first project involves a partnership with Vinfen Corporation, Goodwill Industries, BostonCareer Link, Bunker Hill Community College, WorkSource, and the Boston Housing Authority. This project is designed to provide incumbent workers in the human services field with the skills needed to advance, and to provide entry-level training for Direct Care Workers at Vinfen Corporation. The second project has a healthcare sector focus, and builds upon the previous work of the Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute, as well as the PIC's prior efforts aimed at high schools students. The focus is on preparing pre-college youth and participants in HCRTI with the support needed to take the next steps in a healthcare career. This project will also support the development of a 2-year nursing degree to be offered in the Longwood medical area (that is also a part of HCRTI's SkillWorks 2005 work plan).

A second set of grants went to community-based organizations for the implementation of workforce development programs that help low-income workers achieve family self-sufficiency, and for initiatives focused on older workers. In Boston, Operation ABLE received an "Older Worker" grant to provide training for customer service positions. Nine employers are involved in the programs, including healthcare companies, a hotel (Westin Copley Place), and two financial services businesses

(Citizens Bank and John Hancock). The Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute also received a grant to support its pre-employment training activities.

**Reach Higher Initiative:** In 2003, Commonwealth Corporation received a two-year grant from the National Governors Association, focused on “a larger and longer system improvement process aimed at making it easier for more working adults to gain postsecondary skills and credentials that prepare them for jobs and careers in high demand occupations.” Reach Higher is led by the State's director of workforce development, Jane C. Edmonds, and has staff support from Commonwealth Corporation. As part of this project, Massachusetts was invited to participate in the National Governors Association’s Policy Academy for Pathways to Advancement. Under this effort, key stakeholders in the state involved in workforce development and economic development have been participating in a process that has involved examining policy and practice strategies related to access to post-secondary education in the Commonwealth. The stakeholders include staff from state agencies, state legislators, as well as representatives involved in adult basic education, public and private higher education, organized labor, local and regional workforce intermediaries, research institutions, community-based education and training providers, advocacy groups, employers, industry associations, and other public sector representatives. Some of the participants in SkillWorks, including Funders Group members and staff from the Workforce Solutions Group, also have been involved in the effort.

In October 2004, Jane Edmonds (Director of Workforce Development), Alan MacDonald from the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, and Rick Lord of the Associated Industries of Massachusetts made a joint presentation to the Senate Task Force on Public Higher Education. According to this testimony:

The Reach Higher team decided to focus its attention on the community colleges and we did so for the following reasons: (1) the rapid increase in the cost of private higher education; (2) the geographic proximity of community colleges to learners, which is known to boost the potential for both enrollment and retention; (3) the shift in the nature of job requirements that makes it possible for more people to increase their earnings with community college certificates or degrees; (4) the ability of the community colleges to increase their capacity to address both the industry-specific skills as well as the transferable skills employers value.<sup>12</sup>

**MassINC’s New Skills Campaign:** Since 2003, MassINC has continued to work on its New Skills Campaign. For example, in April 2004 the organization sponsored a Literacy Works Leadership Summit and in May 2004 held a second session titled “Skills Summit: Turning Talk into Action.” This latter summit included panel presentations by Don Gillis (on the work of the Workforce Solutions Group), Mishy Lesser (on Reach Higher), and Jeannette Gerald of the United Way of Massachusetts Bay. In 2004, MassINC also issued a report (with Mt. Auburn Associates) called “*Getting the Job Done: Advancing the New Skills Agenda.*” This report recommended four State policy reform strategies:

- Establish a basic skills credential to signal work readiness;

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<sup>12</sup> Reach Higher Initiative Presentation to Senate Task Force on Public Higher Education, Oct. 18, 2004.

- Increase program completion rates at community colleges;
- Match resources to needs, starting with ESOL programs; and
- Establish regional skill alliances.

**Continuing Work of the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance (MWA):** As part of its continuing policy reform efforts, MWA has developed a “peer project” in which representatives of the alliance are working with direct service staff to teach them about how the political process works and how to do advocacy for workforce development. MWA has also put forth its own legislation for the 2005 legislative session.

**Commonwealth Corporation’s StaffSkills Training Series:** Commonwealth Corporation continues to offer workshops and professional training for workforce professionals who provide services to youth and/or adults. Of most relevance for SkillWorks, Commonwealth Corporation has a Case Management/Coaching Series that provides intensive training for workforce development staff involved in counseling and case management services for adults.

## **Baseline and Existing Activities in Targeted Sectors**

In addition to looking at what is happening generally in the workforce development system, it is also important to think about the targeted sectors.

For example, there has been considerable work in the public and private sectors to respond to some of the workforce issues in the healthcare sector. Since two of the three initial SkillWorks Implementation Partnership grants have targeted the health care sector, looking at some of the potential long-term system impacts relative to this sector requires a better understanding of the other types of interventions that are currently occurring in the sector. Our research suggests that such interventions can be grouped into three categories:

**1) Public and philanthropic support to promote career advancement within the healthcare industry and to ease workforce shortages in Acute Care institutions:** This includes the Boston Workforce Research and Training Institute (HCRTI), NUCLI, the multiple projects being undertaken as part of the Partners system, State policy work related to addressing the nursing faculty shortages, and the healthcare work of the Boston PIC (including its new BayStateWorks grant).

**2) Public and philanthropic support to support career advancement and improved quality of care in Extended Care institutions:** This includes ECCLI and other work of the Extended Care Federation, the Massachusetts' Direct Care Workers Initiative, and the Coalition of Organizations to Reform Eldercare. It also includes the research work at Boston University, Brandeis University and Harvard University on extended care workforce issues that has been funded through “Better Jobs Better Care”, a 4-year \$15.5 million research and demonstration program, funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies.

**3) Existing employer-supported workforce and training activities:** Our research found that many of the hospitals and other healthcare institutions operate their own training and career development programs, in addition to the activities funded through foundations and Federal and State programs.

Many of the hospitals participating in SkillWorks used to offer, or continue to offer, some of their own programs. For example, some operate ESOL and medical terminology training. Boston Medical Center (BMC), which is not participating in SkillWorks, has an extensive training department that provides classes on-site for its employees in Adult Continuing Education, Business Math and Business Writing, ESOL, GED, Medical Terminology, Office Skills, Pre-Nursing Preparation, Introduction to Computers, and other more occupationally specific training. BMC also operates “Partner for Success,” a mentoring program focused on encouraging retention and career growth for BMC employees. BMC’s proactive approach to workforce development is partially due to its history. Boston City Hospital, which merged with Boston University Medical Center to become Boston Medical Center, had a longstanding commitment to workforce development and serving the employment needs of Boston residents.

We should also note that the scale and nature of the employer-funded efforts are somewhat cyclical – receiving more attention when the labor market is tight and less as the labor market loosens. The overall financial condition of the healthcare institutions also obviously affects the extent of employer investment in its in-house workforce development programs.

A number of factors, including --

- The growing crisis in the quality of care in nursing homes and assisted living institutions;
- The difficulty both hospitals and extended care institutions were having in attracting and retaining nurses;
- The shortages that hospitals were experiencing in specific occupations such as radiology technologists and surgical techs; and
- The overall tightening of the labor market in the 1990’s

-- led to a period of innovation and growth in workforce development efforts in the healthcare arena. To some extent, much of this experimentation was occurring on parallel tracks. The result is that initiatives within healthcare workforce environment in Boston are currently very confusing, with multiple programs and players at the same institutions, overlapping efforts, and to some extent, some inefficiencies as groups experiment with new curricula, new approaches to case management, and new relationships with the community colleges. Anyone interested in entering the field, or advancing in healthcare, experiences a confusing picture, with no one place that is able to provide an overview of the opportunities and programs currently available throughout Boston.

## **E. Innovative Features of the SkillWorks Model**

From the above analysis, one can see that SkillWorks was established within a larger context of innovation that was occurring in the workforce development field across the nation, as well as in the Commonwealth and the Boston region. Within this context, it is useful to ask the question: what is it that distinguishes SkillWorks from what went on before it was implemented? This is important to know in order to more fully understand how to evaluate SkillWorks’ success in achieving “system change” and adding value to existing system improvement efforts.

**Basically, our review of the national and regional system baseline provides evidence that what is new and unique about SkillWorks is not most of the individual design elements — many of these were already being experimented with and/or heavily promoted prior to SkillWorks.**

**What is different (and reflects added value) is the strategy that SkillWorks developed to integrate, institutionalize, and bring “to scale” the various best practices that had emerged over the past decade.**

In terms of the individual program elements, the State and local workforce development systems were already experimenting with improved practices during the time period in which SkillWorks was designed and launched. For example:

- **Dual customer focus** – Many of the intermediaries and funders in the State and local systems were looking at the workforce development system as needing to meet the needs of both employers and residents. The Boston PIC and Commonwealth Corporation, in particular, were using this “dual customer” language. This was also a key element of the policy work that was undertaken by Governor Swift’s task force for workforce development reform.
- **Career coaching** – Prior to SkillWorks, many service providers in Boston had begun to realize the benefits of one-on-one career coaching and case management in the delivery of training. WorkSource, a partner in SkillWorks Implementation Partnership projects, had been developing a business model focused on coaching and was using this model as part of a number of its partnership activities that preceded SkillWorks. JVS and other providers were also experimenting with various models of coaching. Finally, coaching was part of many of the partnership projects supported through ECCLI and BEST.
- **Partnerships** – SkillWorks’ first round of Implementation grants were specifically targeted to existing partnerships that had already developed capacity and were looking to bring their activities to scale. Thus, it is no surprise that innovative workforce partnerships between employers, community based organizations and community colleges already existed. Through the Fleet Career Ladder project, ECCLI, and the BEST initiative, Massachusetts had one of the strongest support systems for these types of innovative workforce partnerships in the country. A sign of the growing recognition of the importance of these partnerships was the Legislature’s willingness to allocate \$6 million in supplemental State funding to partnership activities as part of BEST III (now BayStateWorks).
- **Sector and occupation activities** – Training programs focusing on specific occupations have been a standard part of workforce training programs for many years, in this state and elsewhere. On the other hand, sector-specific projects that involved multiple employers in one industry were relatively new. However, in Massachusetts, there were two separate initiatives that specifically supported such sector projects – the Fleet Career Ladders project and BEST – prior to SkillWorks. As previously noted, the Boston PIC had also developed a relatively strong “sector” orientation, and had been experimenting with sector-related workforce projects for a number of years.
- **Career ladders and pathways** – As noted in our earlier review, the Boston Workforce Development Coalition has done significant work looking at best practices in developing career ladders. The Fleet Career Ladders effort also focused its funding on projects that (a) researched career ladders within an industry and then (b) developed partnerships around assisting incumbent workers to make progress along the identified career paths.

- **Use of the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency (FESS) standard** – Over the past five years, the FESS standard (championed by the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union, among others) has been increasingly used by both public agencies and service providers throughout the state as a key long-term outcome measure for their workforce development activities. In some cases, such as the Fleet Career Ladders projects, there was a general goal of “family-wage” jobs. In other programs, there has been a more explicit use of the FESS standards developed by WEIU. In addition, the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance has conducted policy advocacy efforts to have adoption of the FESS standards required as part of the conditions for receiving State workforce funding.
- **Building the capacity of service providers** – There are a variety of approaches taking place that seek to build the capacity of workforce development service providers and improve their effectiveness. Some of these activities involve general workshops and conferences (i.e., the work of CEDAC). Others involve the dissemination of best practices. There has also been some peer learning taking place, both formally and informally, throughout the state. Although the capacity building activity of SkillWorks has been more intensive than most of these other efforts, and has been targeted to partnerships and not just to CBOs, there have been other avenues for technical assistance for practitioners interested in workforce development.
- **Focus on culture changes within employers and sectors** – As noted, there are multiple (and at times overlapping) activities throughout Boston that focus on changing the culture within the healthcare sector. Most of these activities have been with employers involved in Extended Care.
- **Policy initiatives to promote increased resources for workplace ESOL and ABE** – Since the publication of MassINC’s New Skills report, there have been numerous efforts to get increased resources for both ESOL and ABE. There is near consensus on the need; the remaining unresolved issues are primarily budgetary and philosophical. In terms of philosophical differences, there are some who believe that more resources should be targeted to workplace-based literacy, while others remain committed to the idea of general literacy programs.
- **Fostering an integrated workforce development system** – Addressing the multiple program silos operating within the public workforce development funding environment was a priority of Governor Swift’s Task Force, was noted as a goal of the BEST initiative, and has been an on-going issue for the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance. To date, however, no group has been successful in promoting a reorganization of the State’s workforce development system that would eliminate these silos.

In considering the above, we believe that what represents the real innovative aspect of SkillWorks -- the feature that brings the most added value to “system change” -- is the Initiative’s effort to integrate, institutionalize, and bring to scale what had been occurring as disparate activities across the Boston region and within the Commonwealth. This is what differentiates SkillWorks from the other workforce development initiatives that preceded it or are concurrently occurring in the Commonwealth. SkillWorks’ emphasis on integration, institutionalization, and achieving scale manifests itself in a number of ways, including:

- **Bringing together various foundation and public funders in a common body:** One of the most unique aspects of SkillWorks has been its success in bringing together State and local public funders along with the philanthropic community, and the pooling of their funding for the Initiative. The creation of the Funders Group, with representatives from each of the funding sectors, provides an opportunity for long-term system change through involvement of many of the key stakeholders involved in supporting workforce development in Boston. The collaboration of multiple funders provides a more flexible source of support for innovative workforce development programming over an extended period. In addition, it also has engaged these funders in a dialogue over a common model of workforce development practice that can have broader system change impact over time.
- **Integrating capacity building, partnership activities, and public policy advocacy:** As noted previously, there are many disparate design elements in each of the so-called “legs” of the SkillWorks three-legged model of system change. However, a central theory underlying SkillWorks is that the synergies created by having the three components working towards the same “system change” will make it more likely that such change will occur and will become institutionalized. No other effort in the Commonwealth has tried to bring these three “legs” together to address workforce development challenges in a comprehensive manner like SkillWorks is doing.
- **Focusing on bringing partnerships and practices to scale:** The Initiative’s operational definition of “scale” still needs to be more fully articulated. Nonetheless, SkillWorks appears to be unique among current initiatives in explicitly stressing that having many small, isolated projects reflecting best practices and career paths for low-income workers is still not sufficient. Rather, SkillWorks seeks to create some level of scale in each of its funded partnerships and, more importantly, to ensure that the improved practices are broadly adopted and institutionalized throughout the Boston workforce development system. Only in this way, SkillWorks argues, can a large number of low-income residents of Boston be provided with increased opportunity to access family-wage jobs and economic self-sufficiency.
- **Supporting planning activities for new partnerships:** SkillWorks is currently the only entity that is providing substantial funding for planning activities to support the creation of new workforce partnerships. Before SkillWorks, this activity was taking place largely on an ad hoc basis, with minimal resources and support. This feature of SkillWorks is seen as very significant by many stakeholders, and will be critical to the Initiative’s goal of achieving scale.
- **Addressing both pre-employment/entry-level jobs and career advancement for incumbent workers in skills areas needed by employers:** Prior to SkillWorks, most partnership activities in the city involved *either* pre-employment activities *or* incumbent worker activities. SkillWorks funding has addressed both, and within the same partnerships. This support has allowed some of the incumbent worker efforts to expand to more effectively reach community residents who lack jobs (for example HCRTI), and also has allowed some providers that previously focused primarily on pre-employment programs to develop partnerships addressing the needs of incumbent workers.

- **Developing a more strategic and comprehensive approach to public policy advocacy:** The public policy advocacy component includes research, public relations, and lobbying; it also has a strong community organizing orientation. Other groups continue to work on public policies related to improving the workforce development system in Massachusetts and increasing the resources available to meet the needs of low-skilled adults. Nonetheless, the work of the Workforce Solutions Group is unique in its strategic approach, the resources it has to focus on policy reform, and its “organizing” activity that seeks to deepen the constituency advocating for workforce development resources and system change.
- **Taking a comprehensive approach to advancement that includes asset development and income enhancement for workers:** In many of the previous workforce development efforts addressing welfare-to-work activities, there has been an effort to promote asset development and income enhancement. However, few if any incumbent worker efforts have taken such a comprehensive approach – seeking to provide low-skilled workers with the support they need to enhance their incomes and develop assets as part of a longer-term, multi-faceted strategy for achieving family self-sufficiency.

In conclusion, SkillWorks has built upon a very strong foundation of workforce development innovation in the United States, in Massachusetts, and in the city of Boston. It has taken what took place before, built upon it and added new innovations. It is a positive indication that SkillWorks was incorporating all the best practices from other initiatives – it would have been remiss if it had not done so. Yet over and above these practices, SkillWorks is adding significant value through providing a more holistic and comprehensive approach to institutionalizing these innovations.

# Part Two: Year One Activities and Accomplishments of SkillWorks Grantees

## A. Partners in Career and Workforce Development (PCWD)

### Partnership Description

The Partners in Career and Workforce Development (PCWD) is a workforce project led by the Partners HealthCare System (“Partners”). The vision of the project is to broaden Partners’ teaching mission and expand its culture of learning to include entry-level employees who are capable and motivated to advance. Two of the major outcomes that are of interest to the Partners system are: (1) to develop new pipelines for entry-level workers; and (2) to fill positions that have high vacancy rates with existing employees who rise up a career ladder.

The Partners’ proposal to the SkillWorks Funders Group focused on expanding on what some of the individual healthcare employers within the Partners system had been doing in the area of workforce development. The proposed PCWD partnership was designed to bring the various pre-employment and career development efforts under one umbrella. The PCWD proposal called for: piloting new pre-employment partnerships with Transition to Work and the Urban League; expanding the career coaching for incumbent workers that took place at Brigham and Women’s Hospital to cover all of its incumbent worker training programs; and developing new innovative training programs and curricula aimed at improving access to college. The project also proposed addressing information gaps among job seekers and incumbent workers by providing increased access to information about health careers, helping participants to develop individualized career plans, and developing a web site to organize and disseminate information about career related resources for employees and managers.

In addition to its direct pre-employment and incumbent workers services, the Partners proposal includes a number of elements that focus on longer-term institutional change within Partners, as well as some broader changes in the healthcare workforce system. For example, the proposed work plan included the development of a certificate program to train clinicians as educators to address faculty shortages.

Partners is the grantee of the SkillWorks Implementation Partnership funding and is responsible for day-to-day operations, as well as longer-term policy and programmatic decisions. Within Partners, the employers involved in the program are the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. In addition, Whittier Street Health Center, an independent community health center affiliated with the Partners network, is participating in the program. Other key stakeholders include WorkSource Partners (which is providing the career coaching), Transition to Work, Inc. (TTW), and Jewish Vocational Services, Inc. (JVS, which has been involved in curriculum development).

### Pre-existing activities, and what was added in Year 1 through the SkillWorks Initiative

PCWD basically involves the enhancement and coordination of multiple workforce development-related activities at three of the Boston based hospitals within the Partners network. Most notably, the

project builds upon the pre-employment experience of earlier programs: Project Rise at MGH; the career ladder program, Partners-in-Care, funded through Fleet Charitable Trust at the Brigham and Women's Hospital; and the Create-a-Nurse Program at Spaulding. In addition to these pre-existing workforce programs (primarily funded with public and philanthropic support), each of the participating institutions were operating their own internal training and workforce support activities prior to SkillWorks, including on-site ESOL, introduction to healthcare careers, and tuition reimbursement programs, as well as some GED and other basic educational classes.

The PCWD pre-employment program is basically a refined model of Project Rise, which was a program that focused on helping individuals on welfare get jobs, and involved case management services, basic training, and a job club. Through Project Rise, Partners developed a close working relationship with WorkSource as a career case management and coaching service provider, as well as with JVS. Based upon what was learned through the experience with Project Rise, PCWD developed a revised pre-employment program. The new model has involved the establishment of a new relationship with a community-based organization (i.e., TTW), an increased focus on careers, and an improved internship and career club component. Specific enhancements included:

- The PCWD is using Transition to Work (TTW) as the prime community interface responsible for screening potential participants.
- The program requires higher basic skill levels for potential participants than Partners previously had as a prerequisite. The entrance requirements for the program are that potential candidates have an interest in a health career, a high school diploma or GED, a minimum score on the TABE test of 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading (this was recently changed – initially only a 7<sup>th</sup> grade score was required), basic computer familiarity, and a year of previous work experience.
- The program includes a more substantial Career Club that requires individuals who go through the program to attend the Club as they await placement. This Club is run at one of the hospitals by an individual with Human Resource experience.
- Partners has redesigned the training and internships components by reducing the total course period from 6 weeks to 5 weeks, and by reducing the internship component from 3 to 2 ½ weeks. A new half-week transition period allows the program to identify and address any issues that may come up as the students transition from full-time classroom instruction to a full-time internship assignment.

Among the participating PCWD entities, the most relevant pre-existing incumbent worker program focusing on career pathways was Partners-in-Care. The Partners-in-Care project is a partnership of Brigham and Women's Hospital, WorkSource, and Bunker Hill Community College. The partnership was established to help Patient Care Assistants (PCAs) and Environmental Service employees advance onto tracks in nursing, as well as to increase the quality of care delivered by the hospital's entry-level workers. This project continues to be supported through a grant from the Fleet Charitable Trusts (now Bank of America).

Each of the institutions also previously provided some type of basic training opportunities for their incumbent employees. Each of the employers used different training providers and vendors. For

example, Massachusetts General Hospital provided a lot of training in-house for its employees, including ESOL and medical terminology. Brigham and Women referred employees to the Health Care and Research Training Institute (HCRTI) for remedial classes in ESOL and basic administrative and computer skills, and also runs its own medical terminology and ESOL classes.

What is new about PCWD's approach to its incumbent worker component is that the SkillWorks grant has allowed Partners to create more cohesion amongst its many career development activities, and to enhance its ability to provide career coaching. The SkillWorks funding also has allowed Partners to work with learning providers to develop new curricula and classes focused on career advancement.

Overall, it is probably in the area of a commitment to changing the "culture" within the Partners' institutions related to workforce development that the full value-added of PCWD will be seen. Although previously there were many disparate efforts throughout the system that focused on career development, PCWD represents the first time there has been a concerted and strategic effort to address how the human resources systems within the Partners members work to support employees interested in advancing along a career ladder.

### **Characteristics of PCWD Participants at Baseline**

PCWD was very specific about the types of participants that it was targeting for its activities, and recognized that there were many different types of individuals who would be able to benefit from the services provided through the SkillWorks funding. At the outset, PCWD identified four specific cohorts:

- **Health Career Starters:** This group included both the pre-employment participants as well as incumbent workers in entry-level positions in the participating healthcare institutions. Generally, this is the lowest-skill cohort, and includes individuals with limited work skills, limited English and basic literacy, and limited knowledge of healthcare careers.
- **College Bound:** This group includes incumbent workers who have a high school diploma or equivalent, but will require one to two years of pre-college work to pass the College Placement Exam.
- **College Ready:** The members of this group already have the educational preparation needed to pass the College Placement test, and may in fact already have taken college-level courses.
- **Intensive ESOL:** The members of this group have professional health care experience, education and credentials from another country, but lack sufficient English proficiency to meet healthcare occupational requirements in this country.

As can be seen from Exhibit 6, overall PCWD has exceeded its first year goals in terms of the number of individuals served. However, they have served significantly more college-bound and college-ready incumbent workers than they had anticipated, and fewer lower-skilled incumbent workers – their "health career starters."

<b>Exhibit 6. PCWD Enrollment Goals and Year 1 Outcomes</b>		
	<b>First Year Goal</b>	<b>Actually Served</b>
Health Career Starters – Pre-Employment	40	44
Health Career Starters – Incumbent	40	29
College Bound/College Ready	80	127
Intensive ESOL	10	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>209</b>

PCWD is trying to better understand why they have had difficulty in recruiting health career starters among incumbents. They have hypothesized that one of the factors may be the very limited English language and basic skills of this cohort. This lower-skilled group has additional needs for ESOL and GED, and these services are not being provided through the incumbent worker program of PCWD. Improving its ability to recruit and serve this population has become a major priority of PCWD as it moves into its second year of operation.

The following section looks in more detail at the demographics characteristics of the participants in PCWD in its first year.

### **Pre-Employment Participants**

In Year 1, Partners projected 40 pre-employment enrollees and, as we see above, was able to exceed this goal by enrolling 44. Exhibit 7 below highlights some of the most relevant demographics of these pre-employment participants in PCWD.<sup>13</sup> According to this table, out of the 44 pre-employment enrollees:

- 98% were female;
- 80% of participants were Boston residents;
- 86% reported an annual household income under \$10,000;
- 89% were apparently single<sup>14</sup> and only 9% were married;
- 91% indicated that they were their household’s sole wage earner; and
- The vast majority (91%) identified themselves as members of a racial minority group.

<sup>13</sup> Additional information on participant characteristics can be found in the appendix of this report.

<sup>14</sup> This total includes those who were separated, widowed, or divorced.

In addition, in Year 1 the average household size for the PCWD pre-employment participants was 2.5 people, and the average number of children under 18 years of age at home was 1.4. Thus, the data show that the pre-employment component of PCWD primarily served low-income, single Black or Hispanic women with children, who were their household's sole wage earner and were Boston residents.

<b>Exhibit 7. Demographic Characteristics of PCWD Pre-employment Participants</b>			
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
	Male	1	2%
	Female	43	98%
<b>Boston Residency at Enrollment</b>			
	Resident	35	80%
	Not Resident	9	20%
<b>Wage Earner Status</b>			
	Sole wage earner	40	91%
	Secondary wage earner	4	9%
<b>Marital Status</b>			
	Single	30	68%
	Married	4	9%
	Divorced	2	5%
	Separated	5	11%
	Widowed	2	5%
	Partner	1	2%
<b>Annual Household Income</b>			
	Under \$10,000	38	86%
	\$10,000 to \$24,999	6	14%
	\$25,000 to \$39,999	0	0%
	\$40,000 and over	0	0%
<b>Household Size</b>			
	Average household size	2.5	n/a
	Average number of children under 18 years living at home	1.4	n/a
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
	White/Caucasian (not Hispanic)	4	9%
	Black (not Hispanic)	28	65%
	Hispanic	10	23%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	1	2%
	<i>Missing</i>	1	

We can use the above information, along with data on household income, to assess the pre-employment participants relative to the federal poverty level and relevant family economic self-sufficiency standards.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2004 Poverty Guidelines,<sup>15</sup> the income necessary to have a standard of living above the poverty level is \$9,310 for a single person, \$12,490 for a two-person family, and \$15,670 for a three-person family. Taking into account the average household size of 2.5 and the fact that 86% of the participants' families earned less than \$10,000 annually at the time of enrollment, it is reasonable to conclude that a substantial majority of the pre-employment participants come from households that fall below the federal poverty level.

The Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard (MassFESS) is a second measure, and in many ways a better one, for assessing the minimum adequate income level needed to live and work specifically in Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>16</sup> Exhibit 8 shows the MassFESS for four family types living in Boston.

<b>Exhibit 8.</b>				
<b>The Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard for Four Family Types, Boston, 2003<sup>17</sup></b>				
	<b>One Adult</b>	<b>One Adult, One Preschooler</b>	<b>One Adult, One Preschooler, One School Age Child</b>	<b>Two Adults, One Preschooler, One School Age Child</b>
<b>Boston</b>	\$21,362	\$44,046	\$51,284	\$54,612

Using these standards, we see that the PCWD pre-employment cohort in Year 1 represents a group in which all participants fall below what is considered a sufficient household income to live and work in Boston, MA. All the participants from single-person households (N=10) earned under \$10,000, and all the remaining 34 participant households earned less than \$25,000 in 2004. Thus, no PCWD pre-employment participant household was at the MassFESS standard at the time that they enrolled in the program.

Based on additional data detailed in the appendix of this report, we also can see that PCWD has worked with a population with the educational levels that the program set out to target. Of the pre-employment participants, 93% had a High School diploma or GED certificate as their highest educational level at enrollment into the PCWD program.

<sup>15</sup> <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/04poverty.shtml>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.weiu.org/index.php?page=126>

<sup>17</sup> According to the report from which this standard was obtained, entitled *Achieving Success in the New Economy: Which Jobs Help Women Reach Economic Self-Sufficiency in Massachusetts*, "The MassFESS Standard is calculated for 70 different family types across 39 regions. Each component included in the Standard is derived from state or national agencies such as the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development." The report also notes that The Women's Union, partnered with Wider Opportunities for Women, first published the MassFESS Standard in 1998 and updated it in 2003. Hence, the standard used for this report's evaluation is from 2003.

Interestingly, 86% of all PCWD pre-employment participants speak English as their primary language, with the rest indicating that Spanish is their primary language. In addition, the age of participants is fairly concentrated in the in the 21-30 years age group, with 50% of enrollees falling in this age bracket. About half of this group of enrollees, therefore, is at a good age to pursue opportunities in higher education.

Accordingly, overall we can conclude that over the past year Partners has generally succeeded in recruiting the desired target population for its pre-employment component, both in terms of numbers and key characteristics.

### **Incumbent Worker Participants**

The incumbent program far exceeded its projected Year 1 participant enrollment target of 130 individuals, with PCWD reporting a total of 165 incumbent participants. Of the incumbent workers, 78% were working full-time at enrollment, with an average wage of \$14.37 per hour, and 19% were working part-time with an average wage of \$12.71 per hour.

As was the case with the pre-employment program, the majority of incumbent worker participants were female (81%). However, in other respects this group differed significantly from the pre-employment enrollees. Exhibit 9 below highlights some of the most relevant demographics (additional information can be found in the appendix).

Demographic highlights include:

- 52% of incumbent workers were Boston residents;
- 81% identified themselves as members of a racial minority group, while 19% identified themselves as White; and
- Of the 144 participants reporting information on their wage earner status, 64% were sole wage earners, 12% were primary wage earners, 15% were secondary wage earners, and 9% were equal wage earners.

Additional data, included in the appendix, provides a fuller picture of the PCWD incumbent worker population in Year 1. Key characteristics that emerge include:<sup>18</sup>

- 66% of incumbent worker participants were apparently single,<sup>19</sup> and 34% were married;
- 49% spoke English as their primary language, while 51% specified a different language, most frequently Spanish or French Creole;
- High percentages of participants who did not speak English as a primary language are particularly notable among the incumbent “health career starters”; and

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<sup>18</sup> PCWD did not track data on highest educational level at time of enrollment in Year 1. This data will be tracked in Year 2.

<sup>19</sup> This total includes those who were separated, widowed, or divorced.

- The average age of the incumbent participants was 36 years, with a fairly evenly spread distribution. Forty-nine percent of the participants were over the age of 35 years.

<b>Exhibit 9. Demographic Characteristics of PCWD Incumbent Worker Participants</b>			
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
	Male	31	19%
	Female	134	81%
<b>Boston Residency at Enrollment</b>			
	Resident	85	52%
	Not Resident	80	48%
<b>Wage Earner Status</b>			
	Sole wage earner	92	64%
	Primary wage earner	17	12%
	Secondary wage earner	22	15%
	Equal wage earner	13	9%
	Other	0	0%
	<i>Missing</i>	21	
<b>Annual Household Income</b>			
	Under \$10,000	0	0%
	\$10,000 to \$24,999	36	29%
	\$25,000 to \$39,999	66	52%
	\$40,000 and over	24	19%
	<i>Missing</i>	39	
<b>Household Size</b>			
	Average household size	2.7	n/a
	Average number of children under 18 years living at home*		n/a
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
	White/Caucasian (not Hispanic)	28	19%
	Black (not Hispanic)	64	43%
	Hispanic	45	30%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	11	7%
	Native American	1	1%
	<i>Missing</i>	16	

\* PCWD is planning to report this data in Year 2

As noted above, only about half of the PCWD incumbent participants were Boston residents, and the incumbents were less likely to be minorities and sole wage earners than their pre-employment counterparts.

The incumbent worker group is also significantly better off economically, compared to pre-employment participants. For incumbent households that provided data, 85% (95 participants) earned a sufficient income in 2004 to be considered above the federal poverty levels. This finding is not surprising, since incumbent worker by definition were employed at the time of their enrollment.

Therefore, a more interesting economic measure for this group is the MassFESS standard, which is a more localized and realistic measure for determining income adequacy in the region.

Using the MassFESS standard (which is detailed in Exhibit 8) as a benchmark, we estimate that at least 74 incumbents, or about 67% of those incumbents reporting household income and size data, fell below the MassFESS standard for Boston. Seventeen participants (or 15% of respondents) from single-person households earned a sufficient income to exceed the MassFESS, since they reported earning over \$25,000 and the standard for one-person households was \$21,362. For multiple-person families, a household would have to earn at least \$44,000 to reach MassFESS standards and the data show that 21 multiple family types did, in fact, earn over \$40,000. Therefore, in addition to the 17 single person households, it is possible that some of these more affluent multiple-person families may have reached the MassFESS standard; because we only know their approximate incomes, however, we cannot be more precise.

Overall, this demographic profile of the incumbent participants in Year 1 is consistent with the clearly stated intention of PCWD to target college-ready and college-bound individuals who could be prepared to advance into college-level training programs. As we have noted, PCWD's incumbent worker initiative is geared towards filling technical positions with high vacancies within the Partners' system, and thus is not exclusively focused on targeting low-income and low-skilled workers.

## **Year 1 Activities**

### **Activities Relative to Pre-employment Services**

The pre-employment program operated by PCWD has focused considerable attention on ensuring that the individuals who are served have the characteristics that are required by its member-employers for their entry-level workers. Through its strong partnership with TTW, as well as other community-based organizations, PCWD has been able to effectively recruit within low-income neighborhoods of Boston and still identify individuals with strong employment potential. The program is also characterized by its very strong individual case management approach, and its efforts to build close relationships between program staff and supervisors and managers within the employer institutions. These relationships help to ensure that problems are addressed immediately, and that appropriate internship and placement opportunities occur. Specific activities include:

**Initial Screening:** The PCWD Pre-Employment Program starts with the screening process that is undertaken by TTW, the community-based partner involved in the program. TTW has been extremely effective in their role of outreach to the community and in accessing and screening potential participants. Basically, their process for each training cycle involves screening about 50-65 individuals over the phone. Of these, there might be 20 that TTW thinks are appropriate and whom they put through more formal testing, and of these, only between 12 and 15 are then recommended to the Partners program. Even then, they are not automatically accepted - the PCWD staff first interviews them. JVS and WorkSource Partners are also involved in the screening process – JVS conducts the computer assessment and writing sample exercise, and WorkSource Partners' coaches interview candidates to assess their soft skills and identify any barriers that could prevent them from completing the program.

**Coaching:** Once an individual is formally accepted and enrolled in the pre-employment program, they are assigned a career coach from WorkSource. The career coaches are involved in the initial screening process and attend the initial orientation meetings. They work with participants to make sure they are prepared for the pre-employment class (i.e., the participants have adequate daycare and support services), and then provide them with coaching through the training, internship and placement process. In terms of frequency of services, after placement the career coach initially might check in with a pre-employment participant once a week. After that, the frequency might shift to one or two times a month. The coaches also maintain relationships with the supervisors at the job site, to problem-solve on issues related to a specific employee.

**Pre-Employment Class and Internship:** The curriculum for the pre-employment course was designed to conform to the entry-level employment requirements of the participating hospitals. The entire process is five weeks long. The actual classroom time takes 2.5 weeks. This is followed with a 2.5-week internship. PCWD has placed considerable attention on making an informed match between the interests of the participants and the department in which they are placed for these internships. The hope is that the internship will lead directly to a job placement. During Year 1, a total of 7 pre-employment participants went directly from their internship to a job in the department in which their internship occurred.

**Career Club:** Following completion of the class and the internship, some of the participants are immediately placed. Participants who are not placed in a job immediately go to the Career Club once a week, where they are provided with both additional support as well as job search services. PCWD hired an individual with a background in Human Resources to run the club. She provides participants with a more realistic perspective on what employers expect from entry-level workers. PCWD has struggled over Year 1 to develop a Career Club model that meets the needs of both the pre-employment participants and the employers. The partnership is thinking about ways to make this part of the pre-employment program more effective during Year 2.

**Financial Planning and Asset Development:** Although not a big focus of activity in Year 1, PCWD has done some work on asset development. A financial literacy curriculum is provided through the Career Club. PCWD works with the group “Organization for a New Equality” on this training. It is not a new program for Partners, but now everyone receives this training, while in the past it was only for those participants not placed. They are also working with Fleet/Bank of America on a free checking account once an individual is placed. WorkSource career development specialists also work with individuals on various types of asset development issues – such as tax information, child care tax credits, Food Stamps, first-time homebuyer information, educational tax credits and financial aid issues. As PCWD moves into its second year of operations, this is an area in which it is continuing to explore new approaches.

**Post Placement Support:** Once an individual is placed, PCWD staff stay in close touch with the new employee’s supervisor or manager. In general, immediately following placement PCWD staff will contact the participant’s supervisor every two weeks. Later, they remain in touch once a month. As noted, the WorkSource career coach also stays in frequent contact with the employees and supervisor. There are also regular team meetings to discuss feedback from the managers and the participants. PCWD staff believe that, as the program has developed, there is growing respect between the managers and the PCWD and WorkSource staff. This is leading to better communication

and resolution when problems with new employees do arise. Increasingly, managers are calling the coaches or PCWD staff to discuss the employees and to get appropriate support or interventions.

In its initial proposal, PCWD had assumed that the coaches would work on detailed career plans with each of the pre-employment participants. As the program evolved, however, project staff decided that the detailed career plans were not really applicable early-on with pre-employment participants. PCWD staff and WorkSource staff now believe that, after placement, it takes most pre-employment participants about six months on the job before they are ready to get into longer-term career planning.

During its first year, PCWD ran four cycles of its pre-employment program, with the following results:

<b>Exhibit 10. PCWD Pre-Employment Activities</b>						
<b>Cycle</b>	<b>Enrolled</b>	<b>Graduated</b>	<b>Placed in Jobs</b>	<b>Remaining in Career Club</b>	<b>Formally Terminated</b>	<b>Not Placed and Not Participating in Career Club</b>
I.	11	9	7	N/A	N/A	N/A
II.	7	7	5	N/A	N/A	N/A
III.	12	11	8	N/A	N/A	N/A
IV.	15	11	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45*</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5**</b>

\* The total number of individuals is 44. One individual dropped out in one cycle, re-enrolled, and completed the class in another cycle.

\*\* This includes individuals who find a job outside of the Partners system or are not active in the Career Club and are still awaiting placement

### **Activities Relative to Incumbent Worker Services**

PCWD provides an institutional umbrella for pre-existing efforts at career development for incumbent workers across the Partners system. In addition, through the SkillWorks grant, PCWD has been able to: expand its career case management and coaching services; increase the availability of information on career and training opportunities; and support the development of new training programs aimed at helping employees move along an educational pathway leading to a more highly-skilled occupation within healthcare. Specific services include:

**Career case management and coaching:** Through the PCWD effort, the level of career case management and coaching services has been enhanced. Each employee who enrolls in the PCWD is assigned a career case manager/coach who works intensely with him or her on career planning. Once the career planning process is completed, the career coach will help guide the employee through the steps needed to make progress according to the agreed-upon plan. For example, the career coach will help incumbent workers complete the steps needed in order to progress in their education or to receive credit for course work previously completed. This includes assistance relative to: registering for pre-college preparation classes and a range of standardized tests such as GED, TABE, CTP, and

TOEFL; having foreign credentials assessed; applying for financial aid; and applying to programs in nursing, health science, and other college-level classes.

**Increasing incumbent’s awareness of career advancement resources:** PCWD has developed a website, launched in April 2004, which is designed to provide employees in the Partners system with information related to healthcare careers as well as training opportunities and other resources to support career development. In effect, PCWD provides a one-stop source of information and guidance about career development in the Partners system. According to PCWD, the website receives on average about 463 hits a month. In addition, various career planning tools and career-related information are being developed and disseminated on the PCWD website. One specific new product that was developed as part of PCWD is the Career Planning Module. This module, developed by Jewish Vocational Services, was initially conceived of as a computer-based planning program, but has been reframed as a web-based Introduction to Career Planning.

One hundred percent of the incumbent workers developed career plans and received case management and counseling. Of the incumbent workers, 54, or about one third, used the JVS Career Planning Tool.

**Educational Initiatives:** There are also six new training courses that have been developed, or are in the process of being developed, through PCWD (see Exhibit 11):

<b>Exhibit 11. PCWD Incumbent Classes</b>		
<b>Training Programs</b>	<b>Number of Cycles Completed</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
1) <b>JVS Pre-College Class:</b> Combines remedial math, English and science and study skills into one course. The class was designed to prepare participants for passing the College Placement Test.	1 cycle completed: 13 enrolled and 6 graduate	2nd class began January of 2005 with 17; 13 remain enrolled
2) <b>Pre-college Reading and Writing for Non-native Speakers:</b> Intensive ESOL	1 cycle completed: 14 employees signed up; nine showed up and enrolled; and 4 graduated	2nd class began on November 15th with 20 students, 15 remain
3) <b>Hybrid Surg-Tech/Bio 101 course:</b> Mass Bay Community College		1st class began January of 2005: 0 participants from Partners
4) <b>Training Clinicians as Educators</b> Developed by MCH Institute of Health Professions and consisting on two online courses and a practicum, to prepare clinicians to be educators		1st class in January of 2005; 8 people enrolled – but only 3 are currently enrolled at Institute
5) <b>Associates Degree in Respiratory Therapy:</b> Bunker Hill Community College has developed a degree program with Partners to provide clinical sites with clinical instructors		Curriculum to be developed by end of February 2005
6) <b>Pre-Nursing</b> at Roxbury Community College is in development		Curriculum in process of being development

In addition to the training programs being developed through PCWD, incumbent workers participating in the PCWD program at Brigham and Women's Hospital are also able to attend classes at the Health Care and Research Training Institute (HCRTI) being run by another SkillWorks Implementation Partnership grantee. To date, four of the incumbent workers from PCWD have completed classes at HCRTI. Two have taken the Pre-College Class and 2 have taken the Pre-Tech Class.<sup>20</sup>

### **Activities Related to Administration of the Program**

Although PCWD is fundamentally an initiative that is led by one Partners employer, it has been implemented with multiple layers of partnerships to encourage deep engagement by employer institutions throughout the Partners system as well as the service providers involved in the program. There are multiple stakeholder and partnership groups that have been meeting regularly throughout the first year of PCWD's implementation:

- **The Administrative Team** is made up of the four Partners staff who manage the day-to-day operations of the program – the PCWD Director, the Information and Communications Manager, the Pre-employment Program Coordinator, and a Project Consultant.
- **The Pre-employment Operations Team** is made up of the group of PCWD partners (JVS, WorkSource, TTW, and Partners institutions) involved in the development and implementation of the pre-employment program.
- **The Leadership Team:** The Leadership Team has representation from each of the employer institutions in PCWD: Brigham and Women's Hospital, MGH, Spaulding Hospital, and Whittier Street Health Center. This team is the responsible for project direction and oversight of the partnership, particularly as it relates to the employer organizations.
- **The Partnership Council** is made up of the broadest group of PCWD partners and includes the four employers, JVS, TTW, and WorkSource, and six educational institutions (Roxbury Community College, Bunker Hill Community College, Mass Bay Community College, MGH Institute of Healthcare Professions, UMass Boston, and the Board of Higher Education). This group has met quarterly since the project was initiated. Although there has been good attendance at these meetings, it is clear that the core partners for this group are really JVS, TTW and WorkSource. The educational partners appear to be more focused on their own specific elements of the projects, rather than having a more general involvement in program design and implementation issues.
- **Working Groups:** Finally, there are a number of separate working groups that have met during the implementation process. There is an Employer Steering Group that has met twice, a Workforce Culture Working Group that has met a number of times, and an Educational Issues Group that has met quarterly. This last group has engaged the State's

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<sup>20</sup> These four individual incumbent workers are currently being counted by two different SkillWorks partnerships – they are part of the HCRTI participant totals and the PCWD participant totals.

Board of Higher Education, as well as the other educational partners, in a more comprehensive discussion about the role of higher education in PCWD as well as in the workforce development system overall.

There were two administrative/governance components of the Partnership that have not been implemented to date; however, the functions of these elements are being addressed through alternative strategies. The proposed Participant Advisory Committee was replaced with a Participant Survey. PCWD felt that this was a better means of soliciting input from their participants. The CEO Round Table that was initially proposed also has not met. PCWD staff decided that a more effective means of engaging the higher-level leadership would be through individual meetings with each CEO. In March 2005, PCWD staff met with the top leadership of MGH and have plans in place to meet with the CEOs of each of the other participating hospitals.

## Accomplishments

To assess Year 1 outcomes, we must examine whether the participants are improving their measurable (and marketable) skills, their employment rates, their wages and access to benefits. This section examines these participant outcomes, as well as some of the broader “institutional” outcomes associated with the PCWD Year 1 activities.

### Graduation Rates

One immediate measure of PCWD’s accomplishments is the rate of course completion for the various classes that PCWD has run during Year 1.

<b>Exhibit 12. PCWD Enrollment and Graduation Data</b>				
<b>Training Program</b>	<b>Class Cycles Completed</b>	<b>Number Enrolled</b>	<b>Number Graduated</b>	<b>Graduation Rate</b>
Pre-Employment Class and Internships	4 cycles	44	38	86%
JVS Pre-College Class: combines remedial math, English and science and study skills into one course	1 class	13	6	46%
Pre-college Reading and Writing for Non-native Speakers: Intensive ESOL	1 class	9	4	44%

Although the graduation rate for the pre-employment class is relatively high, PCWD and JVS staff were very disappointed with the graduation rates in the first pre-college and intensive ESOL classes. They put considerable effort into trying to understand the reasons for such high attrition in these classes. In the case of ESOL, they found that running the class over the summer proved problematic. Many foreign-born individuals visit their home country during this time period, and thus dropped out of the class. In terms of the pre-college class, PCWD and JVS struggled to understand why they

experienced such a low graduation rate. They think that they did not adequately screen those interested in the class, nor adequately prepare them for what would be involved.

### Terminations

According to PCWD’s pre-employment policies, a participant failing to complete the pre-employment 5-week training program or who leaves voluntarily or involuntarily from the Career Club is considered terminated. During Year 1, a total of 6 pre-employment participants were terminated, which equals about 14% of pre-employment enrollees. The demographic data reveal that this group is generally similar to the typical pre-employment program participant in many characteristics. For example, all of these individuals were minority females, with an average age of 27 years, who reported a high school diploma or GED as their highest level of education. Additionally, 5 out of 6 were classified as sole wage earners with family earnings under \$10,000. The one exception from the typical participant profile is that the terminated individuals were more likely to have children (4 of the 6 terminated participants reported children at home).

Under PCWD’s incumbent program policies, an incumbent participant who no longer works within the Partners HealthCare system is considered “dropped out.” Incumbent workers also can be “on-leave” due to temporary family situations or medical issues for three months before being formally terminated from the program. The total number of drop-outs and formal terminations among incumbent worker participants during Year 1 was 23, which equals about 14% of incumbent enrollees. This group was nearly 85% female and involved a substantial number of individuals reporting comparatively high household incomes, but also exhibited considerable diversity relative to age and race/ethnicity.

### Changes in Employment or Wage Status

**Pre-employment program:** In addition to completing training courses provided by PCWD, the primary goal of the pre-employment program is to place participants in jobs in the Partners system. In Year 1, 23 of the 38 participants (or 60% of those who completed PCWD’s pre-employment training program) were able to secure employment (see Exhibit 13). As noted, seven of these individuals got their job directly from their internship.

<b>Exhibit 13. Pre-Employment Program Employment Related Outcomes</b>			
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent of Graduating</b>	<b>Average Wage</b>
# Placed in Administrative Jobs	14	36.8%	\$12.16
# Placed in General Clerical Jobs	4	10.5%	\$10.50
# Placed in Allied Health Jobs	5	13.2%	\$10.87
# Total Placed	23	60.5%	\$11.57
# Placed in Permanent Jobs	16		
# Placed in Temporary Jobs	7		

Of the 23 individuals placed in jobs, 12 were initially placed in temporary positions through Bulfinch Temp (a staffing agency), with no benefits. Five of these individuals moved on to permanent placements. Seven of the permanent placements were at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and nine permanent placements were at MGH. Of the MGH permanent placements, two are per diem jobs with no benefits.

Demographic data on the pre-employment participants who secured employment are included in Exhibit 14. Basically, those who were able to obtain jobs were very similar to the overall population of PCWD pre-employment participants, although they were slightly more likely to have identified their race as White and be under 30 years of age.

<b>Exhibit 14. Characteristics of Pre-Employment Participants Place in Jobs</b>		
	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Those Placed</b>
Boston Resident	80%	83%
White	9%	13%
English Speaking	86%	87%
Under 30 Years of Age	54%	61%

### **Progression Along a Career or Educational Pathway**

At the time that this report was being prepared, there were no data available from PCWD on the employment rates and wage progression of incumbent workers.

However, in many ways, given the goals of PCWD, the most critical outcome from both the employer and participant perspective is whether or not the workers are making progress along the career paths that they have identified. In particular, given the goals of the Partners Healthcare system, the key outcome measure is the progress of incumbent participants along an educational pathway leading to a college degree or certificate relevant to a more highly skilled health-related occupation.

Achieving a major outcome – such as a new job in a more highly-skilled technician position – often takes a significant amount of time and education to accomplish. It therefore should not come as a surprise that no PCWD participant completed a degree or certificate program in Year 1. However, analysis of the Year 1 achievements provides strong evidence that a number of the incumbent workers are taking the interim steps needed to allow them to achieve their long-term career goals:

- 99 of 165 incumbent participants (or 60% of participants) are considered “on track,” meaning that they are making progress in achieving their career goals;
- 32 of the participants (or 19%) took the College Placement Test;
- 38 of the participants (or 23%) requested information from a college;

- 10 of the participants (or 6%) completed a financial aid application;
- 13 participants (or 8%) completed the pre-requisites needed to take the next step in their education;
- 12 participants (or 7%) applied to a nursing program and 8 participants (or 5%) were accepted to a nursing program. An additional 5 participants (or 3%) were accepted to another certificate or college-level program;
- 7 participants (or 4%) took a board or entrance exam; and
- 9 participants (or 5%) completed a college semester.

Looking at the demographic breakdown (included in the appendix) of incumbent participants who achieved these accomplishments reveals:

- Of the 9 participants who completed a college semester, two-thirds were Black, 5 were Boston residents, nearly all were sole wage earners, and most earned between \$25,000 and \$39,000;
- Of the 8 participants who were accepted into a nursing program, two-thirds were Black and just about all were earning over \$25,000 a year and reported English as a primary language. However, only 2 of these participants were Boston residents;
- Of the 10 participants who completed a financial aid application, about half were low-income participants reporting earnings between \$10,000 and \$24,999. In addition, 60% were non-English speakers (which is a comparatively high proportion), and all had identified themselves as members of minority groups.

### **Reaching Scale: Changing Institutional Culture and Promoting Broader System Change**

One of the unique and very important aspects of the PCWD project is that, from the start, it recognized that the only way to “achieve scale” would be to change the larger culture regarding workforce development issues within the Partners system, as well as within the individual employers participating in the project. The primary strategy that PCWD developed to achieve this goal was to engage managers and supervisors within the Partners system in the PCWD activities. The intent of this strategy was “to provide managers with the tools they need to support their employees’ growth, engaging them in the process of expanding the teaching mission of Partners’ hospitals to include incumbent workers in service and support positions.” By bringing supervisors and managers “on-board,” PCWD was seeking to both disseminate and institutionalize its services and practices throughout the various hospital partners. PCWD’s approach to implementing this strategy had two elements:

- **Health Career Ambassadors.** Health Care Ambassadors include interested health care professionals who participate in health career exposure activities, develop shadowing opportunities for PCWD participants, and generally supporting efforts to interest workers in their technical fields.

- **Workforce Champions.** Workforce Champions include those managers and supervisors who refer employees to the PCWD program, provide internships for pre-employment participants, and hire participants. PCWD planned to provide these managers with training and support in career coaching and mentoring, and to develop mechanisms to formally recognize their contribution to workforce development at Partners.

PCWD had a goal of recruiting 30 “Ambassadors” in its first year. The program was not as successful in this area as it had hoped, and only recruited 11 Ambassadors. PCWD is currently planning on publicizing and leveraging programs that already exist, such as the Career Development Series at Massachusetts General Hospital and the job shadowing activities at Brigham and Women’s Hospital.

On the other hand, PCWD has made significant progress in engaging “Champions.” Although PCWD’s Year 1 goal was to recruit 50 Champions, by the end of the first year it had recruited 89. However, over Year 1, PCWD has struggled with ways to recognize the Champions and engage more Ambassadors. One of the program’s first ideas was to have a celebration lunch for all of the Champions. The concept was to hold a single luncheon, outside of the individual institutions, and to invite all of the Champions to participate. PCWD staff found, however, that there was not significant interest in this idea, due primarily (PCWD staff believe) to the lack of motivation of those involved to venture outside of their own institution. As a result, PCWD has changed its approach, and is planning on holding separate luncheons at each participating institution.

PCWD developed an additional approach to acknowledging the contributions of the supervisors and managers, and nominated the pre-employment Champions for an existing Partners’ recognition program – the Partners in Excellence Award that recognizes important contributions of employees. PCWD nominated the Champions for the award during Year1 of the SkillWorks grant; the actual award ceremony celebrating the Champions was held at the beginning of Year 2 (see addendum at the end of this PCWD profile).

Another strategy of PCWD for driving longer-term cultural shifts relating to workforce development within the Partners system was establishment of the Workforce Culture Working Group. This group is working on a range of approaches for improving communications with managers and supervisors, and is attempting to address the challenges entailed in changing how workforce development is approached at all levels of the Partners system.

In their effort to meet Partners’ internal workforce goals, PCWD has begun to explore and experiment with some models that have broader system change potential. Moreover, its partnership structure has engaged a broad set of stakeholders in discussions about the role of higher education that have the potential to address policy-related issues of system-wide significance. The specific components of the PCWD model that have system change implications are:

**1) Development of a new model of working with community-based organizations.** According to those involved in PCWD, when they started this effort they believed that most community-based organizations were not really informed about what employers needed. They felt that most CBOs were doing what they thought was required, but often this did not match with what employers really wanted in terms of training and preparedness for work. The relationship that has developed between

Partners and TTW, their community-based partner, is a new model, however. TTW is seen as a preferred provider who is responsible for recruitment and screening.

Both TTW and Partners believe that they have learned a significant amount through this new relationship. Through the close relationship with Partners, TTW has built its own internal capacity. TTW has a new appreciation of how Human Resource departments perceive its clientele and understand the pace with which employers are making decisions. TTW is trying to create a new image with the HR departments and change how its clientele are viewed. It could not do this without the strong support provided by the staff of PCWD and the role they play within the employer institutions. Because of its work with PCWD, TTW is now exploring similar types of partnerships with other employers and partners; TTW staff note that they now have a new understanding of the expectations of employers and a new capacity that they can bring to this process.

For Partners, the PCWD staff see their experience with TTW as a potential pilot for a new type of relationship that they would like to see develop with other community-based organizations. The Community Benefit department is in the process of completing a survey of all community-based pre-employment programs to identify programs such as TTW. It is seeking to better understand what is available in the community and to develop a better referral network. PCWD sees that CBOs have a unique role to play in the recruitment and screening process.

**2) Bringing together the higher education community in Boston around a set of common issues.**

Staff involved in PCWD see the links to higher education as extremely important if they are to achieve their goal of creating a new pool of skilled workers for their hard-to-fill positions. To that end, they have convened the Educational Issues Working Group. This group includes representatives of the individual higher education partners, but more importantly, it has engaged the State's Board of Higher Education. The purposes of the Working Group are to create new avenues for communication between the community colleges in the region and UMass-Boston, and to promote new opportunities for collaboration. This convening of key public institutions of higher education in Boston, along with high-level staff from the State Board of Higher Education, provides a broader potential system change opportunity for SkillWorks.

**3) Developing curriculum for pre-college and health care professions.** PCWD has supported the development of curricula that could have system change potential both in the healthcare professions, as well as in efforts to promote a training continuum for pre-college readiness. In terms of the healthcare professions, the development of new programs in Respiratory Therapy, the Hybrid BIO 101 course being developed at Massachusetts Bay Community College, and the certificate program designed to prepare clinicians to become adjunct, part-time faculty members in health profession education programs, all have potential sector-wide impacts. The new pre-college course that was developed by JVS, which integrates math, English and science, also has the potential to become a more standardized part of the pre-college readiness programs in the Boston region.

**4) Developing a peer learning and cooperative activities with the Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute, the other SkillWorks healthcare partnership.** PCWD staff have begun the discussion with HCRTI about how the two projects could work together more effectively. At one level, the focus is on peer learning and sharing information. But, more significantly, the two partnerships have begun to raise the issue of areas of potential collaboration. They have agreed to

meet on a quarterly basis. These discussions could prove to be very important in the long run, and could potentially lead to a more “system” level approach to addressing the healthcare workforce needs of the major healthcare employers in the city of Boston, or even in the larger Boston region.

### **The Employer Perspective**

Unlike the other partnerships supported through SkillWorks, the lead grantee for PCWD *is* the employer. Partners Healthcare has been very clear from the initiation of this grant that it has had two major objectives in participating in SkillWorks.

**First, it is interested in creating a more effective pipeline for entry-level workers.** The Human Resource staff at the participating Partners institutions all noted that, unlike the situation a few years ago, they have been having no problems with recruiting entry-level workers, and little to no problem with employee turnover. Clearly, the changes in the economy in Boston, leading to a rapid loosening of the labor market, have meant that there are many individuals looking for jobs, and existing employees are more reluctant to give up a job. As a result, the motivation of employers for participating in a pre-employment program is more long-term in nature, and more focused on increasing the quality of the entry-level workers that they do hire. In terms of its longer-term interests, Partners would like to develop better “pipelines” for entry-level workers and deeper connections, through community-based organizations, to potential employees. In terms of the shorter-term interests, Partners found that many entry-level workers lacked some of the basic skills and attitudes needed to succeed on the job. Through better screening, basic training, and support through the career coaches, PCWD is better able to place entry-level workers who are more likely to meet their expectations.

**Second, PCWD is interested in filling hard-to-fill positions in the Partners system with existing employees.** In terms of priority workforce needs, Partners identified the following occupations: Registered Nurses, Radiological Technologist, and Surgical Technologist. These hard-to-fill positions pay between \$15.25 an hour and \$48.66 an hour. Their educational requirements range from a 1-year certificate program for a surgical technologist position to a 4-year baccalaureate degree from many nursing and radiological technologist positions. Rather than undertaking expensive, and often unsuccessful, external recruitment efforts, the idea is to build Partners’ own workforce and provide the supports needed to allow existing employees to progress along an educational pathway that would lead to these higher-paying, higher-skilled jobs. In this way, a win-win situation could occur.

Feedback to date from individual employers in the Partners system finds that from their perspective one of the most critical components of the PCWD effort is the career coaching. Those in Human Resources noted that they have in the past provided a wide range of ESOL, basic training, and career development activities. However, without the coaching, many employees did not take advantage of these resources, nor understood what they needed to do to make progress along a career path. Many employees had unrealistic expectations about advancement. Accordingly, the coaching has filled a critical gap, one that it is very unlikely that the individual institutions would be able to support on their own.

Employers also report that the engagement of the supervisors is something that is new and an important aspect of the PCWD effort. As a result of this engagement, the supervisors are gaining a

better understanding of the benefits of having their employees participate in some of the workforce development programs that are available.

There are some early indications that the employers are seeing some momentum related to PCWD. One sign has been the growing number of supervisors who are offering internships to pre-employment participants. The employers are also reporting that their preliminary sense is that the level of reliability and maturity of the graduates of the PCWD pre-employment program is an improvement over the Project Rise program.

## **The Participant Perspective**

In order to better understand how PCWD's program is working "on the ground," we conducted interviews with a small sample of PCWD program participants (6 individuals). In addition to providing a sense of participants' experiences with the program, these interviews also provided insights into some of the challenges that incumbent workers face as they work to progress up the career ladder. In the interviews, a number of the participants had limited English fluency. In addition, a number noted the barriers they faced in going back to school. These included family life issues, as well as having sufficient money to pay for rent during the time period in which they will have to work part-time.

Similarities across interviewees included:

- Supervisors were very supportive of all of the participants;
- A few noted that their job shadowing experience at Brigham and Women's Hospital was particularly helpful in terms of identifying their career interests;
- All of the individuals interviewed found that the coaching was an extremely important component of the program. In some cases, the role of the coach was simply to help keep the participants on track; in other cases, the coach assisted the participants in dealing with personal crises and important life issues;
- All of those interviewed reported that they had referred other co-workers to the program;
- All but one of those interviewed had a very specific career goal within the healthcare field; and
- None of those interviewed are expecting a short-term wage increase or promotion; they all understand the longer-term nature of the program, and are willing to make the commitment to achieve their career goals.

The following vignettes are based on interviews conducted with participants, and provide a more personal glimpse of the PCWD participants. Unfortunately, all of the interviews were with

incumbent workers.<sup>21</sup> To protect the confidentiality of the interviewees, we have created three composite profiles using pseudonyms, based on the experience of our six interviewees.

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<sup>21</sup> Although PCWD provided contact information for a pre-employment participant, the evaluation team was unable to reach this individual.

**Yasmin** – Yasmin, a well-educated young woman from Colombia, came to the United States five years ago seeking a better life for herself and her elderly father. Although she attained an advanced degree in her native Colombia, her English skills are poor and she has been unable to advance from her Patient Care Assistant (PCA) position. Yasmin’s supervisor recognized that her communications skills were a barrier to her moving into a higher-level position, and encouraged her to enroll in the PCWD program. Yasmin enrolled in the program and was assigned a coach with whom she meets regularly. Her computer skills are excellent, and she is working diligently on improving her English. Since Yasmin converses with her father only in Spanish, her coach meets with her on a regular basis, outside of “office hours,” to help Yasmin practice her English speaking skills. She has taken advantage of the job-shadowing component of the program. Yasmin indicated that it was much better than she expected, and she feels it provided a real sense of what various jobs encompass—something that Yasmin could not get from reading a brochure or job description on the computer. Although unsure of her long-term career goals, Yasmin is acutely aware that once she has a better grasp of the language she has endless possibilities for the future. She may decide to pursue a career in nursing or pharmacology, or return to college for a second advanced degree in a completely unrelated field. Her one desire, regardless of which career path she chooses, is to help bridge the cultural gap that exists for Colombians when relocating to the U.S.

**Maria** is a U.S. citizen who transitioned into healthcare from food services. Although she actually makes less money currently as a PCA, the benefits are better and it provides a better work/life balance, which is critical to her family. Maria has found the PCWD program to be extremely beneficial, but is also aware that she has done most of the work herself. Although her supervisor has been supportive, she did not initiate Maria’s enrollment in the program; Maria “happened upon it herself.” Maria, extremely computer-savvy, went onto the Partners’ website, found the Workforce Development page, and then approached her supervisor about the program. Maria feels that a person not as adept as she at finding things on the computer, or even lacking computer access entirely, would have a much more difficult time accessing information about the program or may never even hear about it. Maria is extremely confident, driven, and has set short- and long-term goals for herself that she has every intention of achieving. She is currently working full-time while taking courses at BHCC. She plans to remain at the hospital while attending school in the evenings, and hopes to advance into a surgical tech or x-ray tech position at the hospital. Maria refers to her job coach as her “mentor.” She calls her mentor once every couple of weeks, advises him of her progress, and uses him as a check to make sure she is staying on track as far as classes she should be taking, financial aid forms that need to be filed, etc. Her mentor is a great source of encouragement. Maria is always thrilled to call him with good news about a test score! According to Maria, her mentor always comes through for her. If he doesn’t have an answer, he finds someone who does. Maria believes he opens doors for her and provides the contacts and opportunities, but she needs to keep the ball rolling. According to Maria, he shows you what’s available—surgical tech, PCA, nursing—and encourages you to job shadow. He shows you the avenue and the ladders within the avenue. Maria is aware that she is one of the lucky ones who know how to access resources and get the most out of the program. She is a huge advocate of the program, and has encouraged many co-workers to talk to her coach for guidance.

**Jeff**, a PCA at a Partners hospital, was enrolled in school pursuing a degree when his supervisor at the hospital suggested he take a look at the Surgical Tech program. After job shadowing, he was hooked—he talked it over with his wife and children, they thought it was a great idea, and he enrolled in the program. Jeff’s supervisor has been “emotionally and spiritually supportive” of his involvement in the program. Whatever time is needed for school, she makes sure he gets it. She is a motivating force, constantly encouraging him, pushing him, and making sure that nothing stands in his way. His job coach played a more active role at the outset, but is somewhat less involved now. (For example, in the beginning of his involvement with the PCWD program, the coach provided Jeff with information on a first-time homebuyers program.) Jeff wants to be a role model for his children. He cannot simply tell them they need to go to college to improve their lot in life; he needs to show them. Moreover, the Surgical Tech position is not Jeff’s ultimate goal. He will complete the program and work as a Tech until all his children are through college. Then he and his wife hope to fulfill their lifelong dream of opening their own business.

## **Addendum: Progress Since November 30, 2004<sup>22</sup>, and Plans for Year 2.**

Since the end of Year 1, PCWD has continued to actively enroll incumbent workers, has begun a fifth round of pre-employment training, and has made progress in some of the other educational components of the program. Specifically:

- The fifth cycle of pre-employment program began in February 2005 with 13 participants, and graduated all 13 in March 2005. The group is perceived to be a very strong cohort of participants. This brings the cumulative number of PCWD pre-employment participants to 57.
- Thirty-eight new incumbent workers have been recruited, bringing the cumulative number to 203.
- A second cycle of the pre-college and intensive ESOL classes has begun. The retention rates in both classes are considerably higher than in the first round. PCWD has reported that 15 of 18 participants in the Intensive ESOL class still remain, and 13 of the 18 in the new pre-college class;
- Massachusetts General Hospital’s Institute of Health Professions (IHP) has started its first class in the Clinicians as Educators Program. Unfortunately, only 3 of the 8 participants are new to IHP.
- Massachusetts Bay Community College (MBCC) has offered its hybrid Biology 101 class that was developed as part of the PCWD program. However, to date there have been no employees from Partners who have enrolled in the class. PCWD staff are working to better understand why no one has enrolled, and believe that it is related to the location of the lab at the MBCC Wellesley Campus.

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<sup>22</sup> Through April 2005.

- In December 2004, PCWD “Champions” received their Partners in Excellence awards. This event provided managers and supervisors involved in the pre-employment program with recognition for their myriad efforts. According to PCWD staff, this event was very well received by the “Champions,” who appreciated the official nature of the award.
- More work has been done to build asset development activities into the PCWD program. For example, JVS is doing outreach related to Food Stamps, and there are efforts to ensure that employees know about all available benefits. In addition, a presentation on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) was made at MGH.
- PCWD have been taking steps to increase the number of health career starters in the incumbent worker program. One of its strategies has been to identify and recruit graduates of the previous Project Rise program who are still employed at Partners. According to PCWD staff, 19 former Project Rise participants have enrolled, or plan to enroll in PCWD.
- In place of the luncheon for “Champions” that was originally planned for January and cancelled, PCWD has planned luncheon and breakfast meetings at each of the Partners institutions. These meetings will take place over April and May 2005.

In terms of their current priorities, PCWD staff continue to study, learn, and refine their programs and activities. Some of the areas that they are currently focused on include:

- How do they better meet the basic educational needs of the low-skilled incumbent workers? Currently, there are no formal GED or ESOL classes at the participating partner institutions, with the exception of the ability of Brigham and Women’s Hospital employees to participate in the classes of the HCRTI. They are exploring offering GED on site through JVS.
- They are rethinking how they define their cohorts. Their initial distinctions between college-bound and college-ready have not proven to be useful. In addition, those needing intensive ESOL are being folded into the basic college-ready/college-bound cohort.
- They are focusing increased attention on outreach and communication strategies. They recognize that most employees and managers remain unaware of what PCWD is doing, and the program is seeking new means of reaching out broadly within the Partners’ system.
- The PCWD staff have begun to plan for sustainability, and to explore within the Partners’ system how they could continue to support their activities in the long run.
- They are looking closely at the current coaching model, and thinking about ways to make it more effective and efficient.
- They are exploring how to make the Career Club more effective, particularly for those employees who have not been placed and need to get value from their continuing participation; and
- They are strengthening their collaboration with Bullfinch Temporary Services (BTS), which provides temporary employees to Partners institutions. PCWD staff are working

to move pre-employment participants from temporary jobs with BFT to permanent jobs within the Partners Healthcare system.

## **B. Health Care and Research Training Institute**

### **Partnership Description**

HCRTI represents a partnership involving eleven health care–related employers, one union, three community colleges and training agencies, and ten community organizations. Led by JPNDC (as fiscal agent) and the Fenway Community Development Corporation, the activities undertaken by the HCRTI partnership are intended to bring improved employment opportunities and career paths for Boston residents that lead to jobs paying family-supporting wages. More specifically, with its SkillWorks funding, HCRTI is seeking to institutionalize a sectoral career ladders project in health care focused on the Longwood Medical and Academic Area (LMAA).

The HCRTI neighborhood-employer collaboration has created an employment pipeline for residents, and seeks to streamline and simplify the recruiting and hiring process for health care employers. For the participating employers of LMAA, the services of HCRTI and its partner agencies are expected to provide a well-qualified and trained workforce and a better bottom line. The SkillWorks funding is viewed as facilitating progress toward these ends, as well as in creating a permanent health care Training Center in LMAA for entry-level workers and neighborhood residents. HCRTI also intends to establish a library of health care and research competencies, with related training modules.

The HCRTI partnership is expected to result in the development of a model of workforce development services in the health care and research field that is agile and responsive to changing employers and employee/resident needs. Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC), as lead agency/fiscal agent of the HCRTI, hopes that this model can be replicated by other health care systems. HCRTI is seeking to create a business analysis that captures the return on investment for employers, as part of its efforts to document the benefits of the partnership and to move HCRTI toward sustainability through employer investment.

### **What Pre-Existed SkillWorks**

HCRTI did not suddenly spring into being in 2004. The Institute reflects the culmination of a systematic development effort that began in earnest four years earlier. The origins of the current HCRTI partnership started with planning and research (in 2000) and implementation (in 2001-2003) of the “Bridges to the Future” program.<sup>23</sup> Bridges to the Future was a career ladder pilot project that initially included five health-related employers (Beth Israel-Deaconess Medical Center, Children’s Hospital Boston, Harvard Medical School and Dental School, and New England Baptist Hospital). Original community partners included JPNDC and Fenway Community Development Corporation.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Actually, one can trace the roots of HCRTI even earlier, to a welfare-to-work partnership among JPNDC, Fenway CDC, Beth Israel Hospital, and Children’s Hospital.

<sup>24</sup> JPNDC served as the fiscal agent.

The pilot program focused on expanding training and advancement opportunities for incumbent workers, and on improving the retention and staff vacancy rates of the participating employers. Bridges was initially funded by a three-year grant from Fleet Charitable Trust, the Boston Foundation and others, and then expanded with BEST funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

### **What was Added in Year 1 through the SkillWorks Initiative**

Because many aspects of the services being provided by HCRTI existed prior to the SkillWorks initiative, it is important to identify how the Institute has further expanded its services with the SkillWorks funding. That is, what is the “value added” that the SkillWorks funding has created? Some of the more significant features of the value added to date are:

- Under SkillWorks, HCRTI has expanded its partnership from seven<sup>25</sup> to eleven health care and research institutions. Specifically, the Institute has added as participating employers the Fenway Community Health Center, the Joslin Diabetes Center, the Martha Eliot Health Center, and the South Jamaica Plain Health Center. The inclusion of Joslin Diabetes Center represents a particularly impressive milestone, because it means that the Institute is providing its services to all of the LMAA health care and research providers.
- Although the Institute’s incumbent program had been in effect for several years, the SkillWorks funding allowed the addition of a pre-employment component. This component is now being implemented at nine of the eleven employer-partners, and as noted above represents the establishment of an important employment pipeline for neighborhood residents.
- For both the incumbent workers and pre-employment participants, SkillWorks funding of HCRTI is also allowing the expansion of a continuum of health care-related education and training courses for residents and employees. The ultimate goal is to allow residents and employees to move “over as much time as they need, toward positions that pay family sustaining wages.” Included among the proposed expansion activities is bringing a nursing course of study to LMAA.
- HCRTI has expanded the geographic scope of its services as well, by adding the Mission Hill neighborhood to the pre-existing target neighborhoods of Jamaica Plain and the Fenway. The emergence of Mission Main Resident Services (now named MissionWorks) as a lead partner for that neighborhood also ensures that Mission Hill residents will have a strong service provider and advocate within the partnership. Other community partners involved with HCRTI include Sociedad Latina, Roxbury Tenants of Harvard, and Parker Hill Fenway ABCD.
- The development of the “single point of contact system” for the Pre-Employment component (described in more detail later in this report) is also seen as a major addition by both the employers and the community agencies.

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<sup>25</sup> Prior to SkillWorks funding, the Dana Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham & Women’s Hospital had joined the original five health and research institutions in the partnership.

## Characteristics of HCRTI Participants at Baseline

Exhibit 15 summarizes HCRTI's Year 1 goals for enrollment of Pre-Employment participants and Incumbent Worker participants. In this regard, HCRTI's performance surpassed the specified goals for both groups of participants, and the combined number of Year 1 enrollees exceeded the target figure by 83 individuals.

<b>Exhibit 15. Year 1 Enrollment Experience of HCRTI</b>		
	<b>First Year Goal</b>	<b>Actually Served</b>
Pre-Employment Participants	100	125
Incumbent Participants	150	208
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>333</b>

The sections that follow provide more information regarding the baseline characteristics of HCRTI's participants during Year 1 of SkillWorks funding.

### Pre-Employment Participants

According to its SkillWorks application, under its Pre-Employment component HCRTI planned to target the residents of three Boston neighborhoods (Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill, and the Fenway) for entry-level positions with the participating health and research employers. Using 2000 Census data, the Institute estimated that more than 40% of the adult population of those neighborhoods – between 10,000-15,000 individuals – either had never completed high school or lacked any further education beyond high school. HCRTI also noted that these neighborhoods contained significant immigrant populations, especially Latinos and an increasing number of Africans.

Exhibit 16 presents some summary demographic data for the 125 individuals that HCRTI enrolled in its Pre-Employment component over the course of Year 1.<sup>26</sup> (Additional information can also be found in the appendix at the end of this report.) Although the evaluation team does not have information on the actual neighborhoods in which they reside, nearly all of the pre-employment participants (96%) reported that they were Boston residents. Most were female (82%), and either Latino (42%) or Black (42%). More than half of the participants indicated that their primary language was not English, and more than one in five (21%) indicated that they were resident aliens. Almost half of the pre-employment participants also reported that they either lacked a High School diploma or that a GED or High School diploma was their highest level of educational certification. Thirty-one percent of the pre-employment participants indicated that they had some college experience or an Associates degree, but only 4% reported having a 4-year degree or graduate degree. On the other hand, an additional 16% reported that they had some form of certification from a technical or vocational training program. According to HCRTI, many of these individuals with

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<sup>26</sup> Figures reflect percentages of respondents who provided information relative to each attribute.

**Exhibit 16.  
Demographic Characteristics of HCRTI Pre-Employment Participants**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	23	18%
Female	102	82%
<b>Boston Residency at Enrollment</b>		
Resident	120	96%
Not Resident	5	4%
<b>Wage Earner Status</b>		
Sole wage earner	59	65%
Primary wage earner	29	32%
Secondary wage earner	2	2%
Equal wage earner	1	1%
Missing	34	
<b>Annual Household Income</b>		
Under \$10,000	18	23%
\$10,000 to \$24,999	51	64%
\$25,000 to \$39,999	11	14%
\$40,000 and over	0	0%
Missing	45	
<b>Household Size</b>		
Average household size	2.56	n/a
Average number of children under 18 years living at home	1.96	n/a
<b>Highest Education Level and Certification at Enrollment</b>		
Neither GED or High School Diploma	4	3%
GED Certificate	20	16%
High School Diploma	37	30%
Some college	21	17%
Associates degree	17	14%
4-year Undergraduate degree	3	2%
Post graduate degree	3	2%
Certificate from technical or vocation training program	20	16%
License to practice vocational trade	0	0%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White/Caucasian (not Hispanic)	6	5%
Black (not Hispanic)	50	42%
Hispanic	50	42%
Asian or Pacific Islander	8	7%
Other	6	5%
Missing	5	
<b>Primary Language</b>		
English	52	43%
Not English	68	57%
Missing	5	
<b>Citizenship Status</b>		
US Citizen	91	78%
Resident Alien	24	21%
Other	2	2%
Missing	8	

college degrees or technical/vocational certificates are limited English speakers who obtained such certification before they came to the U.S.

Less than one in five (18%) of the Pre-Employment participants was employed at the time of enrollment, which helps to explain the relatively low annual household incomes. Eighty-seven percent of the pre-employment participants that provided household income information reported annual household incomes below \$25,000.

Exhibit 17 details the Department of Health and Human Services 2004 Poverty Guidelines for various sized households.<sup>27</sup> Using reported annual household income and household size data,<sup>28</sup> we find that 27 of the HCRTI Pre-employment participants, or 29% of the individuals that we have data for, came from households with incomes at or below the federal poverty level in 2004.

<b>Exhibit 17.</b>						
<b>United States Department of Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines, 2004</b>						
<b>Size of Family Unit</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
48 Contiguous States and D.C.	\$9,310	\$12,490	\$15,670	\$18,850	\$22,030	\$25,210

However, as we noted in the preceding Partners case study, the Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard (MassFESS) is a better measure for determining whether households have achieved a minimally adequate income level needed to live and work in Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>29</sup> Exhibit 18 shows the MassFESS for families of varying compositions living in Boston.

<b>Exhibit 18.</b>				
<b>The Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard for Four Family Types, Boston, 2003</b>				
	<b>One Adult</b>	<b>One Adult, One Preschooler</b>	<b>One Adult, One Preschooler, One School Age Child</b>	<b>Two Adults, One Preschooler, One School Age Child</b>
Boston	\$21,362	\$44,046	\$51,284	\$54,612

Based on the data available from HCRTI, at least 83% of the Pre-Employment participants came from households in which the annual reported income fell below the MassFESS standard.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/04poverty.shtml>

<sup>28</sup> HCRTI reported household income and size data on 92 out of 125 pre-employment participants. The reported percentages in this section are based on these 92 participants.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.weiu.org/index.php?page=126>

<sup>30</sup> That is, 76 of 92 households providing the necessary information to make a determination. All 68 of the multiple-person households providing the information failed to achieve the MassFESS standard.

Overall, then, it appears that HCRTI was successful during Year 1 in recruiting pre-employment participants who generally met the characteristics of the intended target population – Boston residents who are educationally and/or economically disadvantaged, many of whom may face additional challenges due to language barriers or immigrant status.

Other characteristics of the pre-employment participants that are worth noting include:

- The majority of the participants are single, divorced or widowed (a total of 74%). Only about a quarter of the participants were married at the time of enrollment.
- Almost two-thirds (65%) of participants characterized themselves as their household’s “sole wage earner.” Another 32% indicated that they were the “primary wage earner” for the household.
- The average household size (2.56 persons) and average number of children under 18 years living at home (1.96), combined with the abovementioned data on marital status and wage earner status, strongly suggests that a substantial number of the pre-employment participants are single-parent heads of households with children.
- A large percentage of the participants have been recent recipients of some form of public assistance. Thirty-eight percent of the participants reported recent TANF receipt, 50% indicated recent receipt of Food Stamps, and 41% received some form of housing subsidy or assistance.
- The age of the pre-employment participants varied widely. Three percent were 20 years old or less, 35% were between 21 and 30 years old, 29% were between 31 and 40 years old, 28% were between 41 and 50 years old, and 6% were over 50 years old.
- Among the 18% of the participants that were employed at the time of enrollment, approximately two-thirds (N=14) were employed full-time, with an average hourly wage of \$10.36. The remaining one-third that were employed at enrollment (N=8) were working an average of 20 hours per week at the time of enrollment, at an average hourly wage of \$9.44. (Note: According to HCRTI, the individuals employed at enrollment were primarily “walk-ins” looking for placement assistance, who did not participate in the formal Pre-Employment training course.)

### **Incumbent Worker Participants**

HCRTI’s application was less specific about the characteristics of individuals that it would target for its incumbent worker component. Nonetheless, the explicit goal of the component – in part, to extend career ladders to help employees reach self-sustaining wages – and the nature of the training and services being provided (ESOL, remedial and pre-college education, as well as health career-focused technical training) strongly suggests that the Institute expected that many of its incumbent participants would also be “disadvantaged.” That is, these incumbent participants would generally be individuals in lower-paying positions who had difficulty in achieving advancement because of inadequate education, language or other skills, information about career advancement opportunities, or resources to pursue further education.

Exhibit 19 provides an overview of the 208 participants who enrolled in HCRTI's incumbent worker component during Year 1. Again, as with the pre-employment participants, most incumbent participants were female (77%), and the majority were members of minority groups (42% of those individuals providing race/ethnicity data identified their race/ethnicity as Black, 31% as Hispanic, and 10% as Asian or Pacific Islander). However, in contrast to the pre-employment participants who were nearly all Boston residents, the incumbent participants contained a considerable percentage of non-Boston residents (40%). This is not surprising given the geographic region from which the LMAA health and research institutions draw employees, and the fact that the incumbent component did not specifically recruit on the basis of Boston-residency.

Interestingly, the percentage of incumbent worker participants indicating that English was not their primary language (58%) was almost identical to that of the pre-employment participants (57%). Moreover, an even greater percentage of incumbent worker participants indicated that they were resident aliens (26%) than did the pre-employment worker participants (21%). Similarly, a greater percentage of incumbent participants reported that they had neither a GED nor High School diploma than did the pre-employment participants (20% versus 3%). Twenty-five percent of incumbent worker participants indicated that they had some college experience or an Associates degree, however. Another 15% reported having either a 4-year degree or graduate degree, a much higher percentage than seen in the pre-employment participants (4%).<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, only 4% reported a vocational training certificate, compared with 16% of the pre-employment participants.

The annual household income distribution reported by the incumbent worker participants is also very interesting, in light of the above information: 48% of incumbent worker participants reported annual household incomes less than \$25,000, 5% reported household incomes between \$25,000 and \$39,999, and 47% reported incomes of \$40,000 or greater.

Looking more closely at the data available from HCRTI incumbent workers relative to household income and household size,<sup>32</sup> we find that 61% of them were from households above the federal poverty level. These findings are not completely surprising, since the incumbent worker participants were employed at the time of their enrollment (although it is distressing that a substantial number of incumbents were both working and below the poverty level).

A more interesting measure for the incumbent group may be the MassFESS standard, however. Using the MassFESS measure as a benchmark, we find that 43% of the incumbents who provided sufficient information for us to make a determination fell below the MassFESS standard for Boston, based on family type and income level.

What these data suggest is that the HCRTI incumbent worker participants may be made up of three or more distinct subgroups. Some incumbent workers have very limited formal education, perhaps

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<sup>31</sup> HCRTI also trains managers and supervisors in how to coach employees; a HCRTI representative has indicated that some of these managers and supervisors are included in the incumbent statistics and may be among those reporting the possession of a Bachelor's degree.

<sup>32</sup> HCRTI reported household income and size data on 186 out of 208 incumbent participants. The reported percentages in this section are based on these 186 participants.

**Exhibit 19.  
Demographic Characteristics of HCRTI Incumbent Participants**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	48	23%
Female	160	77%
<b>Boston Residency at Enrollment</b>		
Yes- Boston resident	123	60%
No- not Boston resident	81	40%
Missing	4	
<b>Wage Earner Status</b>		
Sole wage earner	118	63%
Primary wage earner	54	29%
Secondary wage earner	6	3%
Equal wage earner	7	4%
Other	1	1%
Missing	22	
<b>Annual Household Income</b>		
Under \$10,000	15	8%
\$10,000 to \$24,999	75	40%
\$25,000 to \$39,999	9	5%
\$40,000 and over	87	47%
Missing	22	
<b>Household Size</b>		
Average household size	2.8	n/a
Average number of children under 18 years living at home	2.3	n/a
<b>Highest Education Level and Certification at Enrollment</b>		
Neither GED or High School Diploma	38	20%
GED Certificate	18	9%
High School Diploma	51	26%
Some college	33	17%
Associates degree	15	8%
4-year Undergraduate degree	21	11%
Post graduate degree	8	4%
Certificate from technical or vocation training program	8	4%
License to practice vocational trade	2	1%
Missing	14	
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White/Caucasian (not Hispanic)	25	15%
Black (not Hispanic)	71	42%
Hispanic	52	31%
Asian or Pacific Islander	17	10%
Native American	1	1%
Other	2	1%
Missing	40	
<b>Primary Language</b>		
English	80	42%
Not English	111	58%
Missing	17	
<b>Citizenship Status</b>		
US Citizen	141	68%
Resident Alien	54	26%
Other	13	6%

limited English-speaking skills, and are in low-paying jobs; these may include individuals who were hired when the labor market was very tight and perhaps before the employers raised their minimum educational pre-requisites. These individuals may be even more “disadvantaged” in some respects than many of the pre-employment participants, with the exception of having a job.

A second group may be individuals with limited formal education and/or some language difficulties, who have nonetheless over time been able to achieve some level of job and economic advancement, through persistence and/or technical skills in vocational areas that do not require specific certifications. However, these individuals may need more formal technical training or other skill enhancements to make additional gains.

A third group may be individuals with relatively impressive existing formal education certifications and positions above entry-level, but nonetheless face some barriers to further advancement, such as immigrant status (that may render their college degrees or technical certifications effectively worthless), language issues, and/or a lack of information regarding career pathways and requirements.

Other noteworthy characteristics of the incumbent worker participants include:

- On average, the incumbent workers are somewhat older than the pre-employment workers: none are under 20 years old; 20% are between 21 and 30 years old; 35% are between 31 and 40 years old; 30% are between 41 and 50 years old; and 14% are over 50 years old.
- Although a higher percentage of incumbent worker participants reported that they were married as the time of enrollment than did pre-employment participants (37% versus 26%), the majority of the incumbent worker participants were either single (49%), divorced (12%), or widowed (1%).
- The average household size (2.8) and average number of children living at home (2.3) were both somewhat greater for the incumbent worker participants than for the pre-employment participants.
- Almost two-thirds of the incumbent worker participants (63%) identified themselves as their household’s “sole wage earner,” and more than another one-quarter (29%) identified themselves as their household’s “primary wage earner.”

As with the pre-employment participants, this information suggests that a substantial segment of the incumbent worker participants may be single-parent heads of households with children.

## **Year 1 Activities and Accomplishments**

### **Activities Relative to Pre-employment Services**

As noted above, the Pre-Employment component of HCRTI was added as a result of SkillWorks funding, and complements the incumbent worker activities that Bridges to the Future had been conducting for several years. Nine of the eleven health care and research institutions participated in the HCRTI Pre-Employment component during Year 1.

Establishment of this component involved developing curriculum with employers, hiring instructors and/or negotiating agreements with training providers, recruiting participants through community partners, establishing internships and related matching procedures with employer partners, enrolling participants, conducting the training and internships, and assisting graduates with job placement.

**Job Readiness Training:** HCRTI's pre-employment training during Year 1 consisted of a 12-week, full-time program (9 am to 5 pm on weekdays, 40 hours a week). The training focused on medical terminology, customer service, business skills, financial planning, resume writing, office etiquette, and computer skills. The first four weeks of the training were entirely classroom-focused. For weeks 5 through 12, however, participants were placed in internships with partner employers for three days a week (Tuesday through Thursday), with Monday and Friday devoted to additional classroom instruction and reflection on their internship experiences. In addition, the participants worked at specifying career goals for themselves, through both discussions in class and one-on-one sessions with their assigned Employment Specialist.

During Year 1, there were three cycles of the 12-week job readiness training, with cycles beginning in January, July, and September 2004. The second and third cycles of the Pre-Employment skills training also provided advancement training for previous graduates of HCRTI's ESOL training (see below).

**ESOL Training:** According to HCRTI staff, in 2004 there was a single cycle of ESOL training for Pre-Employment participants, beginning in mid-May and ending in June, serving 18 individuals.<sup>33</sup> All 18 individuals completed this training. It is worthwhile that, based on its experience, HCRTI has expanded its ESOL curriculum to a five-week, full-time program to provide more extensive language instruction to pre-employment candidates.<sup>34</sup>

Overall, 94 enrollees in the Pre-Employment component received some form of training and counseling (achieving 94% of HCRTI's annual goal for Pre-Employment participants to be trained and counseled). The other participants received counseling and job placement services. Many of these were "walk-ins" who didn't need or want training, and requested placement directly into a job.

In addition to the direct services to participants, HCRTI has conducted three career orientation sessions in the three neighborhoods adjoining LMAA (Mission Hill, the Fenway, and Jamaica Plain), bringing HR staff from the employer partners to communicate their hiring needs directly to the staff of the community organizations in these neighborhoods. An additional "hiring forum" was held for other community organizations from these neighborhoods. These sessions have helped to foster a

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<sup>33</sup> HCRTI sent a letter to the Boston PIC indicating that the Institute would not be able to do the second cycle because it had not achieved its fundraising goal due to delayed RFPs from State and City sources.

<sup>34</sup> This level of intensiveness in the training – 12 full-time weeks of pre-employment training and 5 full-time weeks of ESOL – may be necessary to impart the workplace values and skills necessary for success in the targeted health care positions. However, it will be important to assess carefully what barriers to participation (if any) may result from such a lengthy training program. If the duration of the training represents a significant barrier for many potential participants, it will also be important to address how any such barriers may be mitigated.

better understanding of the employers' requirements among the CBOs' staff, and strengthened the networks for referring qualified neighborhood residents to appropriate job openings.

### **Activities Relative to Incumbent Worker Services**

HCRTI has offered a range of services to incumbent worker participants.

**Career Coaching and Counseling:** Some degree of coaching services was provided to all 208 individuals who enrolled in HCRTI's Incumbent Worker component during Year 1.<sup>35</sup>

**Basic Skills:** HCRTI has provided ESOL and GED classes for its incumbent worker participants, as well as brush-up/preparatory math and English classes, pre-college reading and writing classes, and courses for improving computer skills. HCRTI expanded its ESOL, math, and computer skills courses to offer classes at multiple levels. HCRTI did this in order to better accommodate varying skill levels among enrollees, and to provide more advanced training to participants who had completed the earlier courses.

**Vocational/Technical Skills:** HCRTI has offered classes in Patient Care, Administrative skills (two cycles of classes), Pre-Technology (also two cycles), and Science. The Science class was a new class that HCRTI added to its curriculum specifically in response to employer and employee demand. HCRTI also held three cycles of Administration/Supervisory Training classes, focusing on effective hiring practices.

**Financial Planning and Asset Development:** HCRTI contracted for financial planning workshops that were offered during lunchtime hours at LMAA. Six workshops were held over the course of Year 1. The Institute also brought the City of Boston's free tax preparation and EITC assistance workshops on-site. A total of 55 incumbent workers received financial counseling during the program year.

**Tutoring:** HCRTI implemented a tutoring program, with the volunteer tutors trained by the Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts in two separate sessions. By the end of Year 1, a total of 15 participants had been matched with tutors.

In addition to these services, HCRTI has conducted five career orientation sessions at employer sites. This has exposed the entry-level workers to career ladder opportunities, the educational requirements

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<sup>35</sup> Career coaching for the incumbent workers is voluntary (that is, existing workers can participate in the HCRTI training programs without signing up to receive career coaching on an on-going basis). The higher-skilled incumbent workers appear to be less likely to seek intensive career coaching. These individuals are reported generally to be more self-reliant and aware of the career paths and resources available to them. On the other hand, less-skilled workers are more likely to take advantage of the intensive career coaching. Many of the individuals in this latter category face numerous barriers (including language barriers) and therefore, according to coaches, their progress typically is going to be a series of small steps forward. In addition, the principal interest of some of these individuals is in becoming more effective and confident in their current job, rather than in promotion or advancement to a more technically demanding position.

of a variety of positions, and the entrance requirements for community college admission. HCRTI reports that over 130 people attended these sessions.

### **Activities Relative to General Administration of HCRTI**

HCRTI has conducted a collaborative process to design and oversee the implementation of its Pre-Employment component and its expanded Incumbent Worker services.

It has held regular meetings of the HCRTI Steering Committee – comprised of JPND and Fenway CDC board members – to review key policy issues, oversee development of a long-range business plan, and to plan for the Institute’s permanent space at LMAA. Over the course of Year 1, at least seven Steering Committee meetings were held.

HCRTI has also engaged its employer-partners through a variety of forums. On an on-going basis, meetings with the Regional Industry Team, the Employer Advisory Board, and the Curriculum Committee were held to obtain employer input into the design of new HCRTI courses and supports. HCRTI has also worked with the Regional Industry Team (which was created under the BEST grant) to develop a “cohort” model for career coaching. Altogether, more than 20 meetings of these groups took place over the course of Year 1. In addition, monthly meetings were held with individual employers to review the implementation experience with the HCRTI services. HCRTI has also been involved with the employers in an on-going collaboration to develop a library of competencies.

To deal with the administrative and operational demands of HCRTI, the Institute created a new senior position – Director of Operations. The individual hired to fill this position assumed responsibility for managing the day-to-day operations of the Institute. This has freed-up the HCRTI Project Director to focus on fund-raising and the strengthening of strategic relationships critical for long-term sustainability, and on national dissemination of the HCRTI model and learnings.

### **Accomplishments**

**Graduation Rates:** One immediate (as in “short-term”) measure of HCRTI accomplishments, and participant satisfaction, is the rate of course completion for the various classes that the Institute has run during Year 1. Systematic data were not reported for all of HCRTI classes. However, Exhibit 20 provides information on the enrollment and graduation experience on a sample of the class cycles, based on the available data (Source: HCRTI Quarterly Report submissions).

From this sample, it appears that the sizes of the HCRTI courses were generally small for both the Pre-Employment and Incumbent components, allowing for more individual attention to the needs of participants. The graduation rates for this sample were also generally very high across both components, suggesting both provision of adequate supports and encouragement for participants to complete the courses, and participant satisfaction with the curriculum and instructors.

According to HCRTI records, in total 154 of the 208 incumbent worker participants who enrolled in the various training options completed their courses in Year 1, for an overall 74% completion rate for the Incumbent component. [Note: this percentage appears low given the graduation rates previously presented for a sample of Incumbent courses. However, the overall graduation rate reflects the fact that a number of courses underway had not been completed by the end of Year 1.]

**Exhibit 20.  
HCRTI Training Enrollment and Graduation Experience During Year 1**

<b>Course</b>	<b>Number Enrolled</b>	<b>Number Completing</b>	<b>Completion Rate</b>
Pre-Employment ESOL	19	19	100%
Pre-Employment 12-week Program (Cycle 3)	19	14	74%
Incumbent Computer Skills – Level 1	9	7	78%
Incumbent Computer Skills – Level 2	12	11	92%
Incumbent Computer Skills – Level 3	14	12	86%
Supervisory Training on Effective Hiring Practices (Cycle 2)	6	6	100%
Incumbent ESOL (Cycle 1)	30	24	80%
Incumbent – Prep Math (Cycle 2)	15	12	80%
Incumbent – Prep English (Cycle 2)	6	4	67%
Incumbent – Administrative Skills – Level 1 (Cycles 1 & 2)	8 (Cycle 1) 9 (Cycle 2)	7 (Cycle 1) 7 (Cycle 2)	88% (Cycle 1) 78% (Cycle 2)
Incumbent – Pre-Technology (Cycles 1 & 2)	16 (Cycle 1) 14 (Cycle 2)	15 (Cycle 1) 13 (Cycle 2)	94% (Cycle 1) 93% (Cycle 2)

**Terminations:** Another important program indicator, in some ways the “flip side” of graduation rates, is terminations. Under HCRTI policies, terminations can either be voluntary, generally due to participant scheduling difficulties or dissatisfaction with the training or services,<sup>36</sup> or involuntary, because the program concludes that an individual is not fulfilling his/her responsibilities relative to participation. If termination rates are highly, or terminations are disproportionately concentrated among a certain segment of the participant population, the patterns and underlying causes for the terminations should be thoroughly explored.

**Terminations Among Pre-Employment Participants:** According to HCRTI records, during Year 1 the Pre-Employment component experienced only 5 terminations among 125 enrollees, a termination rate of 4%. The terminated participants were all US citizens (i.e., no resident aliens), were generally a little younger than the average enrollee, were all single, included no individuals with any college experience, and were somewhat more likely to have been recently receiving some form of housing assistance than the average enrollee. In many respects, however, they were not unlike the “typical enrollee” of the Pre-Employment component.

<sup>36</sup> Other possible reasons for voluntary termination include a participant enrolling in a different training program, or taking a job with a different employer.

**Terminations Among Incumbent Worker Participants:** HCRTI reports that there was only one termination from the Incumbent component.

**Participant Outcomes Indicators:** Training completion rates (and client satisfaction) are relevant measures of program effectiveness. However, when thinking about fostering economic advancement of low-income/low-skilled individuals, graduation rates reflect *outputs* rather than *outcomes*. To assess outcomes, we must examine whether the HCRTI participants are improving their measurable (and marketable) skills, their employment rates, their wages and access to benefits.

In Exhibit 21 (which begins on this page, and continues on the next two pages) we examine some of the key indicators established for HCRTI in its Year 1 work plan and quarterly reporting requirements. These reflect the subset of indicators from the work plan and quarterly reports that focus on outcomes, as opposed to activities or outputs. In cases in which a specific quantitative annual goal was set for an indicator, the exhibit also assesses how the Year 1 actual performance compares with the goal.

In addition to the outcomes indicators listed in the table, it is worthwhile noting that HCRTI is looking for assistance in figuring out how to measure its “improved hiring practices with better employee outcomes” indicator. Also, although it had originally planned to track “establishment of saving accounts” or “increase in financial assets due to non-wage income” for incumbent workers, HCRTI is not doing so due to reported employer and/or employee confidentiality concerns.

Overall, HCRTI’s Year 1 results relative to these particular outcome measures was somewhat mixed. Perhaps most disappointing was the lower than expected job placement rate for the Pre-Employment participants. During Year 2 it will be important to continue to track this cohort of Year 1 Pre-Employment participants to determine if they are ultimately placed in LMAA positions (or, alternatively, to see what other forms of employment they end up securing).

<b>Exhibit 21. HCRTI’s Year 1 Performance Relative to Selected Outcomes Indicators</b>			
<b>Participant Outcome Indicators</b>	<b>Year 1 Total</b>	<b>Percent of Annual Goal (When Applicable)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Pre-Employment</b>			
# Pre-Employment ESOL Trainees That Advanced 1-2 SPL Levels	11 (based on HCRTI Excel spreadsheet submission)	81% of goal (Goal was 75% of ESOL completers; actual was 11 of 18= 61% and 61/75 = 81%)	As noted in their quarterly reports, the HCRTI staff concluded that they had been using an inadequate testing instrument for the “post” testing that did not accurately measure higher SPL levels. HCRTI has since switched to improved testing instruments.

**Exhibit 21.  
HCRTI's Year 1 Performance Relative to Selected Outcomes Indicators**

<b>Participant Outcome Indicators</b>	<b>Year 1 Total</b>	<b>Percent of Annual Goal (When Applicable)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
# ESOL graduates who are prepared for Pre-Employment Training	9 (However, only 6 of these had entered the Pre-Employment training by the end of Year 1; 3 of the eligible graduates opted to seek full-time employment instead.)	100% of goal  (Goal was 50% of completers; actual was 9 of 18=50%, therefore 100% of goal)	
# Pre-Employment Participants Placed in Jobs	36	71% of goal (No numerical goal was set for overall number of placements. Instead HCRTI set goal for placing 80% of those <i>completing training</i> (see <i>Comment column</i> ). Achieved 20 of 35 =57% and 57/80=71%)	Average new hourly wage level for placed Pre-Employment participants: \$12.27 per hour. <sup>37</sup>  Among the 36 placements, 20 were graduates of the full Pre-employment training program (reflecting a 57% placement rate among training graduates), 12 were "walk-ins", and 4 were graduates of the pre-employment ESOL class.
# Pre-Employment Participant "New Hires" That Receive a (Health) Benefits Package	32	108% of goal (Annual goal established as 80% of training participants placed; actual was 32 of 37 participants = 86% and 86/80 = 108%)	
# Pre-Employment Graduates with Increased Earnings	29 (based on HCRTI Excel spreadsheet submission)	Insufficient data to calculate percentage of goal for <i>training graduates</i>	
<b>Incumbents</b>			
# Incumbent ESOL participants achieving 1-2 SPL levels	14 (based on HCRTI Excel spreadsheet submission)	77% of goal (Goal was 75% of completers; actual was 14 of 24=58% and 58/75=77%)	As noted in their quarterly reports, the HCRTI staff concluded that they had been using an inadequate testing instrument for the "post" testing that did not accurately measure higher SPL levels. HCRTI has since switched to improved testing instruments.

<sup>37</sup> Data on wages/wage improvements for incumbent workers will not be available from HCRTI until the end of April 2005 (i.e., currently being collected from employers).

**Exhibit 21.  
HCRTI's Year 1 Performance Relative to Selected Outcomes Indicators**

<b>Participant Outcome Indicators</b>	<b>Year 1 Total</b>	<b>Percent of Annual Goal (When Applicable)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
# Incumbent workers taking multiple steps toward career goals	57 (based on HCRTI Excel spreadsheet submission)	42% of goal (Goal was 65% of incumbents; actual was 57 of 208=27% and 27/65=42%)	Some differences between how data reported in quarterly reports and how data reported to evaluation team; working with HCRTI to identify and resolve causes for these differences for future reporting.
# Incumbent workers entering college or course of study	8	16% of goal to date (Goal was 25% of incumbents over 3 years ; actual to date was 8 of 208=4% and 4/25=16%)	

**Other Significant Accomplishments:** In addition to the participant accomplishments and outcomes identified above, during Year 1:

- HCRTI has received a commitment for a future permanent space for the Institute at a LMAA site.
- The partnership has designed the basic framework for the database that will become the library of health care and research competencies and trainers.
- HCRTI has held several focus groups with employers as part of the process of developing a return on investment model for the services provided by the Institute.

Moreover, during 2004, HCRTI has developed some refinements in its services that go beyond its original Year 1 work plan, and reflect a commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to participant and employer needs as they emerge. Some of these refinements include:

- Based on requests from employers, HCRTI is significantly redesigning its educational curriculum for its incumbent worker component. For example, it added a science class as well as a business writing class in response to requests by the partner employers.
- HCRTI is also adding animal management training to its Pre-Employment curriculum in response to a request from the partnership's research institutions.
- The protocol for developing pre-employment internships has been revised to reduce the burden of the process on the participating employers.
- As mentioned above, in response to the needs of some pre-employment participants for more extensive ESOL training, HCRTI has expanded its ESOL curriculum for its Pre-Employment component into a five-week, full-time course.

Another achievement over the last year that is important to note is the ability of HCRTI to get its employer-partners to make a substantial investment in the Institute's activities. The eleven participating employers are providing a variety of "in-kind" resources, including the value of release time, human resources and faculty time, supervisors'/managers' time, space, provision of internship opportunities, and tuition reimbursement. Moreover, HCRTI has convinced six of the health care and research institutions to make cash investments in the training services being offered; this cash investment is estimated at \$210,000 for Year 1. This cash investment reflects true employer buy-in and an appreciation of the value of the services being provided through the Institute.

### **Reaching Scale: Changing Institutional Culture and Promoting Broader System Change**

Several of the HCRTI accomplishments during Year 1 also represent clear examples of progress towards system improvements.

In this regard, perhaps the most significant accomplishment to date is the "single point of contact" protocol of the Pre-Employment component for referring job candidates to the partnering health care institutions. This innovation has several system change features. First, the single point of contact approach represents the institutionalization of a feeder system to health care entry-level positions for all neighborhoods contiguous to the LMAA. It has also rationalized how the agencies coordinate their services for multiple customers. As part of this new approach, the job developers of the various provider organizations operate as a team, and on a weekly basis jointly determine the best candidates for the available openings.

The development of standardized assessment and service plan forms/protocols for the career coaches at the provider organizations is another case of progress toward system improvement. Another example is HCRTI's success at convincing six of their employer partners to provide cash matches to underwrite a portion of the costs of the training and coaching services.

Year 2 activities being planned by HCRTI reflect additional opportunities to implement system changes. One prime example is the plan to bring a nursing course of study to LMAA, commencing in 2005 (see Addendum section, below).

### **The Employers' Perspective**

The evaluation team interviewed representatives of the hospital partners to obtain insights regarding the employers' perspective on HCRTI.<sup>38</sup> A statement made by one HR representative seems to typify the current attitude of the hospital partners regarding their involvement with HCRTI: "It's the right thing to do, to help incumbents to advance, and to find qualified individuals [from the surrounding community]."

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<sup>38</sup> To date our interviews with the HCRTI employer partners have been limited to sessions with representatives of the Human Resources and/or training staff of the institutions. In the future, we intend to conduct focus groups or interviews with the HCRTI participants' supervisors as well.

There appears to be a number of reasons for the hospitals holding this view. For one thing, LMAA institutions have limited parking available. Therefore, from a purely business perspective, it is in the hospitals' interests to attract employees that can walk or take public transportation to work. Similarly, the HCRTI program provides the hospitals with more mechanisms to identify candidates for currently hard-to-fill positions, such as radiology technologists.

In addition, community involvement is seen as a core value at some of the hospitals because these institutions were originally founded to serve low-income or underserved populations. These institutions see it as easier to have good connections with the surrounding community if a substantial portion of their employees is made up of local residents.

The employers also feel that it is helpful to have a partner in meeting their workforce development needs. Many of the LMAA institutions have been financially strained in recent years, and would be unable to offer the current array of training and support to their employees without the additional resources that HCRTI brings. In some hospitals, for instance, the training and advancement needs of entry-level workers were not being addressed until the partnership with HCRTI occurred.

Moreover, some hospitals have found it difficult to specify career ladders on their own. These institutions have appreciated working with HCRTI and, to a certain extent, other employer partners to determine the best pathways and supports to help employees advance.

The employers that were interviewed also offered specific comments on the Incumbent Worker and Pre-Employment components of HCRTI. The Incumbent Worker component is viewed by the employers as meeting their needs to improve retention and to channel workers towards key technical positions. The Incumbent Worker component is also seen as addressing the needs of those employees that require more support to move to a higher level in terms of performance or advancement. Through the Incumbent component, supervisors get to nominate individuals that they feel have a potential to advance (in addition to the workers who initiate enrollment themselves), and the hospitals feel that they get to help promising employees to achieve a sustainable living wage at one job, rather than having to work two jobs (which many entry-level employees do).

The GED and ESOL courses are seen as key features of the Incumbent Worker component. These courses are seen as particularly effective in helping workers to become more confident, and open up new possibilities in terms of the jobs that they can do. For example, one of the interviewed HR representatives described an individual who was able to move from the hospital's mailroom to the reception desk at a higher salary as a result of improvements in the individual's English-language skills.

Even if some employees are not interested in advancing to a higher position, the hospitals feel it is still useful to give these individuals opportunities to take classes. The hospitals assert that such opportunities improve the overall morale in departments, as well as the employees' confidence and skills relative to their current responsibilities. In particular, supervisors have reported seeing improvements in communications skills and the ability of individuals to work effectively with other team members, and view this as a major benefit of the partnership with HCRTI.

The employers acknowledge the critical roles played by the HCRTI career coach and the individualized approach to career planning in the Incumbent component. The coach is seen as helping participants begin to think in terms of careers, and to sort through what is important to them in choosing careers. The hospitals recognize the skills and level of effort that it takes to engage participants in such self-assessment, particularly “people who rarely have the luxury of thinking about themselves, they are so used to just trying to please others.” The employers believe that one needs to have a certain type of personality and orientation to be a successful career coach. In their view, the coach needs to be strong in advocating for the participants, but also someone who can hold them accountable. The coach needs to understand the institution and its needs as well as those of the worker, and to be effective at brokering between the two. At some hospitals, there has been turnover in the HCRTI career coaches, but the employers we spoke with are generally enthusiastic about the coaches in place at the time that this report was being written.

Although the Incumbent Worker component was in place at some LMAA hospitals prior to SkillWorks funding, the Pre-Employment component was new. The representative of one hospital indicated that she worried that implementation of this new component would be total chaos at first, but reported that her fears were basically unfounded. According to the employers, implementation of the Pre-Employment component was not without some glitches; for example, the hospitals found the procedures for establishing the initial round of Pre-Employment internships too labor intensive. However, the employers have worked with HCRTI to streamline the process, and report that the system of establishing internships is getting better with each round. In addition, the employers indicated that they were very pleased with the “single point of contact” system through which the CBOs refer qualified candidates for (generally) entry-level positions.

Overall, the employers report that their expectations to date have been met by HCRTI, and the Institute’s services are seen as meeting their institution’s needs. HR representatives from the employers indicate that most supervisors and departments are satisfied with their HCRTI experience, and some have explicitly complimented HR for bringing in the HCRTI resources. The employers feel they have a voice in the major, on-going program and policy decisions of HCRTI, but at the same time are happy to let the HCRTI staff do the background research and to frame options. The hospital representatives are grateful that they don’t have to think through all the details of the training curricula and support services on their own.

In terms of changes, the employers welcome the increasing emphasis on a cohort approach, feeling that there will be more commonalities among participants and mechanisms for mutual support. They are also looking forward to full implementation of the tutoring services, and believe that these extra services can make a big difference for some participants.

According to the employer representatives that we interviewed, the participating hospitals see the value of HCRTI, and as the institutions’ finances improve, expect to increase their investments in HCRTI. They also report that the successes of the Institute will help the hospitals to convince their own boards to allocate more funds to workforce development activities generally. The employers also note, however, that as their cash and space commitments to HCRTI increase, they will increasingly view the connection as a business relationship, and thus may become more demanding regarding the outcomes being achieved.

## The Participant Perspective

In order to enhance our understanding of how the HCRTI program is working, we interviewed a small sample of program participants. Interviews were conducted with four HCRTI participants – two from the Pre-Employment component<sup>39</sup> and two from the Incumbent Worker component.

The interviewed participants range in age from early 20s to mid-40s. All four interviewees are female. They were equally divided among single and married participants. One of the married participants has children, and one of the single participants has a single child. Two of the four participants are the sole wage earners for their household.

Both Pre-Employment participants had been born in the United States, whereas both Incumbent Worker participants had immigrated to the U.S. from other countries. The Incumbent Worker participants are somewhat fluent to moderately fluent in English. Three of the interviewed participants had completed high school and two of these – one of the Pre-Employment participants and one of the Incumbent Worker participants – have some college experience. The third participant with a high school diploma had previously attended a short-term, computer skills training program.

Other characteristics of the interviewed participants and their HCRTI experiences:

- All of the interviewed participants reported having an interest in a career in health care because of their desire to help people.
- All of the participants had demonstrated at least a modest level of initiative in seeking out training and/or career improvement opportunities that led to their HCRTI enrollment.
- The two Incumbent Worker participants reported receiving significant support from their supervisors – in terms of shifting their schedules – that allowed them to take advantage of the HCRTI training. This was particularly significant because the supervisors realized that the training would allow these participants to apply for higher-paying positions in other departments within the hospitals.
- The Pre-Employment participants reported that they met with their coach (Employment Specialist) on a regular basis throughout the 12-week program; the Incumbent Worker participants reported that they were more likely to meet with their individual career coach on an irregular, “as needed” basis.
- All of the participants indicated that they had either one or two specific health care positions as explicit career goals. And, in part as a result of the career coaching, all the participants seemed to have a clear sense of the prerequisites needed to qualify for those positions. For some of the participants, these positions may be attainable within 1-2 years, but for others the timeframe for securing such positions is likely to be much longer because of the remaining prerequisite training or certification that they need to complete.

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<sup>39</sup> One of these two individuals had recently graduated from the 12-week Pre-Employment program.

- The two Pre-Employment participants only had a limited sense of their eligibility for and the services associated with the Incumbent Worker program.
- Three of the four interviewed participants have already realized a significant increase in their hourly wages as a result of obtaining new positions following their HCRTI-related training. However, these salary increases still leave the participants significantly below the FESS level for their household size.<sup>40</sup>
- All of the interviewed participants had high praise for the HCRTI program and what it (and the HCRTI staff) had done for them. Without prompting, they all strongly expressed the opinion that they hoped the program would be continued in order to help other individuals like themselves.
- All four participants had recommended the HCRTI program to a family member or friend.

To provide a richer sense of the experience of the participants while protecting the confidentiality of the individual interviewees, we have also put together a composite profile using a pseudonym, found in the accompanying text box.

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<sup>40</sup> The fourth individual had been unemployed prior to HCRTI enrollment, but previously had worked as a unionized painter. This individual's wage rate as a painter substantially exceeded the pay rate for the health care position this person expected to secure following HCRTI Pre-Employment training. However, this individual was choosing to switch careers to one that was perceived to be less physically taxing.

This individual had significantly more work experience than most of the other participants in the Pre-Employment program. As such, to a certain extent this individual was able to serve as an informal mentor for the other students relative to work-place etiquette and expectations.

**Estella:** Estella is in her early 30s and is married, with two children. She immigrated to the United States with her children from Central America five years ago, joining her husband who had come to the U.S. three years earlier. Estella's husband works for a janitorial services company. For a period they shared an apartment with a cousin. When Estella obtained a job in Patient Transport at the hospital where she is currently employed, she and her family were able to afford to move into a small apartment of their own. The Patient Transport position paid her \$8.30 per hour. She and her husband have tried to arrange their work schedules between day and evening shifts to ensure that one of them can be home when their children are not in school. To make ends meet, however, Estella sometimes had to work 60-hour weeks, which put an added strain on the family's child care arrangements. Her cousin has helped to take care of the children during these periods.

Estella learned of the HCRTI program from her supervisor, who was committed to helping her to advance. She scheduled a meeting with HCRTI's career coach assigned to the hospital. When she met with the career coach, she emphasized how hard she was willing to work to improve herself and her family's quality of life. The career coach explained the types of health career options that were available and the training courses and other forms of assistance that HCRTI could provide. Through HCRTI, Estella enrolled in an ESOL class and, subsequently, a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training program. Estella's Patient Transport supervisor allowed her to adjust her schedule so that she could attend these classes.

She graduated from the CNA program last July, and secured a CNA position at the hospital in August 2004. The CNA position pays her \$11.75 an hour, a 42% increase over her wage rate in her Patient Transport position. Her career coach also advocated with the hospital to help Estella obtain a work schedule in the CNA position that accommodated her childcare needs.

Estella sees her current position as a stepping-stone. In the long run, she is interested in becoming either a Radiology Technologist or a Licensed Practical Nurse. Either one of these positions would effectively double Estella's wage rate and, together with her husband's wages, would permit her family to achieve an income that exceeded the Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency standard for Boston. These positions, however, require at least an Associates degree. Estella feels she needs to wait until her children are older and more self-reliant (they are currently 9 years-old and 11 years-old) before she will be able to commit to the time demands of a college program. In the meantime, she is continuing with her ESOL classes and completing a GED program. She also expects to take some of the HCRTI pre-college classes. At times, Estella feels tempted to work a second job rather than to take these classes, in order to bring in more income. Nonetheless, she appreciates the value of continuing to get more education, both in terms of improving her long-term employment prospects and as a role model for her children.

## Addendum: Progress Since November 30, 2004<sup>41</sup> and Plans for Year 2

In addition to the Year 2 activities previously mentioned:

- HCRTI's mentoring services, whose implementation had been delayed during Year 1, commenced with the first round of mentoring training in December 2004. Part of the reason why the mentoring services for the Pre-Employment component initially were delayed was because HCRTI wanted to have a larger base of Pre-Employment graduates to use as mentors for subsequent cohorts.
- HCRTI reports that its Pre-employment placement rate is increasing, and anticipates meeting its Year 2 placement goal.
- During Year 2, HCRTI hopes to improve the incumbent retention systems at the participating institutions through expansion of career mapping activities, the enhancement of performance reviews, sponsorship of a best practices forum, and implementation of a messaging system.
- Initiation of modular, customized training for incumbents at the health care institutions will begin in Year 2 (per an agreement with the Boston PIC). In addition, plans are proceeding for the roll-out of the new nursing course of study in the LMAA during Year 2.
- During 2005, HCRTI hopes that Massachusetts Bay Community College will become more involved in the Institute's activities, in part through the roll-out of the nursing course of study at LMAA. Massachusetts Bay Community College would be joining Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) and Roxbury Community College (RCC), who functioned as training contractors to HCRTI over the past year, and the Wentworth Institute, which has donated space and other in-kind support.
- During Year 1, curriculum development for the Pre-Employment component was not the responsibility of the HCRTI Education Coordinator, nor was it addressed by the HCRTI "curriculum committee" (which had been renamed the Incumbent Worker Committee). Instead, curriculum development for the pre-employment component was a rotating responsibility among the project directors of the community development organizations. These individuals did not necessarily have any curriculum development expertise, although they periodically consulted with the education providers (e.g., BHCC and RCC) and employers (through the Employer Advisory Committee) for advice. At the beginning of Year 2, however, HCRTI changed its position and decided to make curriculum development for the Pre-Employment component one of the formal responsibilities of the Institute's Education Coordinator.
- HCRTI has been working with Mission Hill groups to develop a set of services that will enable those residents who aren't ready to take the Pre-Employment training to access Institute services, such as basic math and English classes, nonetheless.

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<sup>41</sup> Through April 2005.

- At a group meeting with employers scheduled for April 2005, HCRTI plans to overhaul its internal self-assessment process as a result of the test survey that the Institute conducted for the Fall 2004 participants.
- HCRTI has been participating in a national initiative, coordinated by the Aspen Institute, that is attempting to develop a common set of sector-specific performance indicators for tracking employer and job seeker/worker outcomes.

## **C. International Institute of Boston/Hilton Hotel Industry Training Program**

### **Partnership Description**

The partnership between the International Institute of Boston (IIB) and the Hilton Hotel Corporation, the largest hotel property management firm in Boston, is intended help low-income recent immigrants move towards economic self-sufficiency, while at the same time, helping the Hilton train and retain high performing employees. The partnership accomplishes this by providing job-specific language and skills training to program participants and placing them in positions with growth potential at partner hotels. Hilton hotels are IIB's priority location in placing participants; however, if positions are not available at the Hilton, IIB places participants in other hotels in the Boston area.

The Hotel Career Center (HCC), as the partnership is called, was established in 1998 with formal agreements with two initial industry partners, Doubletree Guest Suites (a Hilton Hotel Corporation property) and the Royal Sonesta Hotel. Since 1998, the partnership has since expanded to include over 30 Boston area hotels. Until the SkillWorks initiative, the Hotel Career Center's primary focus was its pre-employment training and placement program, called the Hospitality Training Program, or HIP<sup>42</sup>.

The partnership's proposal to the Funders Group focused on expanding the existing HIP program to work with more participants, and on developing a program for incumbent workers, which like the partnership, is called the Hotel Career Center (HCC). The goal of this incumbent program is to help workers in the hotel industry improve their language and computer skills so that they are able to perform better in their current job, increase their ability to be promoted, and increase their earning potential. In addition to providing skills training, the proposed program design included career coaching to help participants develop short and long-term career goals.

The expanded partnership is expected to benefit the Hilton's primary partner hotels, the Hilton Back Bay, and DoubleTree Guest Suites, by helping them to meet their increasing need for skilled employees. This has become an increasingly significant need due to the significant number of new hotel rooms built since 1997 (between 1997 and July 2003, 5,193 hotel rooms were built in Boston). As incumbent workers participating in the HCC program improve their language skills and become more confident, it is expected that they will be able to perform better in their current positions, interacting with staff and guests with greater comfort and facility. As participants increase their computer literacy and become more focused on the potential career paths in the hotel industry, they will develop the skills and motivation to achieve promotions within the industry. By providing training opportunities such as those offered through this partnership, the Hilton hopes to develop a better workforce for its hotels, will be better able to promote from within, and will create a feeling of loyalty towards the hotel.

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<sup>42</sup> The acronym HIP is the result of the program's original name, the Hotel Industry Training Program.

### **What Pre-Existed SkillWorks**

Prior to participating in SkillWorks, IIB had a successful pre-employment program (as discussed above), the Hotel Industry Training Program, which trained low-skilled immigrant populations for entry-level positions in hotel industry.

The HIP program consisted of 4 weeks of classroom instruction, plus 2 weeks of intensive hands-on training and observation at local employers in the hospitality industry. The classroom training included vocational English as a Second Language and specific job training to prepare participants for the tasks, such as room preparation or folding, that they would perform working in the hotel industry. The hands-on component included job shadowing, to allow participants to become familiar both with the day-to-day responsibilities of hotel employees and with the atmosphere of the hotel. IIB worked to place graduates of the program at both Hilton hotels and other hotels in the Boston area.

Following placement, IIB provided participants with case management and job retention services to help them transition into employment at the hotel and remain employed; however, IIB did not have a full program for incumbent workers.

### **What was Added in Year 1 through SkillWorks Initiative**

Participating in the SkillWorks Initiative allowed IIB to expand its pre-employment program and improve the curriculum, deepen its relationships with employer partners, engage in internal capacity building, and most significantly, develop an incumbent worker program, the Hospitality Career Center.

### **Development of Incumbent Worker Program, Hotel Career Center**

In developing the HCC, IIB's goal was to create a program that would truly address the skills Hilton workers need to perform better in their jobs in order to advance and be promoted. IIB and Hilton worked together to conduct a Workplace Needs Assessment to determine what skills were the most needed. The classes and training offered in HCC are directly correlated with the findings of this assessment. The three primary components of the HCC program are:

- **English for Advancement classes.** Each cycle of English for Advancement consists of 14 weeks of class with 3 hours of class time per week.
- **Specialized Computer Training.** Each cycle of this course consists of 3 weeks of class with 3 hours of class per week.
- **Career Coaching.** This is a critical component of the HCC program, and focuses on helping participants develop individualized career plans with short and long-term goals.

### **Expansion of Pre-Employment Program**

Participation in the SkillWorks Initiative also allowed IIB to expand its Pre-Employment HIP program to serve additional participants (e.g., 37 participants were enrolled in FY 2002 vs. 52 in Year 1 of the SkillWorks Initiative). The HIP curriculum also benefited from what was learned through the Workplace Needs Assessment, and was refined and expanded to include an economic literacy component.

### **Deepening Relationships with Employer Partners**

Through the joint effort to develop the HCC program, the already strong relationship between IIB and the Hilton became significantly deeper. The hotel was very active in the design and refinement of the new program, taking part in the Planning and Evaluation Committee, inviting IIB representatives to attend regular Hilton HR cluster meetings, and helping to develop creative solutions to further improve the program. Believing in the value of HCC, Hilton also agreed to give participants 100% paid release time to attend class, rather than the previously agreed-on 50%. IIB also strengthened the involvement of the University Park Hotel at MIT. Previously, IIB had placed pre-employment participants at this hotel, but the hotel will now be a full partner and will hold HCC classes for incumbent workers.

### **Building Internal Capacity**

To achieve the objectives of developing an incumbent worker program and expanding and refining the pre-employment program, IIB had to build its own capacity as well as the capacity of the IIB/Hilton Partnership. In Year 1, IIB: established a Planning and Evaluation Team, which included members from IIB as well as the Hilton; hired several staff, including a program coordinator, an English for Advancement teacher, and a career coach; and developed and trained staff to use new internal systems including new record keeping systems and databases.

### **Characteristics of Participants at Baseline**

In IIB's application to SkillWorks, it proposed working with unemployed, underemployed, and/or working poor individuals, particularly residents from Greater Boston's immigrant communities. This is representative of the population the organization typically works with. Within this population, IIB particularly focuses on working with recent immigrants, who face a unique set of challenges as they strive to build a new life in the US.

<b>Exhibit 22. IIB Participation Goals and Outcomes</b>				
	<b>3 Year Projection</b>	<b>Year 1 Goal</b>	<b>Year 1 Actually Served</b>	<b>Percentage of Enrollment Goal Reached</b>
HIP Pre-Employment Enrollees	144	48	52	108%
HCC Incumbent Enrollees	120	30	49*	163%

\* This includes 38 incumbent workers who never took part in the pre-employment program as well as 11 previous pre-employment participants who became part of the incumbent program after reaching retention milestones.

Overall, as shown in Exhibit 22, IIB exceeded its first year goals in terms of the number of enrollees in both the HIP and HCC components. Particularly notable is the high number of enrollees in the HCC incumbent worker program.

Analyzing the demographics characteristics of participants in Year 1 allows us to understand the extent to which IIB is reaching the population it set out to target.

## **Pre-Employment Participants**

Demographic data on IIB's pre-employment participants (see Exhibit 23, below) reveals that, except for Boston residency, the program is serving the target population IIB identified. With the exception of the mixture between Boston residents and non-residents, this is also the population that the SkillWorks funders envisioned the Initiative helping. Reasons for lower levels of Boston residency may be related to the fact that the recent immigrant population IIB is working with and traditionally works with may not live in the confines of Boston proper.

## **Poverty Status of Pre-Employment Participants**

The average household income of HIP pre-employment participants at the time of enrollment was low, with 82% earning less than \$10,000 and 14% earning between \$10,000 and \$24,999,<sup>43</sup> and a very high percentage below the poverty line. In Year 1, only 2 pre-employment participant households had incomes at enrollment above the 2004 poverty guidelines, and both of these households were single individuals. At least 78% of households were clearly below the poverty line. Without more specific information on income amounts, the relation of 9 of the remaining 11 households to the poverty line is unclear.

Looking at the relationship between pre-employment participants and the MassFESS (detailed in Exhibit 2, above) suggests an even more dire economic picture for pre-employment participants at the time of enrollment. At least 96% of IIB pre-employment participant households at enrollment had incomes below the MassFESS income adequacy standards for Boston. Overall, IIB pre-employment households were extremely economically disadvantaged at the time of enrollment.

## **Additional Demographics of Pre-Employment Participants**

IIB's pre-employment participants are largely resident-alien, non-native English speakers. In addition to being very low income, most (83%) were unemployed at the time of their enrollment in the IIB program, and those who were employed worked an average of only 25 hours per week at an average hourly wage of \$7.78. Exhibit 23 highlights some of the most relevant demographics. (Further demographic data can be found in the appendix to this report.) To highlight a few characteristics of this participant group:

- The largest ethnic/racial group is Black, followed by Asian/Pacific Islander, then Hispanic and Caucasian;
- The vast majority (88%) do not speak English as a primary language. The most commonly spoken primary language is Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia (23%), followed by French or Creole (20%), Spanish (11%), Arabic (8%), and Shona, the main language of Zimbabwe (6%). Other languages include: Chinese; Vietnamese; English Creole; Somali; Portuguese; Tagalog (spoken in the Philippines); Albanian; Tibetan; Kinyanda; and Sudanese;
- Most (85%, or 44 of 52) are resident aliens, while only 2% (1 of 52) are U.S. citizens.

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<sup>43</sup> IIB reported household income data on 49 out of 52 pre-employment participant households. Thus, the percentages in this section are based on 49 households.

<b>Exhibit 23. IIB Pre-Employment Demographics</b>			
<b>Boston Residency at Enrollment</b>			
	Resident	26	50%
	Not Resident	26	50%
<b>Wage Earner Status</b>			
	Sole wage earner	34	65%
	Primary wage earner	3	6%
	Secondary wage earner	15	29%
	Equal wage earner	0	0%
	Other	0	0%
<b>Annual Household Income</b>			
	Under \$10,000	40	82%
	\$10,000 to \$24,999	7	14%
	\$25,000 to \$39,999	2	4%
	\$40,000 and over	0	0%
	Missing	3	
<b>Household Size</b>			
	Average household size	1.9	n/a
	Average number of children under 18 years living at home	0.6	n/a
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
	White/Caucasian (not Hispanic)	5	10%
	Black (not Hispanic)	36	68%
	Hispanic	5	10%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	6	12%
<b>Primary Language</b>			
	English	6	12%
	Not English	46	88%
<b>Citizenship Status</b>			
	US Citizen	1	2%
	Resident Alien	44	85%
	Other	7	13%

\* Percentages are based on the total number of enrollees for whom IIB reported data, not for the total number of enrollees. This only impacts Annual Household Income percentages.

Additional demographic data on pre-employment participants, included in the appendix of this report, reveals additional information on the population IIB is working with. Apart from the similarities in their income, residency status, and English language proficiency, participants come from a wide range of educational backgrounds, age groups and family situations.

- The male/female split is fairly even: 44% of participants are male and the remaining 56% are female;
- 65% are single, and the remaining 35% are married;

- Participants varied significantly in their educational level. Although more than a quarter had some college (8% had a 4 year degree and 19% had some college), and another quarter (27%) had a high school diploma, close to a quarter (23%) had neither a GED nor a high school diploma. An additional 23% had a certificate from a technical or vocational training program;
- Although the age range of participants varies significantly, the two highest concentrations are participants between 21 and 25 years old (27% or 14 out of 52) and 31-35 years old (23% of 12 out of 52).

The demographic profile of IIB's pre-employment program participants highlights some of the barriers that this population faces, as well as the challenges IIB must address in trying to help them increase their economic self-sufficiency. Although some participants have an educational background that goes through high school or further, most face two significant obstacles: a lack of English language skills, and a lack of knowledge or understanding of how the American employment and workforce development system work.

Not only are these obstacles significant barriers to employment, they are also issues that take a significant amount of time to resolve; learning a language and the way things work in a new country may take many years and progress may be slow. The population IIB is working with in their pre-employment program is a difficult one to serve, and one in which it may take longer than three years to witness significant improvements in job performance and career advancement. However, given the obstacles to economic self-sufficiency this population -- largely comprised of new, non-English speaking immigrants -- faces, it is extremely important that training programs such as IIB identify and address the impediments for them to achieving self sufficiency in their new home country.<sup>44</sup>

### **Incumbent Worker Participants**

Demographic data on IIB's incumbent participants reveals that again, with the exception of the breakdown between Boston and non-Boston residents, the population IIB is working with is the group that both IIB and the SkillWorks funders intended to target. The lower percentage of participants who are Boston residents is less surprising for the incumbent program, as current employees may come from a range of locations.

### **Poverty Status of Incumbent Participants**

Not surprisingly, incumbent worker wages tended to be higher than those of pre-employment participants, although the former's annual incomes were still quite low (63% of incumbents reported annual household incomes of between \$10,000 and \$24,999). All of the incumbent workers were employed in full time positions, and worked an average of 49 hours/week with an average hourly wage of \$11.55.

Compared to pre-employment participants, a significantly higher percentage of incumbent households had incomes above the poverty guidelines at the time of enrollment (70% of incumbent households compared with no more than 22% of pre-employment participant households). These incumbent

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<sup>44</sup> For more information on barriers, see the section of this chapter on IIB participant experiences.

participants with household incomes above the poverty level were all either single-person households earning over \$10,000, or multiple-person families earning over \$25,000. (It is possible that some of the remaining 30% of incumbent households actually earned enough annual income to be considered above the poverty line, but in order to make this determination, more specific income amounts were necessary than was available to the study team.)

Using the MassFESS standard (detailed in Exhibit 18, in the HCRTI section) as a benchmark similarly indicates that at enrollment incumbents generally were better off economically than their pre-employment counterparts. Nonetheless, the picture was not consistently positive. At enrollment, at least 47% of the incumbents had household incomes become the MassFESS income adequacy standards for Boston based on family size and income level. Therefore, a substantial portion of the HCC incumbent participants was also economically disadvantaged at the time of enrollment.

### **Additional Demographics of Incumbent Participants**

Although the majority of incumbent participants were resident aliens (69%) and did not speak English as a native language (80%), compared with the pre-employment participants a slightly higher percentage of incumbent workers were US citizens and/or native English speakers. Looking at the ethnic breakdown of incumbent participants, a significantly higher percentage was Hispanic. In addition, a significantly higher percentage of incumbent participants had a high school diploma (71%). Some additional demographic highlights of this population include:

- 57% (28 of 49) of incumbent workers were Boston residents.
- The largest racial/ethnic group of incumbent workers was Hispanic (47%, or 23 of 49), followed by Black (33%, or 16 of 49), Pacific Islander (10%, or 5 of 49), Caucasian (8%, or 4 of 49), and other (2%, or 1 of 49).
- Compared to the pre-employment participants, a higher percentage of the incumbent workers are female (65%, or 32 of 49) than male (35%, or 17 of 49).
- Over half incumbent participants were primary or solo wage earners (69%, or 34 of 49). 29% (14 of 49) were secondary wage earners, and 2% (1 of 49) were equal wage earners.
- Incumbent participants were less likely to have children under 18 at home than pre-employment participants were (the average number of children living at home for incumbents was 0.54).
- While a greater percentage of incumbent workers spoke English as a primary language, 80% (40 of 49) spoke another language as their primary language. The most primary language was Spanish, followed by French Creole, and Portuguese. Other languages included: Arabic; Shona; Albanian; and Dinka.

Summary demographic information about the incumbent worker population is included in Exhibit 24, below.

<b>Exhibit 24. IIB Incumbent Demographics</b>			
<b>Boston Residency at Enrollment</b>			
	Resident	28	57%
	Not Resident	21	43%
<b>Wage Earner Status</b>			
	Sole wage earner	26	53%
	Primary wage earner	8	16%
	Secondary wage earner	14	29%
	Equal wage earner	1	2%
	Other	0	0%
<b>Annual Household Income</b>			
	Under \$10,000	0	0%
	\$10,000 to \$24,999	31	63%
	\$25,000 to \$39,999	11	22%
	\$40,000 and over	7	14%
<b>Household Size</b>			
	Average household size	1.92	n/a
	Average number of children under 18 years living at home	0.54	n/a
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
	White/Caucasian (not Hispanic)	4	8%
	Black (not Hispanic)	16	33%
	Hispanic	23	47%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	5	10%
	Native American	0	0%
	Other	1	2%
<b>Primary Language</b>			
	English	10	20%
	Not English	39	80%
<b>Citizenship Status</b>			
	US Citizen	13	27%
	Resident Alien	34	69%
	Other	2	4%

Additional demographic data on incumbent participants, included in the appendix of this report, provide further information on the population IIB is working with. Highlights include:

- Incumbent participants were evenly divided between those who were married (47%, or 23 of 49) and those who were single (47%, or 23 of 49). Compared to pre-employment participants, incumbent participants were more likely to be married;
- Incumbent worker participants were less likely than pre-employment participants to have children living at home;
- There was a wide age spread among incumbent participants. Twenty-two percent were between 26 and 30 years old; 18% were between 31 and 35 years old; 10% were between 36 and 40 years old; and 29% (14 of 49) were between 41 and 50 years old. An

additional 12% (6 of 49) were over 50 years old, 4% (2 of 49) were between 31 and 25 years old; and 4% (2 of 49) were younger than 20 years old;

- The majority of incumbent workers (71%, or 35 of 49) have their high school diploma. However, 22% (11 of 49) have neither a high school diploma nor a GED. An additional 4% (2 of 49) have a GED, and 4% (2 of 49) have some college);
- A limited number of incumbent workers had recently received public assistance: 12% (6 of 49) received housing assistance; 6% (3 of 49) were received Mass Health assistance; 2% (1 of 49) received food stamps; and 2% (1 of 49) received TANF.

The demographic profile of incumbent worker participants highlights that this group is dealing with many of the same challenges in terms of language and the challenges associated with being an immigrant as pre-employment program participants are. However, incumbent participants appear to be in a slightly better place in terms of their current income, and have already succeeded at locating jobs that they are able to perform with their existing skill set.

## Year 1 Activities and Accomplishments

### Activities Related to Pre-Employment Services (HIP Program)

IIB's program for pre-employment workers, the Hotel Industry Training Program (HIP), focuses on providing workers who are interested in obtaining a job and/or pursuing a career in the hotel industry with the skills they need to do so. The primary component of this training is the HIP training course. This 6-week course combines 4 weeks of instruction at IIB with 2 weeks of hands-on training and observation at local employers in the hospitality industry. Specific elements of the course include: initial intake and assessment, 20 hours per week of vocational ESL and job training, and job shadowing. This training prepares participants for positions in food service, housekeeping, wait staff, and building maintenance.

- **Intake and Assessment:** Candidates are screened to ensure that participants are likely to succeed in the program. Ongoing assessment allows program staff to assist participants in establishing realistic goals and individual service strategies to support employment and post-employment goals.
- **Vocational ESL/Job Training:** Training covers basic employment regulations, job seeking skills, an orientation to the hospitality industry, customer service skills, workplace communication, and safety.
- **Job Shadowing:** Incorporating job shadowing allows participants to gain practical, hands-on training to complement classroom learning.
- **Job Placement and Job Retention Support:** Participants work with an assigned job developer to define and work towards employment goals. Regular contact provides clients with the support they need through this transition, and builds employer confidence that IIB is available for troubleshooting should the need arise.
- **Post-Placement and Follow-up Strategies:** Following placement, clients have access to IIB's extensive education resource library, Employment Resource Room, computer lab,

ESL instruction, clinical mental health counseling, tax form assistance and legal advice/immigration forms assistance. In addition, with the development of IIB's incumbent worker program (HCC), after reaching retention milestones former pre-employment participants can enroll in incumbent worker training and courses.

In Year 1, IIB completed four cycles of the HIP program. A total of 52 people enrolled in the program, and 42 participants completed the program. Ten participants took advantage of additional pre-employment activities offered by IIB, which included completing a skills training program, receiving career coaching, identifying short-term career goals, job shadowing, creating or revising resumes and engaging in informational interviews. Characteristics of these 42 HIP graduates are presented in Exhibit 25 on the following page.

### **Pre-Employment Terminations**

Of the 52 enrollees, 13 participants were terminated. For IIB, termination signifies when a participant does not (or refuses to) stay in contact with program staff over three months; therefore, termination may occur before or after program completion.

The demographic profile of these participants was fairly similar to that of participants who completed the pre-employment program; there were some slight differences, however. Among participants who did not complete the program, a higher percentage was Hispanic (23% vs. 10%) and a higher percentage did not speak English a primary language (100% vs. 88%). Participants who did not complete the program were also slightly more likely to have a child (100% had at least one child at home), slightly more likely to be married (46% vs. 35%), and more likely to be the secondary rather than primary or sole wage earner. This suggests that the pre-employment program has a harder time retaining participants who may feel the need to stay home and take care of their family, and for whom the urgency to find a job is less pressing as they are considered the secondary wage earner for their household.

### **Activities Related to Incumbent Worker Services (HCC Program)**

For the Incumbent Worker component, the first half of Year 1 was devoted to program development. IIB conducted a Workplace Needs Assessment to determine the skills and training that would be most beneficial to the Hilton properties and to Hilton employees, and based on this assessment developed their incumbent program. The first class of incumbent workers began taking classes and receiving career coaching in July of 2004, mid way through Year 1. Despite starting mid-way through the year, IIB exceeded their Year 1 target number of incumbent enrollees, with 49 participants versus their Year 1 goal of 30. Of these 49, 38 were incumbent workers who were never part of the pre-employment program, and 11 were people who had completed the pre-employment program and had reached retention milestones required to participate in the incumbent program.

**Exhibit 25.  
Characteristics of HIP Graduates**

Activity	Total	Boston Residency at Enrollment				Annual Household Income										Race/Ethnicity									
		Resident		Non-Resident		Under \$10,000		\$10,000-\$24,999		\$25,000-\$39,999		\$40,000+		Missing		White/Caucasian (not Hispanic)		Black (not Hispanic)		Hispanic		Asian or Pacific Islander		Other	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Total HIP Graduates</b>	42	20	48%	22	52%	33	80%	5	12%	3	7%	0	0%	1	2%	5	12%	29	69%	3	7%	5	12%	0	0%

The primary components of the Incumbent Worker program are: IIB's English for Advancement class, which includes Professional Skills Workshops; specialized computer classes which teach participants the computer skills they need to advance within the hotel industry; and career coaching, which helps participants identify short and long-term professional goals. Students who require additional assistance also have access to tutoring services to help them address their personal needs in improving their English language reading, writing, and speaking skills.

The most used elements in Year 1 of the incumbent program were career coaching and assistance identifying short-term professional goals. All 49 individuals who formally enrolled in the Incumbent Worker program took advantage of these services.<sup>45</sup> The two elements that those incumbent participants interviewed spoke the most about were the English for Advancement class (which had 25 enrollees), and the computer workshop (which had 33 enrollees).

Looking at the demographics of incumbent workers who took advantage of elements of IIB's program, we see a higher percentage of Boston residents than might have been expected based on the overall profile of incumbent enrollees. This is particularly the case for the English for Advancement class and the Professional Skills workshop, where Boston residents accounted for 72% and 75% of participants, respectively. This might be due to the fact that it is easier for Boston residents to stay after work or arrive early for classes, as they have shorter commutes than their coworkers who live outside of Boston. Apart from Boston residency, the demographic profile of these participants was similar to that of program incumbent enrollees generally. Additional demographic information on the incumbent workers participation in elements of the IIB program is included in Exhibit 26 on the following page.

### **Incumbent Terminations**

The termination rate in IIB's incumbent worker program has been extremely low to date, with only 1 enrollee withdrawing from the program. This low termination rate suggests that participants feel that the time they are devoting to the courses that IIB offers is beneficial to them, and that they are not experiencing a conflict between participating in the program and either their professional or personal responsibilities that would cause them to need to stop attending the IIB classes.

### **Activities Related to Program Development and Administration**

In order to accomplish the activities discussed above, IIB needed to develop the curricula for the new HCC program and hire additional staff to implement IIB's expanded services. Through these activities, the IIB/Hilton partnership deepened significantly as the two organizations worked together regularly to develop and implement the new program. Key activities included:

- **Workplace Needs Assessment completed.** The WNA was a joint effort undertaken by IIB and the Hilton to help both organizations better understand the career development needs of Hilton employees. Findings from the WNA directly impacted the services offered as part of the new incumbent worker HCC program. (Continued on p. 95)

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<sup>45</sup> It also appears some individuals who were not formally enrolled received these services.

Exhibit 26. IIB Incumbent Activities and Characteristics of Participants																							
Activity	Total	Boston Residency at Enrollment				Annual Household Income								Race/Ethnicity									
		Resident		Non-Resident		Under \$10,000		\$10,000-\$24,999		\$25,000-\$39,999		\$40,000+		White/Caucasian (not Hispanic)		Black (not Hispanic)		Hispanic		Asian or Pacific Islander		Other	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Enrolled in HCC English for Advancement Classes	25	18	72%	7	28%	0	0%	15	60%	6	24%	4	16%	0	0%	5	20%	15	60%	5	20%	0	0%
Enrolled in HCC Specialized Computer Workshop	33	19	58%	14	42%	0	0%	22	67%	6	18%	5	15%	2	6%	10	30%	16	48%	4	12%	1	3%
Attended HCC Professional Skills Workshop	28	21	75%	7	25%	1	4%	17	61%	7	25%	3	11%	0	0%	7	25%	16	57%	5	18%	0	0%
Received Tutoring Services	3	2	67%	1	33%	0	0%	2	67%	0	0%	1	33%	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Received Career Coaching	54	30	56%	24	44%	0	0%	36	67%	11	20%	7	13%	4	7%	20	37%	23	43%	6	11%	1	2%
Identified Short-term Professional Goal(s)	54	30	56%	24	44%	0	0%	36	67%	11	20%	7	13%	4	7%	20	37%	23	43%	6	11%	1	2%
Accessed Group and Individual Educational Support	49	28	57%	21	43%	0	0%	31	63%	11	22%	7	14%	4	8%	16	33%	23	47%	5	10%	1	2%
Received Instruction Through:																							
a. Customized Cross Training	3	2	67%	1	33%	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	33%	2	67%	0	0%	0	0%
b. Mentoring	3	2	67%	1	33%	0	0%	2	67%	1	33%	0	0%	1	33%	1	33%	1	33%	0	0%	0	0%
c. Distance Learning	2	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%
Eligible participants who accessed tuition reimbursement	4	4	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	50%	2	50%	0	0%	0	0%	3	75%	1	25%	0	0%

- **HCC curriculum was developed and refined** and staff was trained on new curriculum.
- **New staff were hired** including:
  - A Hotel Career Center Manager (this position was filled by the former Senior Employment Specialist at IIB);
  - A Career Coach;
  - A Spanish-speaking English for Advancement and Computer Class Teacher;
  - A Program Assistant; and
  - An Employment Specialist.
- **A Planning and Evaluation Team (PET) was formed.** This is a working group that includes members from both partner hotels and IIB. This group meets regularly to discuss program development and solutions to any issues that arise.
- **Relationships with Hilton were strengthened** (for more on this, see section on employer perspective).
- **Relationship deepened with employer (Hilton University Park Hotel at MIT),** who will become a new full partner in the IIB/Hilton partnership.
- **5-year anniversary event was held** to market the new Hotel Career Center and honor achievements of the HIP program's past 5 years.

## Accomplishments

To assess the outcomes for Year 1 of the IIB/Hilton partnership, we must examine the progress made by participants in improving their skills, employment rates, and wages. We must also look at the larger systems changes that have occurred as a result of the SkillWorks initiative.

### Graduation Rates

One short-term metric of IIB's Year 1 accomplishments is the rate of completion for the HIP (pre-employment) and HCC (incumbent worker) courses. As discussed above in the activities section, graduation rates for both the HIP and HCC programs were quite high. Graduation for the HIP program was 81%, with 42 of 52 enrollees completing the program. For the HCC program, only 1 enrollee dropped out of the program.<sup>46</sup>

### Changes in Employment or Wage Status

#### Pre-Employment HIP Participants

The primary metric for pre-employment participants is the number of participants who obtained employment following completion of the HIP program. Thirty-three of the 42 program graduates, or 79%, were placed within three months of graduation, and an additional 2 graduates were placed after the 3-month window, for a total placement rate of 83%. In trying to place students, IIB's primary concern is to identify an appropriate position for each participant and get them employed. If this

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<sup>46</sup> In the future, IIB may want to consider collecting and reporting data on graduation rates for the HCC incumbent program.

position is at a Hilton hotel, this is most desirable; however, if no appropriate positions are available at the Hilton properties, IIB places participants at other hotels. In Year 1, just under half of the participants placed within three months (or 16 out of 33) were placed at Hilton hotels, while the rest were placed at non-Hilton hotels in the Boston area. The relatively low percentage of placements at Hilton hotels was due to a lack of available positions. To address this, IIB has determined that it should expand its reach to include two additional Boston-area Hilton Corporation hotels in Year 2, to increase the likelihood of positions being available at the Hilton for new program graduates.

In terms of participant demographics, participants who were employed following training were slightly more likely not to be Boston residents than enrollees as a whole, but apart from that, differed little from overall enrollee demographics. Additional demographic data on pre-employment participants who achieved these outcomes is included in Exhibit 27.

### **Incumbent Participants**

The primary metric for incumbent workers is wage increases. Each of the member hotels has a different policy regarding when raises are given. At the Hilton Back Bay property, raises are based on the anniversary of the date of hire, while at the Hilton DoubleTree hotel they are based on a company-wide annual date. Wage increases could be between 2.5% to 4.5%, but the average across all employees in a property for 2004 had to be 3%. Given that the schedule for wage increases is based on a once-a-year date, and that the incumbent program was only in operation for half a year, the number of incumbent workers who received a raise (14 of 38) is reasonable. In the future, a useful metric to understand the impact of HCC program participation would be to compare the percentage wage increases received by HCC participants vs. the average of 3%.

Looking at the demographics of the incumbent workers who achieved wage increases, these participants largely resemble the population of incumbent participants with a few notable exceptions. A significantly higher percentage of those who received wage increases did not speak English as a primary language (93%, or 13 of 14) than was the case in the overall group of incumbent workers. In addition, a slightly higher percentage of those who received wage increases were Hispanic than was the case in the general enrollee pool, and a slightly higher percentage were sole wage earners. Summary information on the demographics of incumbent workers who achieved these outcomes is included in Exhibit 28. More complete demographic data on participants who achieved these outcomes is included in the appendix.

### **Progression Along Career or Educational Pathway**

#### **Pre-Employment HIP Participants**

For the majority of pre-employment participants, one of the most significant obstacles to moving forward on an educational or career pathway is poor English language skills. By working on participants' language skills, the training offered through the HIP program allows participants to begin to take the initial steps necessary to achieve further progress along educational and career pathways. By providing participants with the skills needed to obtain employment in the hotel industry, the HIP program also helps them begin a career in which there are opportunities for growth, both in terms of moving into more managerial roles and in terms of earning higher wages. Metrics for progression along educational or career pathways are therefore captured in looking at program completion rates and job placement rates, both of which are discussed above.



**Exhibit 27.  
IIB Pre-Employment Outcomes**

Activity	Total	Boston Residency at Enrollment				Annual Household Income										Race/Ethnicity													
		Resident		Non-Resident		Under \$10,000		\$10,000-\$24,999		\$25,000-\$39,999		\$40,000+		Missing		White/Caucasian (not Hispanic)		Black (not Hispanic)		Hispanic		Asian or Pacific Islander		Native American		Other		Missing	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
HIP Graduates employed within three months of graduation	33	20	61%	22	67%	26	81%	5	16%	3	9%	0	0%	1	3%	4	12%	24	73%	1	3%	4	12%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
HIP Graduates (initially) employed at Hilton within three months of graduation	16	7	44%	9	56%	14	88%	2	13%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	13%	13	81%	0	0%	1	6%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
HIP Graduates employed at other employers within three months of graduation	17	7	41%	10	59%	12	75%	3	19%	1	6%	0	0%	1	6%	2	12%	11	65%	1	6%	3	18%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
HIP Graduates (initially) employed at other employers after three months of graduation	2	2	100%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

**Exhibit 28.  
IIB Incumbent Outcomes**

Activity	Total	Boston Residency at Enrollment				Annual Household Income								Race/Ethnicity									
		Resident		Non-Resident		Under \$10,000		\$10,000-\$24,999		\$25,000-\$39,999		\$40,000+		White/Caucasian (not Hispanic)		Black (not Hispanic)		Hispanic		Asian or Pacific Islander			
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
<b>Job Promotions</b>	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Received Wage Increases</b>	14	11	79%	3	21%	0	0%	9	64%	4	29%	1	7%	1	7%	3	21%	7	50%	3	21%		
<b>Increased proficiency by at least one point relative to:</b>																							
<b>Initiative</b>	7	6	86%	1	14%	0	0%	5	71%	2	29%	0	0%	0	0%	4	57%	3	43%	0	0%		
<b>Expressive Behavior</b>	10	7	70%	3	30%	0	0%	7	70%	1	10%	2	20%	0	0%	0	0%	6	60%	4	40%		
<b>Feedback</b>	11	8	73%	3	27%	0	0%	6	55%	3	27%	2	18%	0	0%	2	18%	6	55%	3	27%		
<b>Articulation</b>	9	6	67%	3	33%	0	0%	7	78%	1	11%	1	11%	0	0%	2	22%	5	56%	2	22%		
<b>Phone Service Skills</b>	8	6	75%	2	25%	0	0%	7	88%	0	0%	1	13%	0	0%	1	13%	5	63%	2	25%		
<b>Listening</b>	13	10	77%	3	23%	0	0%	9	69%	2	15%	2	15%	0	0%	2	15%	9	69%	2	15%		
<b>Writing</b>	7	5	71%	2	29%	0	0%	6	86%	0	0%	1	14%	0	0%	0	0%	7	100%	0	0%		
<b>Career Awareness</b>	11	9	82%	2	18%	0	0%	8	73%	3	27%	0	0%	0	0%	3	27%	8	73%	0	0%		
<b>Personal Demeanor</b>	8	4	50%	4	50%	0	0%	7	88%	0	0%	1	13%	0	0%	2	25%	5	63%	1	13%		
<b>Team Work</b>	4	3	75%	1	25%	0	0%	3	75%	0	0%	1	25%	0	0%	0	0%	3	75%	1	25%		
<b>Technical Skills</b>	5	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%	5	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	5	100%	0	0%		

Depending on the progress made by participants in improving their English language skills, achieving more formal educational milestones, such as receiving a GED or enrolling for college courses may become a more important milestone. At this point, however, these are less relevant milestones, given the obstacles the majority of participants currently face.

### **Incumbent Worker Participants**

Based on incumbent workers' current English language skill levels, for the majority of participants, although advancement along a traditional educational pathway may be a long-term goal, it is likely to be a realistic short-term goal for only a very limited number of participants. For the participants who do speak English as a primary language or who speak English with a high degree of proficiency, progression on an educational pathway is a relevant shorter-term metric. In Year 1, no participants reached milestones associated with pursuing formal educational pathways, although one of the participants interviewed for the participant perspective section did mention that prior to enrolling in the HCC program, he had tried to take a GED course, but had dropped out because his language skills were insufficient for the course. This participant felt that if he were to try to take the GED course following his participation in the HCC program, he would be able to keep up and begin to work towards his GED.

However, for the majority of incumbent participants, a more relevant metric for progression along a career path is promotion. Although IIB exceeded its Year 1 goal in terms of the number of incumbent participants, in Year 1 none of the incumbent workers received a promotion. In part, this was due to the timing of when IIB's incumbent component began. As mentioned above, IIB's first incumbent class began in July of 2004. Normally, IIB would expect to see participants start to benefit from participation towards the end of 2004. However, this corresponded with the slow season in the hotel industry. With fewer guests, opportunities for promotion and advancement were limited. The expected benefits may begin being seen in 2005, however, as the hotels become busier.

Based on interviews with participants, the process for being promoted seems to be closely linked to developing confidence in your current job, improving your ability to speak and communicate clearly and appropriately, and increasing your manager's confidence in your abilities to perform and to manage others. It seems to be the case that employees who achieve these capacities are recommended for additional trainings that then enable to be promoted. Therefore, an additional interim metric to measure incumbent workers progression along a career path is supervisor assessment. Based on assessments conducted by participants' supervisors in 2004, a significant number of participants were seen as having increased their proficiency in: listening (13); career awareness (11); feedback (11); expressive behavior (10); articulation (9); personal demeanor (8); writing (7); initiative (7); phone service skills (8); writing (7); technical skills (5); and team work (4). Continual improvement in these areas appears to be the stepping-stones towards career advancement.

### **Reaching Scale: Changing Institutional Culture and Promoting Broader Systems Change**

Looking at Year 1 performance suggests that the Hilton-IIB partnership has started to affect systems change in several ways. Based on the Hilton's experience working with IIB, the University Park Hotel at MIT and the DoubleTree Downtown expressed interest in participating in the program. In the immediate term, this expansion will help the partnership grow to a larger scale. In the longer term, this may suggest the potential for it to become more of the norm in the industry in Boston for hotel chains to work closely with workforce development organizations to develop their workforce.

IIB's experience also highlights ways in which the SkillWorks initiative as a whole may affect systems change, including:

- By increasing the visibility of partnerships such as that between IIB and the Hilton, SkillWorks may help employers realize the potential benefits of this type of collaboration with an industry-specific training partner. The addition of the University Part Hotel at MIT as a full partner is evidence of the way this model may spread;
- The lessons learned from implementing this type of a partnership can be shared through conferences and papers, enabling other organizations and funders to learn from the successes and failures of this initiative. For example, the HCC English for Advancement teacher would like to present a paper at a teachers conference on her experience teaching English as part of this type of program;
- By bringing the same group of organizations and individuals together to the same table over a period of time, a sense of each organization being part of a larger field or larger community has started to develop; and
- Classes held at the hotels help to create a sense of community among program participants, help participants improve their ability to deal with conflict, and learn about other positions in the industry.

## **Participants' Perspectives**

In order to better understand how IIB's program is working on the ground, we conducted interviews with 6 program participants. In addition to providing a sense of participant's experiences with the program, these interviews also illustrated some of the challenges this population faces, challenges IIB must address as it helps participants progress towards increased economic self-sufficiency.

The English ability of interviewees varied significantly, from fluency to struggling, as did how well-articulated the participants' longer-term career goals were. Not surprisingly, there seemed to be a correlation between English language ability and how well developed a participant's career plan was; those who spoke English more fluently had more developed career goals, while those who struggled in English were more focused on shorter term goals of improving their language skills and getting a raise.

A few common themes emerged from the participant interviews:

- Hilton managers were seen as having been very supportive of participants attending IIB classes;
- Classes are well scheduled so as not to conflict with either participants' work or personal responsibilities. Typically, classes are either immediately before or after a shift;
- IIB staff are flexible and able to accommodate the needs of each participant. For example, when the class was moving too quickly for one student, IIB arranged for the student to meet separately with a tutor;

- Participants felt that the classes IIB was providing (English and computer skills) were the most essential skills for them to gain; and
- Interviewees who had worked at other hotel chains all mentioned that their current employer was more flexible and treated them much better than their previous employers, including providing them with access to classes such as those IIB offers.

The vignettes contained in the text box on the next page are based on interviews conducted with participants, and provide a more personal glimpse of the population group that IIB is working with. We should note that more of the assessment team's interviews were with IIB participants in the incumbent worker program, and these vignettes reflect that bias. Moreover, to protect the confidentiality of the interviewees, we have created three composite profiles (using pseudonyms) based on the experience of our 6 interviewees.

The participants that IIB is working with face substantial challenges, particularly in regard to language and understanding the career opportunities that may be available to them. Although all interviewees were quite willing to talk, for some of the individuals interviewed, understanding the interview questions and responding to them was a significant struggle. Given this, IIB's focus on providing the language skills needed to successfully work in the hotel industry seems particularly important. For most participants, and certainly most interviewees, language appears to be the most significant barrier to advancement. IIB's additional focus on computer skills also seems to correspond quite well with the skills participants felt they would need to advance. All interviewees mentioned the importance of these skills and were able to describe the way their supervisors use computers.

## **Employers' Perspectives**

One of the more successful elements of IIB's Year 1 performance was the deepening of the IIB-Hilton relationship. IIB involved the Hilton at several levels through the course of their program development, and the Hilton appears to have responded by supporting both IIB's efforts and the participation of Hilton employees in the IIB program. In addition to staff and managers participating in IIB's Planning and Evaluation Team (PET), which meets every other month to deal with program operations and policy setting, the Hilton also provided IIB with Hilton training materials which IIB has been able to incorporate into their classes, conducted mock interviews with IIB pre-employment participants, and invited an IIB representative to attend their HR cluster meetings. Inclusion in the Hilton HR cluster provides IIB staff with information on all of the positions available at the ten Hilton hotels in the Boston area and allows IIB to gain a better understanding of the Hilton's hiring system. The Hilton has further demonstrated their commitment to the IIB program by providing employees who are participating in IIBs courses not with the 50% paid release time requested, but with 100% paid release time.

The Hilton has also played an active roll in working to improve the HCC program and in helping to devise creative solutions to issues that come up (see addendum for further discussion). Hilton staff were helpful in setting up participant interviews, and when one participant missed his interview, someone from HR came out to talk with the assessment team.

**Abena** – Abena is originally from Africa and has been living in the United States for 15 years. For the majority of this time, she has worked in low-level service industry jobs. Her spoken English is excellent and she is able to easily converse with both hotel guests and management. However, she has never learned to read, write, or use a computer, and this has limited her ability to move into management positions. Abena is working with IIB staff to learn how to read and write and to develop the basic computer skills she would need to move into a more supervisory role. At the same time, Abena is working towards several certificates that would demonstrate her knowledge of hotel systems such as heating and plumbing. Abena has a long-term goal of starting her own business in the hospitality industry, either here in the US or in her home country catering to foreign visitors. However, in the short and medium term, her goal is to gain as much knowledge about how the hotel works as she possibly can and gain more management experience. Abena believes that participating in IIB's program has helped her to make significant progress in her ability to read and write, and believes that these skills will help her not only move into a more supervisory role, but will also prepare her to run her own business in the future.

**Ramon** – Ramon has been in the United States for 8 years, and for most of that time, has been working two full time jobs and struggling to make ends meet. Although Ramon is able to understand most of what his supervisors say to him, his English is limited, and his lack of confidence made him hesitant to ask questions, fearing that he will not understand the response. Prior to starting the IIB class, Ramon tried to take an English language class, but felt frustrated because the class moved too quickly. The teacher of this class would explain English grammar in terms Ramon did not understand, as he had never learned grammar in his native language and had dropped out of school quite young. Ramon's goal in participating in the IIB program was to improve his English and to learn the basic computer skills that he would need to become a manager. Since participating in IIB's classes, both Ramon's confidence and his listening comprehension have improved significantly. His supervisor recently commented that a couple of months ago, the supervisor would have to repeat things to Ramon two or three times before he understood, but now, Ramon always understands the first time. Ramon mentioned that one of the other benefits of the class is that he has learned how to talk to anyone, including guests, peers, and supervisors, and feels comfortable doing so. During the interview, Ramon was open, friendly, and talkative. Although his grammar was shaky, he talked fluidly, and as the interview was wrapping up, mentioned that it had been fun, and had been a good opportunity to practice speaking in a new context. Ramon's goal is to be promoted to assistant manager, and hopes to become a manager, either at the Hilton or at another hotel, in the next five years. Recently, Ramon was invited to attend one of the hotel's other training programs, where he anticipates learning more about how the business side of the hotel works.

**Isabel** – Isabel, who is originally from Mexico, has been living in the United States for five years. However, for most of that time, she stayed at home, raising a her son, and had very little contact with American culture. Isabel came to IIB when her husband left her and she found herself having to both care for a young child and work for the first time in a country where she did not speak the language, in a culture she did not understand. Initially, she found several part-time jobs, but she did not earn enough to support herself and her son. Isabel now works at the hotel full time, and to supplement her income, works another part-time job. When she came to the hotel, Isabel spoke very, very limited English. Although she has been recognized for her high performance on the job and her language has improved some, she still struggles to understand what she is being asked to do, and is reserved when she has to speak. Isabel has worked in several different positions at the hotel, including the laundry, housekeeping, and the lobby. In addition to wanting to improve her English, Isabel learned while working in housekeeping that it would be good to know how to use a computer, as the supervisors use computers to tell which rooms are dirty. Isabel's immediate goal is to get a raise so that she can earn enough not to feel like she needs to work a second job. Beyond that, she is not sure of what her career goals are because she does not feel like she understands yet what kinds of jobs exist in the US and how people move up in a job.

Reasons for Hilton's interest in and support of the partnership likely include: the presence of a program champion at the Hilton, who is also an IIB Board member; the company's desire to promote internally; the company's desire to improve customer service, coupled with recent cuts in training budgets; and a previous track record with IIB that has demonstrated value with their pre-employment program. These factors suggest that IIB's partnership with the Hilton is solid and likely has the potential to deepen even further.

### **Addendum: Progress Since November 30, 2005<sup>47</sup> and Plans for Year 2**

Between November 30, 2004, the end of the period this report addresses, and April 2005 when this report was written, IIB achieved several additional accomplishments. Although these are outside of the scope of the current report, they are summarized here.

The overarching theme for this period has been the IIB and Hilton working together to think creatively and brainstorm ways to improve aspects of the Hotel Career Center. The collaboration has resulted in a few small adjustments highlighted below.

During the February 2005 meeting of the Planning and Evaluation team, Hilton and IIB representatives discussed the fact that workers at Hilton hotels seem to be hesitant to take promotion opportunities if they require moving to another hotel. Workers were hesitant because the new hotel was seen as something unknown. One of the PET members from the Hilton came up with a solution. He suggested creating a job shadowing exchange between the DoubleTree property and the Hilton Back Bay hotel. The goal of the exchange would be to give workers a sense of what the atmosphere and day-to-day work are like at another hotel, to reduce their reluctance to accept a promotion if it meant moving between hotels. The Hilton agreed to provide shuttle service for participants from the two hotels, the exchange was promoted in English for Advancement classes and it began in March 2005.

To encourage greater participation in their IDA program, IIB also changed the income eligibility guidelines for 2005 to allow participant with incomes up to 300% of the poverty level to participate. Previously, in 2004, the limit was 200% or the poverty level, and IIB found the majority of HCC participants earned too much to enroll, and those who did not exceed the income limit felt they could not set aside the monthly amounts required. This change has been effective -- since the change was made 3 family accounts have been started.

To ensure the selection of participants in the incumbent worker classes for whom career advancement is a goal, IIB revised their applications to include questions on short- and long-term career goals. In addition, IIB staff will interview all applicants. This change went into effect in January 2005.

A drop-in computer resource center was established at IIB in February 2005. Initially, students had access to the computers from 9 am to 5 pm on Friday. However, very few students would come to these sessions. IIB tweaked their plan slightly, and now the computer teacher comes in early and sets

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<sup>47</sup> Through April 2005.

up the computers. The earlier set-up time allows students to come in during their lunch to practice, and so far, this has resulted in a higher turnout.

In December 2004, an additional incumbent worker was promoted from lobby attendant to preventive maintenance. This promotion was accompanied by a raise from \$11.70/hr. to \$12.95/hr.

An additional Hospitality Training Program graduation occurred on March 4, 2005.

Looking towards the future, IIB conducted a workplace needs analysis for the Hilton at MIT To prepare for their expansion to this hotel.

## D. Workforce Solutions Group (WSG)

### Partnership Description

In its RFP for the SkillWorks Public Policy Advocacy component, the Funders Group was seeking an organization or team that would develop and implement specific short- and long-term strategies to move the system in the direction outlined by the public policy priorities that the Group had identified. These priorities were to build a broad continuum of services, create industry-responsive career ladders aimed at the advancement of low-wage workers, and coordinate the funds and policies of all agencies involved in workforce development. The RFP also noted that the key goals of the Public Policy Advocacy component were to reduce the barriers to effective implementation of the other components of the Initiative, and to develop systems to institutionalize their successes throughout the publicly funded system.

Workforce Solutions Group, the entity selected by the Funders Group, is a partnership of a variety of organizations in Massachusetts who came together to respond to the Public Policy RFP that was issued. The initial group included the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union (now the Women’s Union), the Organizing and Leadership Training Center (now the Massachusetts Communities Action Network, MCAN), and the Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Association, along with a fourth major partner – the AFL-CIO. All four organizations had all been working on various aspects of workforce development policy independently, prior to the SkillWorks Initiative. In its proposal, this new partnership also identified The Strategy Group, Northeastern University’s Center for Labor Market Studies, and the National Network of Sector Partners as members. The initial proposal called for:

- Operating a regionally-based, statewide campaign;
- Aligning grassroots organizing with coordinating media, research, marketing and advocacy aimed at workforce development “system reform”; and
- Putting the needs and interests of low-wage workers at the center of its policy change and reform efforts.

The proposed strategy entailed:

- Ensuring that low-wage workers have a central voice in identifying and advocating for workforce development reform priorities;
- Using a coalition strategy to build strong support amongst employers and business organizations;
- Engaging influential champions in the Legislature;
- Engaging employers through the Massachusetts WIB Association;
- Building regional support through public events and forums;
- Coordinating strategies for research, media, and advocacy with all partners; and

- Creating an advocacy system that will be greater than the sum of the independent efforts of the partners.

Policy change priorities that the WSG partnership thought would be the focus of its system change activities were:

- Changing the way workforce development system dollars are used;
- Targeting resources to promising advancement practices;
- Strengthening integration of the adult education, the workforce development system, community colleges, and economic development services;
- Creating a clear policy focus on the goal of advancement to economic self-sufficiency, supported by performance benchmarks and funding priorities; and
- Building stronger connections to link supply-side workforce development efforts with demand-side employer skills needs.

### **What Differentiates the WSG?**

The Workforce Solutions Group did an analysis of what differentiated them from what other organizations in Massachusetts were doing in the workforce development field. In conducting this analysis, WSG identified the following factors as characterizing its efforts:

- Diversity of constituency
- Statewide focus
- Five-year outlook
- Dual customer focus

In the SkillWorks evaluation team’s initial scan of what else is going on relative to efforts to change the Massachusetts workforce development system, it is in regard to the longer-term outlook and the central role that low-wage workers and community residents play through the AFL-CIO and MCAN that makes WSG different. WSG is unusual in bringing community organizations to the table with the unions and the WIBs, with the community organizations bringing the power of their citizen-members, the unions bringing the workers’ perspective, and the WIBs representing the views of the public workforce system and of businesses and employers. In combination, this diversity potentially brings significant political strength.

WSG’s statewide focus and a dual customer focus does not seem to be new or particularly unique among existing public policy advocacy efforts. For example, the Reach Higher initiative is one effort addressing statewide workforce related issues that has a dual customer focus and is working towards broad system change. The goal of this initiative is “to develop policy recommendations to improve the connections of working adults to postsecondary education and to ensure that those connections result in skills that are valued by employers.” Reach Higher is being led by the Commonwealth Corporation, and involves about sixty people from the private, public, and non-profit sectors,

including leaders of the Romney Administration and members of the Legislature and their staff. The Reach Higher initiative also includes some of the same organizations involved in WSG. Staff from WSG, as well as members of the WSG Executive Team, participate in the Reach Higher initiative activities. Although Reach Higher has a more-narrow agenda – focusing on higher education – there is some potential overlap with the WSG and SkillWorks priorities.

## **WSG's Year 1 Activities and Achievements**

The Year 1 work plan included in the WSG proposal identified the following proposed tasks:

- Build a strong base of public and stakeholders support through targeted organizing and outreach;
- Show need for workforce development reform, assess leverage points for change, and identify best practices through strategic research;
- Develop a reform agenda through multi-stakeholder dialogue;
- Develop and widely disseminate an effective message; and
- Develop a legislative and regulatory change package.

In its first year of operations, WSG conducted five critical sets of activities:

**1) Early legislative advocacy effort.** The Workforce Solutions Group got off to a very early start through its involvement in a major legislative initiative in its first quarter of operations. This involved getting a \$6 million workforce development component included in the Economic Stimulus bill that the Legislature passed and became law, despite the Governor's veto. The members of Workforce Solutions Group helped to mobilize various constituencies to support passage, including members of the Funders Group, for this effort. The \$6 million in supplemental funding was used to develop the BEST III Initiative (now BayStateWorks). Clearly, the early legislative victory was an important outcome for the WSG partnership.

**2) Formalizing their management structure and expanding their partnership.** The Workforce Solutions Group spent time early in Year 1 in formalizing their basic management structure and hiring their project manager. In addition, over the course of the first year of operations, the Workforce Solutions Group has developed a partnership structure with multiple layers. The primary partnership is comprised of the Executive Team, which includes the initial three partners and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO. This team meets on a bi-weekly basis and is responsible for setting the overall direction of the public policy work, in addition to conducting a significant portion of the implementation activities. The project manager, hired in February 2004, reports directly to the Executive Team and deals with the day-to-day coordination of the WSG activities, as well as conducting specific implementation tasks.

There is also a Partners Group, which includes additional organizations representing various constituencies. This larger group has met seven times throughout the first year of the project. In addition to the core members, the Partners Group includes:

- The Massachusetts Immigrants and Refugees Advocacy Coalition;
- The Boston PIC;
- The Associated Industries of Massachusetts;
- The Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education;
- The Massachusetts Executive Office of Community Colleges; and
- The Massachusetts Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives

During Year 1, the Executive Team and WSG staff also embarked on an extensive outreach effort which sought to engage a broader group of stakeholders in the policy-setting process and make them part of the larger leadership team. They met with many critical workforce development stakeholders, including organizations that had competed with them for funding for the Public Policy component of SkillWorks. The outreach meetings have primarily been with individual unions, individual WIBs, numerous community-based organizations, and three community colleges. Outreach to the employer community has primarily been through business organizations such as AIM. However, WSG also has reached out to a number of individual businesses including KB Toys, Partners Healthcare, Vicor Corporation, Marriott and Jordan's Furniture.

**3) Planning and running eight regional forums.** Between September 1st and the end of November 2004, WSG conducted eight regional meetings: North Shore (45 attendees); Franklin/Hampden/Hampshire (about 75 attendees); Southeast Massachusetts (75 attendees); Central Massachusetts (65 attendees); Cape Cod and the Islands (55 attendees); the Berkshires (50 attendees); Lawrence (75 attendees); and Boston (130 attendees). Four of these regional meetings were held during November.

In conducting these meetings, one of the barriers that WSG had to overcome was the perception that there had been similar sessions in the past – most notably the regional forums of MassINC. WSG has been able to overcome this barrier and was able to bring together key stakeholders in each regions. The meetings provided WSG with important input on workforce challenges as well as potential policy ideas. The WSG forums also had considerable participation from union members and low-wage workers, who were not in attendance in significant numbers in the MassINC sessions.

The purpose of these forums was not only to gather information, but also to begin to organize a constituency for WSG's policy efforts. The intention is to utilize these groups as part of the legislative campaign.

**4) Releasing initial research report.** Under the aegis of WSG, in May 2004, Northeastern's Center for Labor Market Research issued a report on labor market problems in Massachusetts. The second and third reports in what is envisioned as a continued series have also recently been completed. The titles of these additional reports are "*A Commonwealth Growing Apart: Family Income in Massachusetts*" and "*Treading Water in Quicksand: A Look at Poverty, Income Inadequacy and Economic Self-Sufficiency in Massachusetts.*"

One difference from the initial WSG proposal has been in the substance of the research that has been completed as part of the public policy effort to date. The WSG proposal for Year 1 called for a number of research-related activities, including conducting research and analysis of the workforce development system to identify any overlap of services, lack of coordination, gaps in services, and/or barriers that limit success. WSG also proposed to use the research activities to identify best policy practices in Massachusetts and elsewhere. However, the actual research products that were developed during the first year have all focused on further explorations of family income and poverty in the state.

**5) The Development of the Workforce Solutions Act of 2005.** Out of necessity, the WSG group did not wait until all of the regional forums were completed to begin to identify the elements of its policy agenda. Given the filing deadline of December 1, there was considerable urgency to begin to develop specific ideas for the proposed legislation. The members of the Executive Team were working during October and November 2004 to sketch out some of the key themes that would form the basis of the WSG legislative agenda. Beginning in November, the Executive Team began evaluating forum data on a rolling basis and incorporating this input into their thinking. The actual legislative agenda that was generated was based on a combination of things, including specific recommendations that had been voiced in the forums, and ideas that emerged among the partners that were consistent with input received at the forums.

Most of the intensive work on the legislation took place during the third and fourth weeks of November, following the completion of the regional forums. During this period WSG drafted legislation and vetted that legislation, both with its own Partners Group, as well as with the Policy Committee of the SkillWorks Funders Group.

The result of this work was the filing of the Workforce Solutions Act of 2005 on December 1, 2004. This Legislation requested approximately \$39 million in new funding for the following workforce development priorities:

- **Training Massachusetts Workers:** The legislation calls for the establishment of a Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to provide \$20 million in funding for Sector Training partnerships and programs for out-of-school youth. The legislation also proposes increased funding for welfare-to-work programs, dislocated workers, and One-Stop Career Centers. The legislation also calls for extending the Workforce Training Fund to 2010.
- **Educating Massachusetts' Youth and Families:** The legislation also calls for increased funding of ABE and ESOL, with a portion of this to be spent in the workplace. In addition, the legislation proposes funding for a higher education grant program, for school-to-career connecting activities, and expanding summer sessions and evening classes at public institutions of higher education.
- **Performance Standards and Accountability:** The third section of the Act calls for the creation of a Task Force to review programs, governance and funding of workforce development programs in the Commonwealth.

In addition to drafting the legislation during this period, Susan Tracy from The Strategy Group, one of the consultants to WSG, began the process of identifying and securing legislative sponsors for the bill. WSG was successful in securing its first choices for both a House and a Senate sponsor. Susan Tracy was able to secure the sponsorship of Lida Harkins, the Assistant House Majority Leader from Needham, and Senator Thomas McGee from Lynn. In the end, WSG was able to convince 101 legislators to sign on as sponsors for the bill.

The WSG also reached out to other organizations to discuss their legislation. For example, on November 23, 2004, WSG representatives met with the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance (MWA) about potential overlap in the legislative priorities of the two groups. Despite the effort of WSG, however, MWA submitted separate workforce development-related legislation.

In general, the WSG was successful in addressing all of the tasks that it had proposed in its Year 1 work plan. Although the process of organizing the regional forums was more complex and took longer than anticipated, WSG was able to conduct all of the regional forums during the first year, develop a reform agenda, and design and submit a legislative package by the December 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. While an additional month would have been helpful to ensure a fuller vetting of the legislative proposals, the extensive outreach activities that took place during the entire year provided a good foundation for developing a legislative package that addressed the challenges and ideas that WSG thought would have widespread appeal.

## **An Assessment of Initial Outcomes**

As initially conceived by the Funders Group, the Public Policy component would be key to achieving system change. The theory underlying SkillWorks is that, as the public policy grantee, WSG would develop the short- and long-term strategies required to move the system in the direction outlined by the Funders Group. This process would require building strong public support for investment in the workforce development system, and would include working with the public sector to institutionalize successful innovations emerging from the entire SkillWorks initiative. Although there have been some successes consistent with this model, there are also clear challenges that need to be addressed as the public policy component moves forward.

### **Early Victory in the Economic Stimulus Bill in 2004**

The most critical indicator of success in system change to date has been the early victory of WSG in the legislative arena. There were many other stakeholders involved in the effort to get \$6 million in training funding into the Economic Stimulus Bill and then to campaign for an override of the Governor's veto. However, there is no doubt that WSG was a critical actor in this process. In addition, this early "win" by WSG and the Funders Group has built credibility for the overall SkillWorks initiative, and provided evidence of the benefits of a new coalition working to increase resources for workforce development in the Commonwealth.

Once the legislation passed, however, WSG was not instrumental in the decisions about how the \$6 million would be spent and the eventual design of the new state workforce program, first known as BEST III and now as BayStateWorks.

## The Development of a Statewide Constituency for Workforce Development

A second outcome of the initial year of WSG activity has been the building of a large network of organizations and businesses that crosses the entire state. With close to 600 individuals attending the regional forums, as well as through its extensive outreach activities, WSG has begun to develop a very broad constituency for the public policy work. This network puts WSG in a potentially strong position to effectively push their legislative agenda. And there is some initial evidence of the success in this effort. For example, individuals involved in the initial forums were helpful in the process of securing legislators to sponsor the Workforce Solutions Act of 2005.

Although the WSG effort has effectively engaged many of the key stakeholders in the workforce development system, as of yet WSG has not been successful in bringing in some of the critical stakeholders. For example, this is true for some of the other workforce-related consortiums and collaboratives in the state. Therefore, although progress has been made in building a statewide constituency, promoting increased cooperation with these other consortiums and collaboratives, as well as leadership by individual employers, will be important for WSG in pursuing the longer-term system change agenda. It should be noted, though, that WSG has made good faith efforts to reach out to these other workforce consortiums, as well as to associations representing employers (such as the Chamber of Commerce), to groups representing immigrant organizations, and to others.

## Continuing Challenges

In thinking about the longer-term interests of SkillWorks in achieving change in the workforce development system, the activities of the WSG are extremely important. The first year activities of WSG have raised some questions about the role and focus of the public policy efforts in the overall system change agenda. Some of the questions that arose in the analysis of the Year 1 WSG activities include:

- **Are there public policy priorities that are not related to legislation, and what is the role of WSG in addressing these priorities?** Are there barriers to creating an effective workforce system that is able to meet the needs of low-income, low-skilled Boston residents that are not necessarily solved through the state legislative process? Possible examples would include: the relationship between the community colleges and employers; the role of community-based organizations and their relationships with employers and the community colleges; and how workforce development is being integrated into the overall development process within the city of Boston. The question is whether or not these public policy issues are within the scope and capacity of the WSG mandate, given its limited resources.
- **Is there a more deliberate plan for moving from a focus on increasing resources to a bolder policy agenda that leads to more fundamental system change?** Clearly in the Funders Group's RFP, the first goal of the Public Policy campaign was defined as changing the workforce development system so that it more effectively assists low-income individuals to enter the workforce and advance to family-wage jobs. WSG has translated this goal to mean an early focus on increasing resources for workforce development, but not necessarily making substantial changes in the way workforce development services are delivered. WSG's initial legislative package takes a first step in

implementing a system change agenda by calling for a “Performance Standards and Workforce Accountability Task Force.” The structure of this Task Force has some “system change” elements. For example, it puts the leadership in the hands of the Legislature, not the State agencies, and it requires strong business involvement. However, the current operating theory of WSG is that its initial focus should not be on dramatic and broad system changes. WSG’s belief is that some early wins to increase resources for workforce development will help WSG and SkillWorks on a tactical level to move more effectively into bolder reform efforts. But this strategy for moving towards more bold system reform might need to be more clearly articulated.

- **Will a statewide focus always lead to optimal system reform outcomes in Boston?** A related system change issue is the assumption that a statewide policy effort will lead to the best system change outcomes for the city of Boston. There is an assumption in the design of the public policy component that public policies that make the most sense on a statewide basis will also make the most sense as a priority in the Boston region. In terms of meeting the Funders Group’s goals in the city of Boston, it is important to consider whether there are some policy related issues that are more specific to the Boston region, and that may not be fully addressed through a statewide initiative. Specifically, there are many differences in conditions throughout the state. For example, there are differences in the capacity in the local/regional workforce development systems and the relative importance and influence of different stakeholders. In addition, across regions, there are different economic sectors with varying workforce needs and priorities that may lead to different system reform-related priorities. This is a natural tension in the design of this Initiative.
- **Can a coalition that is made up of so make different constituencies reach agreement on bold policies that will lead to true system changes?** The partnership structure that has been developed by WSG has involved the engagement of a very broad stakeholder group across Massachusetts. And, in developing this broad-based coalition, WSG has been successful in achieving specifically what it anticipated doing in its initial proposal to SkillWorks. However, in considering this approach, the question arises about whether it is going to be possible to develop a system change agenda that meets the needs of all WSG partners without having to make so many compromises along the way that the effort reinforces the system rather than changes it?<sup>48</sup>
- **Is further work needed to align the many organizations and agencies that are currently involved in workforce development policy in the Commonwealth?** As noted, WSG has been effective in its outreach efforts. There are, however, some continuing areas of overlap and tension amongst the many organizations that are interested in promoting increased funding for workforce development and changes in the workforce system. An illustration of the potential complications of this continuing tension was the filing of very similar legislation by the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance. MWA filed a bill, sponsored by the House Chairman of the new Labor and

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<sup>48</sup> Although this question has not been definitively answered yet, the SkillWorks Funders Group have affirmed this approach by refunding WSG for Year 2.

Workforce Committee that also called for the creation of a Task Force to review workforce system reform. Though WSG tried to work with MWA, in the end MWA filed its own legislative package. There are a few additional examples where there might be some overlap between WSG's legislation and other advocacy groups. The question is whether such overlap and lack of coordination will represent a major challenge for the SkillWorks system reform agenda in the long term.

- **What is the difference between issues that the WSG takes on as a group and those that individual partners address?** There are some workforce-related policy issues that the partners involved in the Executive Team still pursue separately. Does this represent a problem when the partners take different positions on workforce issues outside of WSG?
- **What is the relationship between WSG and the SkillWorks Implementation Partnerships and Capacity Building component?** In the SkillWorks theory of change, there is a strong assumption that the three components of the system – the partnerships, the public policy advocacy, and the capacity building – by working together will achieve system change. However, the relationships between the various elements are still in a developmental stage. To date, WSG has organized some initial meetings with some of the partnerships and with the capacity-building staff. However, it is not at all clear what the connections between these components should be, and how to promote those connections most effectively.
- **Should the research agenda be more specifically targeted to the SkillWorks agenda and/or focus more on Boston?** As noted, the research work to date has been focused on making the case that there are increasing income disparities among the state's population, and many individuals in Massachusetts are not making progress towards achieving economic self-sufficiency. It is not clear that the choice to focus the research in this direction was based on any strategic decisions, or that the Legislature or public was unaware of these substantive issues. Therefore, some basic questions for future WSG research activities are: how is the research agenda being set, and is it meeting the overall goal of helping to achieve the workforce system change envisioned by the Funders Group?

### **Addendum: Activities Between the End of Year 1 and March 2005 - *The Beginnings of the Legislative Campaign***

WSG is currently in a very strong position for seeing some success in getting the Workforce Solutions Act passed. WSG was effective in getting very good sponsors for the Act, one of whom (Senator Thomas McGee from Lynn) was appointed Chairman of the Labor and Workforce Committee. As noted, they also were able to get 101 legislative co-sponsors for the bill.

WSG is now fully engaged in the legislative campaign. It has reorganized its Executive Team to manage the process, with different members leading various groups: organizing, research, and media and messaging. WSG is working on a strategy that builds on the idea that the Massachusetts economy is encountering a "perfect storm" in terms of the confluence of many negative economic trends. It is positioning the Workforce Solutions Act of 2005 as a way of responding to this "storm."

WSG sees increasing evidence that both the Governor and the Legislature are recognizing the critical importance of workforce development in addressing the Commonwealth's economic challenges. For example, the Governor has increased funding for ABE and Employment Security in his budget, and the Legislature has created a Labor and Workforce Committee. In addition, six public hearings have been planned around the state on an Economic Stimulus Bill, and the Committee on Labor and Workforce is being included as an integral part of this effort.

WSG is developing a dual approach to its legislative campaign. The first element is "the inside track" – trying to contact as many legislators as possible. With the help of Susan Tracy, WSG has been meeting with the Legislative leadership to garner additional support for the Act. WSG is also working aggressively "outside" the Statehouse to grow the constituency for the legislation. In this process, those involved in the regional forums are being mobilized to become active supporters of the legislation. In some cases, regional groups are meeting with their legislative delegation to gain their support.

WSG has also made additional efforts to engage some of the SkillWorks Implementation Partnerships. Most notably, WSG representatives met with Partners Healthcare on two occasions, and are beginning to discuss some community college related issues with this group. However, continued challenges remain in thinking about how to further integrate the activities of the Implementation Partnerships with that of WSG.

Finally, as of yet, WSG has not fully engaged the Funders Group itself in the legislative campaign. WSG has met with Paul Grogan from the Boston Foundation, and is planning similar meetings with the staff of other entities represented on the Funders Group. As part of this communication, some preliminary discussions are taking place about how to ensure that WSG is working more closely in the future with the Funders Group relative to the public policy agenda.

## Part Three: Continuing Challenges in Pursuing System Change

The most significant “added value” of the SkillWorks Initiative is its focus on bringing to scale some of the partnership activity that is taking place, and on institutionalizing many of the innovations occurring in the workforce arena (both SkillWorks-initiated innovations and some of those that predated it). To be successful in promoting these system improvements, it must continue to address the barriers that impede progress in these areas. In addition, the Initiative would benefit from developing a more intentional and systematic approach to taking advantage of some of the opportunities and innovations that have occurred as a result of the first year’s activities.

The evaluation team’s Year 1 review of the three Implementation partnerships and the public policy activities of the Workforce Solutions Group, as well as our analysis of the broader system baseline, identified some substantial challenges (and, in some ways, opportunities). Below we highlight these areas that we believe merit additional attention by the Initiative:

- **Developing a more systematic and comprehensive approach to workforce and workforce development activities in the healthcare sector:** Clearly, healthcare remains one of the largest sources of employment in the city of Boston, as well as one of the most important sources of entry-level employment for low-income, low-skilled residents of the city. In addition, there are considerable employment opportunities within this sector that could provide family wage jobs with some fairly modest levels of training and education. This opportunity has been widely recognized – the result being that there is considerable work going on in Boston in the healthcare field. Boston also has the potential to serve as a model of the nation in this area. The challenge is that it is getting more and more difficult to understand the landscape. There is a need to better map out what is happening – who all the actors are, where are there common issues in the extended care and acute care sectors, and where can there be additional synergies and economies through collaborative action. Basically the question is: “what is the key ‘system change’ agenda in this sector, and what role can SkillWorks play a role in promoting greater coordination and focusing of resources to implement it?”
- **Addressing on-going turf battles:** To some extent, there will always be turf issues and competition in any policy arena. Some of these tensions arise from process issues, or from real or perceived slights that have occurred in the past. Moreover, no effort is going to eliminate such turf issues entirely, and a certain degree of competition may be healthy. On the other hand, there are some longstanding turf issues that pose a substantial, continuing challenge to improving the workforce development system’s responsiveness to the needs of low-skilled individuals. For such turf issues, it may be beneficial for the SkillWorks funders to examine what role they may be able to play in mediating these conflicts, since in some cases they are funding organizations on both sides of these issues.
- **Being more strategic about the interaction of the three components of the Initiative:** SkillWorks has focused more attention in recent months on the important intersections between the public policy work and the Implementation partnerships, as well as on the connections between the capacity-building work and the partnerships. However, to date

there is still no explicit, detailed strategy about how the three different components of SkillWorks will be linked in order to maximize the system change outcomes. There is an “implicit” general strategy, but there is not a common understanding among all stakeholders of what this strategy entails in an operational sense. This is an important area for the Initiative to address in the near future.

- **Thinking about the most appropriate roles of various intermediaries in the system:** Another area that would benefit from some additional strategic thinking involves the roles and composition of intermediaries in the workforce system. Although the SkillWorks Initiative recognizes the importance of intermediaries, the model (or models) for such intermediaries have not yet been fully articulated. For example, should intermediaries be based at the city, the region, or the state level, or all three? Should there be sector-specific intermediaries and/or multi-sector intermediaries? Under each of these scenarios, what should be the composition of the intermediary, and what roles should it perform? Should it be a major priority that the public workforce system provide on-going funding to foster and maintain these intermediaries? These are some of the questions that the Skillworks Initiative presents a great opportunity to address systematically.
- **Developing increased clarity about the populations groups that the SkillWorks Initiative is targeting:** There seems to be some ongoing issues about who are the target job seeker/worker population(s) for the Initiative. It appears that there are some who think that the focus should be exclusively on low-income, low-skilled residents of the city of Boston. However, there may be some inconsistency between such a focus and the design of the Initiative, since the partnerships involve both pre-employment and incumbent worker activities and are explicitly seeking to create a continuum of services along career paths. The Year 1 experience found that indeed, in the pre-employment activities, the Implementation partnership activities were primarily reaching low-income Boston residents. However, in the incumbent worker activities, there are many individuals who live outside of Boston and/or who would not be considered low-income. As we have suggested, this may be an inherent feature in any incumbent worker effort where the goal is to provide a continuum of services to help workers advance, since the individual incumbent workers are at different points in their career pathways. Moreover, it may not be possible to have a dual customer approach, if one is saying to the employers, “we are only interested in helping you if you are targeting only your workers who live in the city and who fall below a certain income threshold.”
- **Developing a strategy for making the community colleges a more integral part of the system change agenda:** Bunker Hill Community College, Roxbury Community College and Massachusetts Bay Community College have all been involved in various aspects of the SkillWorks Initiative. In some cases, they have been contractors providing new curriculum and classes at their respective campuses. In other instances, they are more involved as partners in the projects. And in the case of PCWD, they have been involved in broader policy and system change related discussions. These institutions are also involved in other system change efforts, including the Reach Higher initiative. The SkillWorks Initiative would probably benefit from thinking more strategically about what, if any, system-related changes it is seeking to achieve that relate to the region’s

community colleges, and to develop a coordinated approach to achieving these changes through its policy and partnership work.

- **Exploring the role of CBOs in the system:** One on-going challenge in the workforce development system is the varying views held about the role of CBOs within the system. Underlying some of the system-related conflicts in Boston have been competing perspectives on the performance of service providers and when and how they should be involved in workforce development. Some of the Implementation partnerships have developed some new relationships with CBOs, and in other cases CBOs have taken on new or expanded roles. The learnings related to these experiences could help to inform and shape a broader discussion of this issue among key stakeholders.
- **Making increased connections between workforce and economic development:** Another potential system change issue involves the linkages (or the lack thereof) between the workforce development system and economic development at the city, regional, and state levels. Within the city, there have been efforts to better link the two arenas. At the statewide level, it appears that the linkages remain very weak. This is a system issue that has not been directly addressed as part of SkillWorks to date. Yet it has potential importance to the public policy efforts, as well as in the institutionalization of some of the partnership activities.
- **Tracking the results of improved practices and systems change:** The evaluation team's experience over the past year has highlighted the challenge of tracking the results of the SkillWorks Initiative, at both the partnership and the system level. For the partnerships, we feel that there is a growing recognition (at least among the funders, managing agencies, and the evaluation team) of the importance of developing more standardized metrics<sup>49</sup>, of more fully articulating the outcomes of interest to the employer partners, and of improving the capacity of the partnerships to track and report consistent and verifiable data relative to these measures on an on-going basis. As a result of our baseline review of the system change and sectoral efforts concurrently occurring in Boston, we also recognize that the evaluation team will need to be very careful in how it assigns attribution for any sectoral or system improvements that occur.

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<sup>49</sup> At the request of the Funders Group, the evaluation team and the Boston PIC have already drafted a proposed set of more standardized performance measures. We will share these with the partnerships for their review and feedback on possible refinements, and then will make a formal proposal to the Funders Group for adoption of the new reporting metrics.