NW Promise

PARTNERSHIP LEAD ORGANIZATION – WORKSYSTEMS, INC.

SERVICE AREA
OREGON: Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties. WASHINGTON: Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties; and the Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro Metropolitan Area.

Overview
NW Promise is a $6 million four-year grant that trains and places historically under-represented populations into healthcare careers with a solid career pathway that provides sustainable and living wage employment. Training resources are focused on the long-term unemployed, under-employed, incumbent workers, people of color, English language learners, people with disabilities, low-income residents, and other populations facing barriers to employment. Increasing workforce diversity in the healthcare field is seen as an important contributor to these goals and has been a key area of focus for all employers within our local region.

Partners include the Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative (CWWC), WorkSource centers, training providers, economic development agencies, industry associations, and employers. Clackamas Workforce Partnership (CWP), Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW) and Worksystems are the regional Workforce Development Boards in the greater Portland metro area, and have come together to address the collective workforce challenges faced by our local business community. The board contracts with multiple community partners to provide supportive services such as career coaching, mentoring, supportive services and tuition-free training. NW Promise also works with incumbent workers in order to provide resources and opportunities to our business community to up-skill and re-tool some of their existing workforce. The CWWC is joined by leaders from the five largest health systems in the area, Kaiser Permanente, Legacy Health, Oregon Health & Sciences University, PeaceHealth and Providence Health & Services, the Oregon Nurses Association, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 49, economic development agencies, and many others who are working together to advance health equity, improve patient care quality and eliminate health care disparities. This program exceeds goals, creating success for our community.

Program Highlight
Works systems developed a customized Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) for H-1B related healthcare occupations, which streamlined the process for connecting participants with approved healthcare training providers. The ETPL was updated to reflect the status of training providers during the stay at home order to clarify for participants and career coaches which trainers offered online trainings and which courses were postponed due to COVID. Additionally, some providers have delayed their opening dates for upcoming classes, while others stayed open and offered normal coursework in a socially distant context. Due to the success of this practice, a customized ETPL will be an ongoing feature for future grants and initiatives.
Regional Workforce Partnerships and Sector Strategies

NW Promise allowed us to develop multiple new partnerships with labor unions (SEIU and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees), industry (Kaiser Permanente, Legacy Health, Oregon Health Sciences University and Providence Health), and training providers (Portland Community College) and one notable new relationship with the Shirley Ware Education Center. This partnership focused attention on incumbent workers and demonstrated the high level of demand for training within the healthcare industry among existing front-line employees.

As part of the sector strategies pursued by CWWC, a report was drafted in January 2018 called “Healthcare Labor Market Report” in which it was noted that “Registered Nurses will continue to add the largest number of jobs, accounting for 11 percent of the sector’s growth.” To advance this sector strategy, the Immigrant Nurse Credentialing (INC) program formed as part of the America’s Promise program. INC was overseen by an advisory board that included the Oregon Nurses Foundation, University of Portland School of Nursing, Clackamas Community College, Legacy Health, Washington State University, Marquis Assisted Living and Senior Care Facilities, and Worksystems. Because of this sector strategy; we had participants from over 11 countries complete training.

Success Story and Impact

Alexandra Muth, NW Promise (and Health Careers NW) success story, in her own words:

“I come from a pretty unstable childhood background. Foster homes, drug and alcohol abuse as well as mental health issues, but through all of my struggles I was determined to not give up on myself. This is when I decided that inpatient treatment through Central City Concern was my best option. That’s where I was connected with NW Promise (and Health Careers NW). As soon as I found out I got into the program, I knew I wanted to be something more than I ever imagined for myself. I decided [to pursue] a Medical Assisting degree. Through Health Careers NW I got help with tutoring, a career exploration workshop which was very insightful and helped me a lot to really understand my options. My Career coaches were awesome! Totally nonjudgmental, helped me out with a lot of resources, the application process, school options and even helped me with my resume after I finished school. Overall it was a life changing experience that I am so grateful for.

[Through] NW Promise (and Health Careers NW) I successfully obtained my GED in order to attend the college I wanted to go to, then completed the college program of my choice, followed by an internship. Today I am working as a Medical Assistant. I love my job, I love working for the providers and I love the relationships I have with patients. I feel like I cannot even find the words of how much NW Promise helped me and changed my life. Today I have a stable career that I absolutely love, I am a stable mother and I get to help others that have been through the same struggles that I have. None of this would be possible if I didn’t have the support of NW Promise.”

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