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Linking the Neighborhood to World Class Employers:

A Profile of the Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute

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Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute

The Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute provides a comprehensive array of education, mentoring, and career advancement opportunities to low-income, under-skilled community residents and entry-level workers in Boston's Longwood Medical and Academic Area (LMAA), one of the nation's highest concentrations of world-class health care and research institutions.

The institute has three goals:

- Expand health care and research job opportunities and career advancement paths for Boston residents living in or near the LMAA;
- Provide entry-level workers with education and supports to enable them to build skills, earn higher wages, and advance along career pathways; and
- Support employers, by improving their bottom line through increased retention of current workers, filling critical skills gaps, and providing a well-qualified workforce.

The institute was established in 2000, when the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation and Fenway Community Development Corporation joined with four health-related employers to undertake research and then provide training and career advancement opportunities for entry-level workers. Two years later, the institute expanded to eight employers. In 2003, the collaboration won a SkillWorks grant to expand the opportunities it offers to entry-level health care and medical research workers and to add training and coaching that open up career opportunities to other

residents of the community. It has grown into a partnership of eleven health care employers, one union, ten community organizations, and four educational institutions.

Each year, the institute serves over 400 job seekers and entry-level employees, high percentages of whom progress toward family-sustaining incomes: 98 percent of pre-employment participants earn higher wages at placement than their pre-enrollment incomes, and 83 percent of incumbent workers complete one or more courses each year.

Employers provide significant financial support for the institute's operations and for participating workers, including paid release time and tuition reimbursement. The institute has convinced employers that the community can be a source of qualified job candidates to meet shortages of skilled workers. Employers report an 89 percent retention rate for entry-level workers enrolled in services over the first two years; 97 participants received promotions; and 233 received merit wage increases. Supervisors report saving from half an hour to two hours a week from the enhanced skills of participants.

The institute also has improved the process of referring job candidates from community organizations to hospitals, introducing the efficiency of a single-point-of-contact system. And it has collaborated with postsecondary institutions to make college courses and programs more accessible, with offerings at the Longwood area and at times convenient for the hospital workers.

Making of a Role Model

Born and raised in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood, Grace Toledo graduated from the Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute's pre-employment training in June 2006 and then completed an internship in the finance office of Harvard Medical School's Cell Biology Department. Ms. Toledo is interested in pursuing a career in the medical field and would like to earn a nursing degree.

"This health training program made a positive impact on my life, with the excellent instructors of YMCA Training, Inc., and

the help from the Employment Specialists, as well as my colleagues. In the program, I learned a lot, such as medical terminology and conducting myself in a professional manner during interviews.

"The program impacted [not only] me but also my daughter Shayla. She watched her dedicated mother with grit determination to be successful, and I influenced her to 'reach for the sky.' She saw that I too was learning like her, and that school is very important no matter what [your] age."

The institute's ultimate vision as a SkillWorks partner is to establish a permanent health care education and training center for entry-level workers and community residents. The broad partnership and educational and service offerings—combined with sustainable enhancements to the workforce systems of employers and education and service providers—lay a strong foundation toward achieving that goal.

Program Design

The activities of the Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute include pre-employment training, incumbent worker training, and college degree programs.

Pre-Employment Education and Training

With ten employer partners, the institute's pre-employment component provides unemployed or underemployed community residents with a pipeline to family-sustaining jobs. Components include job-readiness training, skills training, learning internships, English for Speakers of Other Languages, financial literacy, career exploration, and goal setting.

Participants choose among four skill-building tracks—animal lab technician, central processing, administrative/patient registration, and environmental services/food services. Job-readiness, soft skills, and world-of-work training are built into all tracks, as are career planning and financial literacy. Each track is four to eight weeks long, depending upon the skills being taught. Participants then move into 32-hour-a-week internships with participating employers for three to four weeks, and they also work on career goals, through both class discussions and one-on-one sessions with Employment Specialists. Based on employer demand and neighborhood interest, the institute has also offered a pathology lab training course and a patient care course designed to prepare participants for Certified Nursing Assistant licensing. ESOL courses contextualized to health care are offered to community residents, with the goal that some graduates will enter the pre-employment training and others will go directly to job placement services.

The institute tries to make the transition from pre-employment training to incumbent worker education as smooth as possible. Three to four months after an individual is hired, an Employment Specialist contacts the new employee to assess his or her interest in further training. The Employment Specialist works with those who are interested to develop a basic plan. The Employment Specialist and the employee then meet with a Career Coach, who from this point forward

provides career guidance and information on education, and career advancement.

Incumbent Worker Education and Training and College Courses

For incumbent, entry-level workers, the institute provides advancement steps along a career pathway. Preparation includes basic skills education; vocational education; tutoring; career exploration, coaching, and counseling; and financial planning and asset development. Basic education courses include GED preparation, four levels of ESOL, and brush-up and pre-college courses in math, English, reading, writing, and science. Many of the courses accommodate students of varying skill levels, and a small tutoring program matches participants with volunteers recruited from within the hospitals and trained by Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts.

The institute offers vocational education classes in computers, patient care, administrative skills, and exploration of technology careers, as well as two innovative courses of study for incumbent workers, one for those who wish to pursue a nursing degree and the other leading to surgical technologist certification. About two dozen workers are participating in these programs. In addition, training for supervisors focuses on effective hiring practices and stresses the importance of investing in the education of entry-level workers. Each semester, the course catalogue changes, based on employer and employee needs.

The institute provides a variety of career support services. Career coaches help workers with general career exploration and provide specific career information—for example, about job requirements, education and training opportunities, and how to plan a course of study.

The Institute has experimented with group coaching sessions, and it offers regular career orientation sessions at employer sites. In addition, lunch-time financial planning workshops are offered at various Longwood locations. In 2004 and 2005, 113 incumbent workers received financial counseling.

Partners and Their Roles

Employers

The Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute is a partnership of eleven employers in the Longwood Medical and Academic area and three primary surrounding neighborhoods (Fenway, Jamaica Plain, and Mission Hill). Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Children's Hospital Boston, Harvard

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Medical School and School of Dental Medicine, and New England Baptist Hospital are original members. Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital joined two years later. Four employers joined under SkillWorks: Fenway Community Health Center, Joslin Diabetes Center, Martha Eliot Health Center, and Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center.

Employers provide significant support. Most offer some paid leave for training, all reimburse college tuition costs, and one offers forgivable loans to employees in the Nursing Course of Study Program. All the employers contributed staff time to designing and monitoring program components. In 2004, six employers contributed approximately \$210,000 in cash, which represented about 25 percent of the institute's operating budget. In 2005, employers contributed about \$350,000 in cash, plus in-kind contributions of training space and staff time.

Community-Based Organizations

Ten community-based organizations are partners in the institute: Fenway Community Development Corporation; Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation; MissionWorks; Parker Hill ABCD; Roxbury Tenants of Harvard; Sociedad Latina; Hyde Square Task Force; Jamaica Plain Community Centers, Jamaica Plain Head Start, and Bromley Health Tenant Management Corporation. Jewish Vocational Service provides education and training courses for incumbent workers, and WorkSource Partners, a for-profit workforce agency, provides some incumbent coaching services.

The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation and Fenway Community Development Corporation co-manage the program and employ most of the staff. MissionWorks also employs staff for the pre-employment program. Staff meet regularly in a variety of committees; they also meet monthly with employer partners to assess their needs and satisfaction with the institute. Board members from JPNDC and the Fenway CDC comprise an internal steering committee that reviews key program policy issues, oversees the long-range business plan, and provides general oversight. Other CBOs provide recruiting support.

Educational Institutions

The partnership includes four educational institutions:

- Mass Bay Community College designed and delivers the Nursing Course of Study program and the Surgical Technologist program, as well as college pre-

requisite courses (i.e., math, biology, chemistry, and computer science).

- Bunker Hill Community College has delivered a customized Certified Nurse Assistant training program and an introduction to technology careers, and it provides pre-college math and English classes.
- Roxbury Community College provides math and English classes and partners with the institute to deliver community-based math and science courses.
- Wentworth Institute of Technology donates all the pre-employment training space and in-kind support.

Organized Labor

The Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers reaches out to its members, promotes institute course offerings, helps identify worker training/education needs, and participates on the Steering Committee and the Curriculum Committee.

Outputs and Outcomes

In addition to its quantifiable outcomes for participants (see chart), the Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute has accomplished several important "systems change" outcomes across and within participating partner organizations.

Employers: The institute has convinced employers that low-income neighborhood residents are a good source of labor and that investments in their education and career development pay off.

Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute

The data for 2004-2005, covering December 2003 through November 2005, has been validated by the SkillWorks evaluators. The data for 2006 is preliminary; it covers December 2005 through November 2006. The total participants served is a non-duplicated count of people receiving any of the following training or non-training services: occupational training, coaching, literacy, ESL, placement assistance, retention assistance, referrals, tutoring, mentoring, and mapping career pathways. The number of participants completing training includes multiple counts based on incumbent workers who participate in multiple training courses.

	2004-2005	2006
Pre-employment Participants	246	134
Completed Pre-employment Training (includes vocational and non-vocational skills)	103	80
Placements	89	52
Incumbent Workers Enrolled	452	303
Incumbent Workers Completed Training	439	225
Incumbent Workers Promoted	97	Not available

The institute worked with employers to develop a system that promotes the hiring of qualified neighborhood residents. As a result, the percentage of institute graduates hired by participating employers jumped from 45 percent to 65 percent.

Employers' in-kind and cash contributions to the institute are evidence of their increased support for incumbent worker education, training, and career development. Frontline supervisory training, started by the institute in 2001, is now provided internally by most employers; two employers are beginning mentoring programs, and two others are considering expanding the scope of tutoring beyond institute participants.

It is important to note that the institute started developing a relationship with employer partners before SkillWorks began. This has given the institute time to influence many of these system changes.

Service Providers. The institute has increased collaboration, streamlined services, and reduced duplication of effort among community-based organizations providing services. It also has worked with postsecondary institutions to design and offer courses responsive to employer needs and accessible to and convenient for workers.

Community-Based Organizations: A single-point-of-contact system links community organizations to the employers. Each CBO is assigned as a "preferred provider" to a single employer and works closely with HR personnel to understand employer expectations and culture, receive and distribute job postings to other CBOs in the network, and screen candidates from all CBO partners for referral to the employer. This system streamlines connections between CBOs and employers and facilitates the recruitment of low-income neighborhood residents to hospital jobs. It is key to dramatically improved job placement outcomes, from 50 percent of training completers before SkillWorks to 79 percent a year after the institute joined SkillWorks.

The institute also has streamlined referrals to the pre-employment program. A manual for the partner CBOs standardizes the process for recruiting candidates into the pre-employment program and centralizes information on employer hiring criteria. This helps ensure that candidates are properly screened before they enroll in pre-employment training.

Postsecondary Educational Institutions: The institute has leveraged its deep employer connections to: work with community college partners in designing courses that

respond to employer demand for specific skill sets; and offer courses at the work site and at times that are convenient to workers.

The Future: Planning for Sustainability

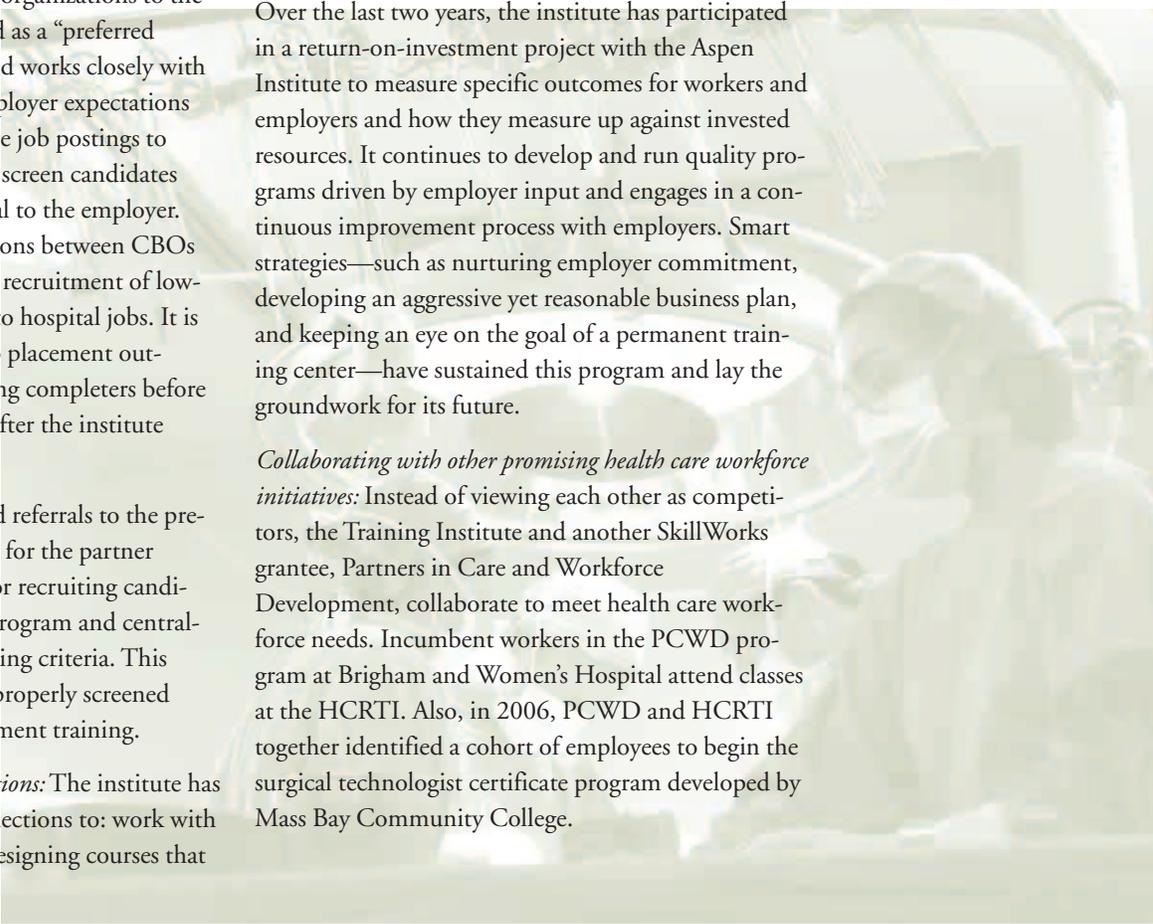
The Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute is ambitious, yet it has an even more ambitious long-term goal: to establish a permanent health care training center in the Longwood medical area. Serving entry-level workers and neighborhood residents, this center will include a library of health care and research job competencies, with related training modules. The institute has secured a commitment for a free site within the Longwood area and developed a database for the competency library.

The most significant challenge is sustaining the institute's comprehensive intermediary activities. So far, its work has been fueled by government and foundation funding, with about a third of its budget coming from employer investments. The vision is to transition to a higher level of support from employers; however, nurturing employer buy-in and cash contributions will take time and evidence of bottom-line returns from their investments in low-income and low-skilled neighborhood residents and entry-level incumbent workers.

Over the last two years, the institute has participated in a return-on-investment project with the Aspen Institute to measure specific outcomes for workers and employers and how they measure up against invested resources. It continues to develop and run quality programs driven by employer input and engages in a continuous improvement process with employers. Smart strategies—such as nurturing employer commitment, developing an aggressive yet reasonable business plan, and keeping an eye on the goal of a permanent training center—have sustained this program and lay the groundwork for its future.

Collaborating with other promising health care workforce initiatives: Instead of viewing each other as competitors, the Training Institute and another SkillWorks grantee, Partners in Care and Workforce Development, collaborate to meet health care workforce needs. Incumbent workers in the PCWD program at Brigham and Women's Hospital attend classes at the HCRTI. Also, in 2006, PCWD and HCRTI together identified a cohort of employees to begin the surgical technologist certificate program developed by Mass Bay Community College.

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SEEING OPPORTUNITIES. CREATING SOLUTIONS.

SkillWorks, a five-year public/private partnership, is addressing the needs of employers for more skilled workers and of workers for more and better access to jobs that pay a family-supporting wage.

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