

Hartford Jobs Funnel

Location: Hartford, Connecticut

Host Organization: Shared among stakeholders

Partner Organizations: State of Connecticut Office for Workforce Competitiveness, Capital Workforce Partners (Regional Workforce Investment Board), Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Connecticut Puerto Rican Forum, South Arsenal Neighborhood Development Corporation, Hartford Areas Rally Together, Urban League of Greater Hartford, Blue Hills Civic Association, Connecticut Labor Department, Hartford-Co-opportunity, Inc.; Organized Building Trades, Minority Construction Council, Laborers International Training Fund, Associated General Contractors, City of Hartford, Northeast Utilities/Connecticut Light and Power, Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Target Population: Hartford Adult Residents Seeking Careers in Construction

Program Innovations

- Funnel design model that channels participants to various training and employment opportunities in the construction sector in Hartford and across Connecticut
- Shared project ownership and organizational structure which distributes responsibility for the project among partnering organizations in the community

Program History

The Hartford Jobs Funnel began in 1999 with the aim of providing Hartford residents with training and career opportunities in the construction industry leading to financial stability and emphasizing apprenticeship. A range of stakeholders, from

“This project belongs to everybody....A lot of people in the community including funders, collaborators, partners feel that they have a legitimate stake in the project.”

---Rich Pearson, Hartford Jobs Funnel Project Facilitator

community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, local and state government, the workforce investment board, and the construction industry, including union and non-union contractors, created and designed the program and continue to help steer the

program today in 2010. The program's finances and information management are managed and administered by Capital Workforce Partners, the regional workforce investment board. The Funnel Steering Committee, a volunteer committee consisting of the stakeholders outlined above, oversees the overall coordination and implementation of the program. Most of the Funnel's staff, however, is employed by the partnering community-based organizations that are responsible for program delivery.

Program Summary

The Hartford Jobs Funnel is designed to coordinate outreach, recruitment, assessment, case management, and job training, and placement and retention services among various community partners to seamlessly deliver these services to Hartford city residents seeking a career in the construction industry. Participants, who must first attend an orientation session to learn about the program, must be 18 years of age and a resident of Hartford. African-American and Hispanic males from all Hartford neighborhoods citywide tend to be the majority of participants enrolled in the program. No income guidelines are required for entry into the Funnel and participants are enrolled on a continual basis. However, enrollments may be slowed when job demand is low and participants are finding it difficult to find employment.

After the orientation session, potential participants engage in an academic assessment and are tested in reading, math, spelling, language, and basic measurement through the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE). Qualified candidates, who score minimum 8th-grade proficiency on the TABE, are then enrolled in the Hartford Jobs Funnel program. Candidates who do not meet the basic educational requirements are referred to other agencies providing job placement or adult education services.

Enrolled participants are assigned to a case manager/employment specialist at one of three community-based organizations from across the city. Participants are typically assigned to the community-based organization nearest to their home. The case managers work with each participant to create an individual employability plan, which clearly lays out and defines their career interests and goals. After completing the individualized plan, participants are referred to appropriate activities and workshops to build their job readiness. Some options include pre-employment workshops, math remediation or refresher classes, and financial literacy training. Participants complete between 20 and 40 hours of life skills training during this time and meet regularly with their case manager for additional assessment to address any barriers that may prevent them from completing the program.

Once trainees complete the life skills coursework and pre-employment training workshops, they are eligible to begin training for a career in construction. True to its name, the program funnels trainees to different construction skills training programs across the city based on their skills, qualifications, interests, and potential job demand for those skills. For example, some trainees may enroll in a painters' union pre-apprenticeship program, while others may participate in weatherization training or a pooled training conducted by area minority contractors. **Curricula**, training length, and other educational components vary by program.

Throughout the participants' training, they continue to receive case management and **support services**, such as assistance with transportation or child care expenses from the community-based organization. Some participants are eligible to receive a small stipend during their training.

After completing the skills training component to which the trainees were funneled, participants enter the **job placement** phase. The entire Hartford Jobs Funnel staff and all of the partnering organizations are responsible for job placement. Funnel staff reach out to partnering community-based organizations and WIA providers to assist with participants' job placement. Participants' job placement is contingent on the job market and available opportunities, and some participants may continue to expand their skills through additional training while waiting for a job opportunity.

“Our retention services include providing them with work gear and tools and one-on-one follow-up to make sure there is an attachment to the workplace and that the individual continues his/her professional growth.”

-- Yolanda Rivera, Hartford Jobs Funnel Program Manager

Though participants' skills training may be targeted towards specific trades or types of jobs (weatherization, apprenticeship with the painters, etc.), individuals are still exposed to a range of jobs they may be qualified for through ongoing meetings with employment specialists. Once Funnel participants are placed into jobs, participants receive retention services, including one-on-one follow-up from assigned retention specialists, to make sure the placement is successful. Re-employment services are provided to participants who become unemployed and additional retention supports are provided through the Funnel network when necessary.

Program Funding

The diversity of Hartford Job Funnel's funding changes annually. On average the project operates with between \$800,000 and \$900,000 in funding. Over half of

this amount comes from the State of Connecticut's Office of Workforce Competitiveness. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving – Connecticut's largest community foundation – has been an important financial contributor from the program's inception.

In addition to providing significant direct financial support, Capital Workforce Partners, the regional workforce investment board, provides ongoing administrative support, financial management, and information management and reporting services to support ongoing Funnel operations. Previously, the Funnel benefited from a Making Connections grant through the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which helped provide two family intervention retention specialists for the program. Associated General Contractors/Laborers Employment and Training Fund has been a consistent supporter.

Industry Engagement

The Hartford Jobs Funnel collaborates with a variety of union and non-union developers and contractors, including minority-owned firms, which are partners in the construction industry. Both union and open-shop employers helped create the Funnel and continue active involvement in 2010 as members of the Funnel's Steering Committee. Through the Steering Committee, both union and non-union contractors have a voice in presenting their career opportunities and training programs to the Funnel's staff, partners, and clients. The Steering Committee and Funnel staff spent a considerable amount of time and energy in developing, maintaining, and balancing these relationships. This approach to including both union and non-union sides of the industry ultimately rests on maximizing the number of employment and training opportunities for Funnel graduates, and allowing them to choose what career options work best given their individual circumstances.