



*THE*  
**Best *of***  
**Both**

Community Colleges and Community-Based

Organizations Partner to Better Serve

Low-Income Workers

and

Employers

*Brandon Roberts*

**Working**  
**Ventures**

A P U B L I C A T I O N O F P U B L I C / P R I V A T E V E N T U R E S

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# P/PV

Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the effectiveness of social policies and programs. P/PV designs, tests and studies initiatives that increase supports, skills and opportunities of residents of low-income communities; works with policymakers to see that the lessons and evidence produced are reflected in policy; and provides training, technical assistance and learning opportunities to practitioners based on documented effective practices.

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# Introduction

During the first 15 months of the new millennium, 50 low-income people from San Francisco's inner-city tenderloin district, many of whom were unemployed and some even homeless, obtained well-paying jobs as information technology specialists. Two years earlier, few of these individuals, no matter how highly motivated, had a chance of obtaining a \$34,000-a-year job on their own. For them, the prospects for economic prosperity were a mirage far removed from unemployment or the daily toil of low-skilled, low-wage work.

Now, thanks to a skills training partnership between Mission Community College and San Francisco's Glide Church, an inner-city institution that feeds over 1,000 people daily in its soup kitchen, low-income workers have for the first time the opportunity to access and use the resources of the education and workforce development system. This initiative provides both the opportunity and necessary support to:

- Improve basic skills,
- Address personal barriers,
- Obtain industry-driven and certified occupational skills,
- Receive college credit,
- Secure jobs in the mainstream economy, and
- Access further training in the future.

The Mission/Glide partnership has opened doors to the educational community and created employment opportunities previously

inaccessible to many low-income workers. It has also created links with other important players, such as local staffing agencies that are used to helping participants secure jobs in internationally renowned technology firms. In doing this, the partnership has established a model for serving low-income workers, one that is now being replicated among a new set of community nonprofit partners across the region.

In a growing number of places, community colleges and community nonprofits' are working together, sometimes as equal partners, to prepare low-income people for obtaining and sustaining employment in occupations that can pay a livable wage, and offer opportunities for advancement. More specifically, institutions are partnering to create new initiatives that combine intensive support services with short-term, hard skills training to produce qualified workers who fulfill the workforce needs of private employers.

Though limited in number, these nascent efforts represent a new emphasis and approach to preparing low-income workers to succeed in the labor market. By working together, community colleges and community nonprofits are showing how very different organizational entities can find common ground to serve mutual interests. They are also demonstrating that by combining the unique assets and strengths of each institution, such initiatives can help low-income workers successfully navigate a complex labor market environment and lead to a win-win situation for all involved.

Examples of such partnerships, in varying degrees of development and implementation, exist across the United States. Perhaps the most widely publicized is the partnership between Project QUEST and the Alamo Community College District of San Antonio, Texas. Five years ago, the two institutions formed a partnership to help low-income residents gain the necessary skills for succeeding in the workplace. The initiative has recast the training and support services in four career clusters—health care, business systems, maintenance and repair, and service technology—specifically to help nontraditional students access and succeed with career training. Today, Project QUEST helps more than 800 students annually.

Project QUEST is an example of a partnership created as a result of a nonprofit organization taking action to help a community college become more responsive to the training needs of low-income workers. Other community groups have seen the need to take a similar approach. For example, WIRE-Net in Cleveland has allied with local manufacturing firms and associations to encourage Cuyahoga Community College and other educational institutions to improve and strengthen their precision machining training programs to better serve low-income and minority populations. The New Orleans Job Initiative, an effort established under The Annie E. Casey Foundation's national Jobs Initiative, has taken similar steps with New Orleans' Delgado Community College. And, Chicago's Instituto del Progreso Latino has

taken action to help revive the manufacturing program at Richard J. Daley Community College and make it more accessible to low-income minorities in the surrounding neighborhoods.

In other situations, the community college has played the lead role in developing new partnerships. In San Diego, the community college system actively sought participation by the city's housing authority and three nonprofits in operating its Individual Career Advancement Network project, designed to prepare disadvantaged individuals for self-sufficient employment. Similarly, the Milwaukee Area Technical College has opened neighborhood-based learning centers in partnership with inner-city, community nonprofits in order to meet the specific training needs of local businesses and to better serve residents in preparing for those jobs. Capital Community College in Hartford operates its Customer Services Institute in cooperation with the nonprofit Community Renewal Team as it has become a One-Stop operator for the region and is an important source of recruits and support for training participants.

Common to all these efforts is the primary objective of preparing low-income individuals to gain access to and succeed in the labor market. For every initiative, this preparation involves providing students with skills and supports that lead to well-paying jobs or that provide a solid foundation for obtaining a good job in the near future.

Some efforts are focused on training low-income persons for new economy jobs, particularly as information technology specialists. In addition to the Mission/Glide initiative, which is expanding to include other community nonprofits in the Bay Area, the Opportunities Industrialization Center West (OICW) in Menlo Park/East Palo Alto is helping low-income individuals to become information technology specialists. This initiative, which includes Cisco and Sun Network Academies, is conducted with the assistance of Silicon Valley's Canada Community College.

The training initiated under these new partnerships is not limited to new economy jobs. Fundamental changes in the composition of the workforce (aging workers) and the workplace (new technologies) have resulted in openings for higher-skilled, higher-wage jobs in such traditional economic sectors as health care, machine trades, office and customer services, and construction. New partnerships between community colleges and community nonprofits are seeking to take advantage of these opportunities. For example, the partnership in the health care field between City College of San Francisco and Jewish Vocational Service/Visitacion Valley Jobs, Education and Training does not offer the initial level of pay found in information technology positions. The initiative does, however, help low-income workers to develop a foundation of occupational skills that can lead to higher-paying jobs in the future.

This report focuses on the ways in which community colleges and community nonprofits develop, operate and sustain their partnerships. It is concerned with such operational issues as articulating roles and responsibilities, financing project activities, delivering effective support services, working with the private sector and building educational pathways. As such, the report is intended to assist community colleges, community nonprofits and others in developing partnerships to train low-income workers for higher-skilled, higher-wage employment.

That this study found a limited number of viable, or even nascent, partnerships between community colleges and community nonprofits is important. In fact, many of the partnership examples noted in earlier reports or cited by officials of various educational and community nonprofit associations no longer exist, if they ever truly existed as full-fledged partnerships. In many places, community colleges and community nonprofits do not cooperate with or respect each other's efforts. All too often, these two institutions still compete for smaller and smaller pots of federally allocated employment and training funds. The move to vouchers under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) places additional pressure on local training programs, particularly in community nonprofits that do not have the resources to provide up-front financing for training.<sup>2</sup> Underlying these issues is the reality that current national workforce policy does not encourage the formation of such partnerships.

To be sure, working through these issues and overcoming years of discord is not an easy task. Developing, operating and sustaining a partnership requires a significant openness to change on the part of both institutions and a willingness to overcome negative attitudes and a distrust of each other. As will be discussed, such change requires strong leadership to guide the way, resources to pay for additional activities and support functions, and a willingness to cede operational responsibilities to other organizations. Or put in less positive terms, it requires community college leaders who are willing to address other public needs beyond just helping students gain access to a four-year college, and it requires community nonprofits to acknowledge that they cannot do all things for all low-income people.

Even when all this comes together and a partnership is in full operation, issues and problems continue to surface. For example, after several years of development and operation, the notable Mission/Glide initiative still confronts issues concerning organization, culture, resources and faculty. The partnership, however, is committed to resolving these matters, as all involved know that their initiative provides effective

training services and is a critical vehicle for helping low-income workers to enter the mainstream economy.

By using a variety of experiences, this paper focuses on how community colleges and community nonprofits can and do partner to better serve low-income workers seeking to obtain higher-skilled, higher-wage employment. It addresses why partnerships should be formed, how effective partnerships can be developed, and how partnerships can be made to work. The report concludes by discussing the overall benefits of seeking to develop and support such partnerships.

# Why Partner? Building On the Best of Both

Consider the stereotypes. Community colleges are two-year schools whose purpose is to prepare students to transfer to four-year colleges or universities. Community non-profits are social policy advocates focused on delivering services to poor people or their communities.

Although these stereotypes still apply in many places, labor market conditions and other factors have compelled some of these institutions to broaden their missions to address the workforce needs of low-income individuals. In particular, some community colleges and community nonprofits have sought ways to address the country's skills shortage and the growing economic disparity among workers. They do this in an increasingly complex labor market in which private companies, facing competitive pressures and a highly mobile entry-level workforce, are reluctant to invest in basic training for low-wage workers,<sup>3</sup> an important point that the government downplays.

Approximately 7.2 million people who routinely work fail to earn enough to escape poverty for themselves or their fam-

ilies.<sup>4</sup> Limited abilities in reading, math and sometimes English, along with the absence of any specific occupational skills, understandably inhibit access to higher-wage jobs. For these workers, often referred to as the working poor, the emergence of the new economy and the continued introduction of technology into traditional work further diminish their chances of higher-skilled, higher-wage jobs. The prospects for the chronically unemployed or those moving from public assistance to work are even bleaker.

As both community colleges and community nonprofits respond to these circumstances, they have searched for new ways to better prepare and connect low-income workers to higher-skilled, higher-wage jobs. The institutions examined for this report understand that they must do business differently—that they can accomplish more and better outcomes by working together. The next section identifies a number of reasons and possible benefits that influence each institution to partner.

## Community Colleges: Motivations for Serving Low- Income Workers and Partnering With Community Nonprofits

Many community colleges still concentrate on preparing students to transfer to a four-year college or university. This generalization applies to all types of community colleges, be they big or small; locally supported or predominantly state financed; urban, rural or suburban.<sup>5</sup> The reality is, however, that over the past several decades some community colleges of varying types and sizes have also started to give additional attention to career-focused education and training. For those colleges and the two-year technical colleges that specialize in career training, this endeavor has meant working with new partners and obtaining funds from other sources, since the traditional community college system is still geared to supporting academic programs.

Career-focused education means customized training for local businesses, dislocated worker training programs, welfare-to-work initiatives and an expanded array of career-oriented certificate programs, many of which can be obtained in a year or less. The American Association of Community Colleges reports that almost 30 percent of community college students who enroll in and complete a program of study obtain some type of educational or training certification other than an Associate's Degree, and that 47.9 percent of community colleges offer a welfare-to-work program.<sup>6</sup> Such efforts enable community

colleges to address a broader variety of education and training needs and serve an expanded set of constituencies, including local businesses and low-income workers.

Why are some community colleges moving in this direction? A number of reasons are cited:

1. Community colleges are under-enrolled and are seeking new populations of students now and for the future.
2. Community colleges see that occupational training programs can generate new sources of revenue, as can programs that serve targeted populations.
3. Local businesses in their search for qualified labor are putting pressure on public educational institutions to produce more and better-prepared graduates.
4. Community leaders are insisting that such public institutions as community colleges serve a more diverse population and produce better completion and placement outcomes for these participants.
5. Some community college leaders believe that their institutions can take action to address the growing inequality in wages among U.S. workers.

In operating occupational training programs that serve low-income workers, including public assistance recipients, community colleges recognize that they are not equipped to implement all aspects of a program. In particular, community colleges are

challenged by issues of recruitment, pre-training preparation, support during training and job retention. Although community colleges have worked hard to assist low-income and minority students challenged by academic programs, the colleges do not necessarily have the experience, staff or resources to address issues pertaining to low-income students enrolled solely for skills training.

Community nonprofits, however, have extensive experience working with low-income populations and are generally sensitive to their needs. Assistance is offered to poor communities and their residents by a vast array of groups that focus on social services, economic development housing, job training, advocacy and a host of other services.

In particular, community nonprofits are strong in addressing the specific issues—recruitment, pretraining preparation, support during training and job retention—that challenge community colleges.

*Recruitment.* Many community nonprofits have extensive outreach and communication mechanisms in neighborhoods and a level of credibility among residents that lead them to believe that promises made will be promises delivered. These factors work well in soliciting local residents to participate in a training program offered by a major institution that may be seen by many as inhospitable to people of their color, ethnicity or economic class.

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One senior official of a community college noted, "We do not have good connections to low-income neighborhoods. Community nonprofits help bridge that gap."

*Support.* Community nonprofits typically have experience providing support services to community residents. They are familiar with the barriers that may impede a participant's successful completion of a training program and the community resources that may be used to overcome those barriers (e.g., transportation subsidies, child care vouchers, etc.). That experience is useful in providing job retention services.

In addition, nonprofits understand their community and are prepared to work with participants in ways that address their cultural and situational needs. This ability allows the community nonprofits to offer potential students preparatory programs to assist them in getting ready to enter a community college skills training program. The nonprofits can use their neighborhood-based facilities for such purposes, thus providing a more gradual transition into the world of formalized education and training.

These assets complement the strengths of the community college and provide a

sound basis for a partnership. The community colleges reviewed in this study note that community nonprofits can play a critical role in helping trainees succeed in an effort and environment that is probably far removed from their past circumstances.

Likewise, community nonprofits seeking to prepare their constituencies for higher-skilled, higher-wage jobs are limited in their ability to provide skills training. Partnering with community colleges can help fill this gap.

### Community Nonprofits: Motivations for Serving Low-Income Workers and Partnering With Community Colleges

Over the past 30 years, many community nonprofit organizations have taken steps to expand their missions and address the employment and training needs of their constituencies. These efforts have encountered numerous challenges often as a result of inhospitable federal employment and training policies.

Over the past five years, community nonprofits have intensified their involvement in the workforce development arena. Their focus on employment and training was fueled by welfare reform and the strong economic growth of the 1990s. In particular, the work requirements and term limits of welfare reform forced community nonprofits to consider how best to help their constituents make an effective transition

from public assistance to economic self-sufficiency.<sup>7</sup> The result is that community nonprofits are now engaged in workforce development activities ranging from basic pre-employment and job placement services to self-contained skills training programs that are customized to address the labor market needs of key employers or industry sectors, or both, within their community.

Of particular note are those community nonprofits that emphasize skills training as a fundamental element of their workforce development activities. Several factors motivate their interest:

1. Community nonprofits recognize that work is the only way out of poverty and skills are the key to jobs and careers with good wages.
2. Local businesses in their search for qualified labor have opened the door to working cooperatively with community organizations.
3. The resources from welfare reform are sufficient and flexible enough to finance and support innovative training efforts.
4. The philanthropic community, a traditional supporter of community nonprofits, is devoting more attention and resources to workforce development.

As community nonprofits seek to address the education and skills needs of their constituents, they must often confront their inability to operate a full-fledged skills training program. In particular, they see

that many such programs require up-to-date equipment and technology, which changes rapidly and is costly to replace. They also see that skills training requires expert faculty and curriculum finely tailored to the labor market. And they understand that skills training is not a one-shot deal but a continuous process that requires access to a life-long learning environment. Finally, they see that both public and philanthropic resources are less supportive of sustaining individual program delivery and that philanthropic resources particularly are more directed at fostering innovation and system change.

All these factors provide compelling reasons for community nonprofits to partner with community colleges, as after all, community colleges have the training infrastructure and resources to address many of these issues.

*Equipment.* Community colleges have budgets for maintaining and updating the equipment and facilities essential to ensure that students are trained on the equipment they will encounter in the workplace. These funds add up to millions of dollars and, although they must be justified through annual budgeting processes, they typically do not require special fundraising and solicitation campaigns that can consume significant time and staff resources.

*Faculty.* Community colleges have an institutional base for hiring and maintaining

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Community nonprofits recognize that they cannot afford to replicate the training resources of community colleges. Instead, they need to make those resources work better for low-income individuals.

faculty and can secure resources to hire outside experts who complement the skills of the general faculty.

Community colleges also receive public revenues to offset students' tuition costs. In addition, the life-long learning available through a community college, and its connections to four-year institutions, cannot be matched. In some instances, community colleges offer credit for short-term training programs that can lead to other training and academic opportunities within the college. Thus, workers of any age can at any time upgrade their skills and knowledge, and increase their opportunities for career advancement.

Such assets are hard for a community nonprofit to develop and maintain. They provide, however, a strong motivation for community nonprofits to partner with community colleges. All of the community nonprofits consulted for this study noted that the resources of the community college are so significant and potentially important to their constituencies that they cannot be ignored.

In sum, the benefits of partnering for community colleges and community nonprofits are real and can be significant. Developing closer relationships may have even broader benefits if community residents realize that the college has much to offer and if the college makes itself more accessible and attractive to the community. In short, a partnership can create a win-win situation for the community nonprofit and community college, as well as for workers and employers. Although there are many challenges to developing and sustaining an effective partnership, the costs of not doing so may be higher to all four parties.

# Developing Effective Partnerships: What To Do and How It Should Be Done

The initiatives studied for this report start with a common goal: creating accessible skills training programs that enable low-income workers to obtain higher-skilled, higher-wage jobs and develop a foundation for career advancement.

Some refer to such training initiatives as pathway or career ladder programs. Dr. Davis Jenkins refers to such efforts as “bridge programs.” He notes that there are a handful of well-known programs and a growing number of fledgling efforts that seek to bridge the gap between low-wage and livable-wage employment. In the words of Dr. Jenkins, bridge programs offer intensive training in “applied basic skills and technical fundamentals, and extensive assessment, counseling, case management and follow-up support, all in an environment that seeks to expose program participants to the culture and learning demands of the workplace.”<sup>8</sup>

A small number of bridge programs involve a community college and a community nonprofit working together (see boxes and

appendix), but not every initiative studied for this report has evolved into a full-fledged partnership. In some instances, the institutions are still working to determine how their respective strengths can be combined to better serve low-income workers. Reaching a point of partnership requires each institution to acknowledge both the value and the influence of the other on the development and operations of an initiative.

There is no model for constructing and operating a partnership. There is, however, a core set of activities that constitute an effective skills training program for low-income workers. An important task of any partnership is to decide which partner is best suited to deliver which activities, as both partners bring expertise and resources to an initiative. For some activities, such as participant recruitment, community nonprofits have a strong advantage because of their familiarity with low-income neighborhoods and the targeted constituency. In activities involving training and instruction, community colleges have tremendous assets.

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*Jewish Vocational Service and Visitacion Valley Jobs, Education and Training/City College of San Francisco*

This initiative, called Gateway to Health Careers, prepares and connects low-income workers and public assistance recipients to skilled positions in health care. The effort takes advantage of San Francisco's tight labor market in which the growth of jobs has generated new openings and higher wages. The initiative builds on an existing partnership between a community nonprofit and a community college that helped recent immigrants already trained as health care professionals get appropriate American certifications.

The two-year partnership between Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) and City College of San Francisco (CCSF) combines the strengths of both institutions to serve low-income participants. The effort provides participants with the skills, support, motivation and guidance to become employed in a field that offers multiple opportunities and pathways to high-skilled, high-wage employment. Visitacion Valley Jobs, Education and Training (VVJET), which had devel-

oped a parallel project, joined forces with JVS and CCSF at the start of the second program year. The community nonprofits, JVS and VVJET are responsible for recruiting participants and providing program support and job retention services. In addition, the two groups jointly manage and host a 12-week preparatory program that helps participants improve their basic reading and math skills, and provides job shadowing experiences that prepare them for the health occupation training programs at CCSF.

CCSF, one of the largest community colleges in the country, supports the preparatory program by providing instructors for key aspects of the program. They also help broker job shadowing experiences and placement opportunities with local employers, and provide a full complement of 13 health care training programs, some of which can be completed within a four-and-a-half-month period. Course offerings are scheduled at times that are accessible to pro-

gram participants, and participants are able to apply credits earned in the 13-week preparatory program toward the credits needed for a program certificate. Given the low cost of California's community colleges and the tuition waivers available for low-income students, the cost of classes is not a significant issue. Resources obtained by the community nonprofits from foundations and others are used primarily to prepare students for the training and to support them in completing their program.

Data from the 1999 program year show that 75 percent of participants entering a CCSF program completed their course of study and that 87 percent of these individuals were placed in a related job. The average wage at placement was \$10.75 an hour and involved a full-time position with health care benefits. JVS is now working with CCSF to develop and offer career advancement training for people already working.

This chapter examines who does what and how they should do it by looking at six core activities of the training initiatives:

- Recruitment and participant selection,
- Pretraining preparation,
- Skills training,
- In-program support,
- Placement, and
- Post-placement retention and skills upgrading.

In some instances, one of the partners has a clear advantage over the other in implementing an activity. In several matters, however, the division of labor is not so clear and is dependent on local circumstances and experiences.

### Finding Participants: Community Nonprofits Taking the Lead

Community nonprofits take the lead responsibility for recruiting participants. In fact, their ability to reach and bring under-served populations into a training initiative are assets that are highly valued by community colleges. Indeed, some community colleges actively seek to partner with community nonprofits at the outset of an initiative; in other instances, community colleges are much more responsive to a partnership offer if they know that the community nonprofit will deliver participants.

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Using existing neighborhood outreach and communication mechanisms, community nonprofits rely on their networks of churches, community centers and educational institutions to reach local residents. They make outreach personal and purposeful.

The community nonprofits work with other neighborhood-based organizations in recruitment. The Northeast Milwaukee Industrial Development Corporation (NMIDC) works with several groups to find sufficient applicants from the surrounding neighborhoods. WIRE-Net takes a similar approach. In San Diego, three community nonprofits work closely with the local housing authority to solicit potential applicants. After the first year in San Francisco, the original partnership between Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) and Community College of San Francisco (CCSF) was expanded to include Visitacion Valley Jobs, Education and Training (VVJET), since that community-based organization was thought to have the potential to recruit a large number of community residents interested in health care training (see box on previous page).

Most of the initiatives studied tend to serve between 15 and 30 students per program cycle. Several of the partnerships need a minimum class of approximately 20 enrollees in order to start, largely because the community college can offer staff support for the initia-

tive's pretraining effort provided the number of participants is sufficient to generate a full-time instructor through the colleges general funding process.

In general, the nonprofits have discovered that they need to solicit multiple applicants for each eventual participant. The drop-off, which typically occurs before the program starts, is attributable to a number of factors, including disinterest, personal problems, a sudden need to work and insufficient basic skills to participate in the program.

Each partnership engages in some form of assessment of basic skill levels during the recruitment and selection process. The community college is often critical to the assessment process in providing staff and the instruments for individual assessments. This important contribution provides information that helps determine a participant's career training needs.

In San Diego, this information is used to prepare a participant's Personal, Education and Placement Plan, which, among other things, helps determine the level of basic skills remediation needed before enrolling the participant in the recruitment and selection process. It is clear they cannot and do not do it alone. They rely on other community organizations to solicit participants and use the existing resources of the community college for such important and potentially costly functions as assessment. This level of collaboration at the initiative's outset is indicative of the relationships that occur throughout the program.

### Preparing Participants to Succeed: Community Nonprofits and Community Colleges Working in Tandem to Help Those With Poor Basic Skills

Both community nonprofits and community colleges have resources that can be combined to address participants' basic educational needs prior to entering a more formal skills training program. Several initiatives provide contextualized instruction to help prepare participants for occupational training.

In San Francisco, JVS and VVJET, with the assistance of CCSF, offer a 13-week preparatory program whose services include instruction in basic math and literacy skills, English as a Second Language (ESL) as needed, and general life skills; an introduction to health care terminology and procedures; and career exploration and job shadowing activities. The program is delivered at VVJET, a familiar setting. Teachers are provided by the community college at no cost to the student. Community nonprofit staff focus on the other activities. Participants can enter the preparatory program with fourth-grade assessment levels, but they are expected to progress to at least the eighth-grade level before advancing to a skills training program. Additional remediation is available for those who do not achieve this level over the 13 weeks. As an incentive, CCSF awards participants who complete the preparatory program with seven credits that can be used for some of the college's health care certificate programs.

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*Instituto del Progreso Latino/West Side Technical Institute of Richard J. Daley Community College*

This initiative prepares low-income Latino and African-American populations in inner-city Chicago for metalworking jobs in manufacturing. It is successful because a community nonprofit, working in concert with local residents, took action to make the community college manufacturing training program more responsive to the needs of low-income workers. The effort, which takes place in a city well known for conflicts between community colleges and community nonprofit training providers, is part of a broader training initiative—the Chicago Manufacturing Technology Bridge Program—that is designed to prepare disadvantaged residents for career-path employment and post-secondary technical education in manufacturing.

Instituto is a 25-year-old community nonprofit that annually offers an extensive array of educational and support services to more than 2,000 students. Since 1997, Instituto has partnered with Daley Community College to

operate a 16-week intensive manufacturing training program. Instituto has enrolled more than 200 participants and has achieved a graduation rate of 65 percent. Almost 70 percent of graduates have obtained manufacturing jobs with an average starting wage of \$9.60 an hour. Although the Chicago Bridge program was designed to serve workers with eighth-grade math and reading levels, Instituto has established a pre-Bridge program that helps develop math and enhanced English skills, as well as introductory computer skills, in order to serve a less-prepared population.

Instituto manages the program and offers participants counseling, case management, paid internships during training, job placement assistance and advanced placement in continuing technical training. Students are provided instruction in industry-specific English and basic math, and more than 80 hours of hands-on training in the state-of-the-art machine shop at Daley Community College's

West Side Technical Institute, located around the corner from Instituto. By receiving instruction in blueprint reading, quality control, computer applications and applied physics, as well as taking machining and welding classes, students receive five college credits that can be applied toward an advanced machining certificate as well as an Associate's Degree.

The partnership between Instituto and Daley Community College benefits from participation in the Chicago Bridges Program, which is coordinated by the University of Illinois at Chicago. To support the effort, Instituto receives financial support from Chicago's Empowerment Zone and a variety of other federal and state workforce development programs. In addition, Instituto has recently become a certified affiliate of the One-Stop system under WIA. This provides Instituto with resources to provide core and intensive services to participants, including those that choose to enter the Manufacturing Bridge program.

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Many low-income workers interested in skills training have poor basic skills. They have typically had a poor experience in the secondary educational system and do not see the community college as a viable option for additional education and training. Each of the studied initiatives understands the need to prepare participants to succeed in their skills training efforts.

The New Orleans' Jobs Initiative also offers a 21-day preparatory, or job readiness, program that is required for any participant enrolling in skills training. The program has become so well regarded that Delgado Community College is now using it for all of their workforce training programs. As noted earlier, the Instituto del Progreso Latino has created its own pre-Bridge preparatory program, so that residents with basic skills below the eighth-grade reading and math level have a chance to participate in manufacturing training. After 18 months, the preparatory program has generated 70 new participants for the Bridges program. Cuyahoga Community College operates its own computer-based preparatory program for those not meeting entry-level standards. The college reports that 85 percent of participants successfully complete the preparatory program and 90 percent of them go on to finish their manufacturing skills program.<sup>9</sup>

### **Making Skills Training Accessible and Meaningful: Community Colleges Becoming More Responsive to the Needs of Low-Income Workers**

The resources, personnel, facilities and equipment of a community college are all too often a community asset that is not effectively deployed for the benefit of low-income residents seeking occupational skills training. A common characteristic of many of the initiatives studied is the desire either by the community nonprofit or the community college, or both, to reshape the college's offerings to better accommodate the needs of low-income workers. For community nonprofits, this means acknowledging the value of the community college and using resources rather than duplicating them. The cost of the latter can be significant for a community nonprofit, thus hindering its ability to provide the services it delivers best.

The community colleges in several of the initiatives, for example, Capital Community College and the San Diego system, have restructured career training programs.

Classes are offered at night and on weekends, and in neighborhood locations in an effort to be more accommodating to the needs of low-income workers. The subsequent partnership with community nonprofits aimed to add value to these reforms. In other instances, such as in Chicago, Cleveland and New Orleans, the community nonprofit played a lead role in fostering change in the skills training programs.

All these efforts reflect common changes in career training efforts. First and foremost is the desire to change the training's academic emphasis to a focus on workplace skills. This change often requires implementation of new curriculum based on industry needs and perhaps even identified skill standards. The types of skills training programs found in the studied initiatives include information technology, manufacturing, construction, health care, customer service, and office or clerical work. Although these efforts have different participant entry standards and produce graduates whose starting wages can vary substantially (e.g., \$7 an hour for skilled office work to \$20 an hour for computer technicians), these initiatives are designed to respond to an area's labor market demand for qualified labor, particularly for entry-level positions. Therefore, relationships with local employers and industry associations must be developed, which brings a new perspective into the training program. In many of the partnerships, the community nonprofit played a key role in bringing employers into the initiative to help shape curriculum.

Other changes in training programs include more flexible times for course offerings (e.g., nights and weekends), shorter-term training periods ranging from three to nine months, programs with open entry and exit as well as staged completion points, applied learning environments, and opportunities for internships and other job experiences. In addition, many of the programs include a focus on nontechnical workplace skills, such as communication, problem solving and interpersonal relations. For example, Instituto's manufacturing Bridge program has recently introduced a new workplace communication module, called "Workplace Essential Skills," that offers videos, workbooks and an online component for strengthening students' communication skills.

An important advantage of these training initiatives is the opportunity to bring new students into the community college. Providing college credit can help pave the way. As noted earlier, CCSF offers seven hours of credit for the health care preparatory program—credits that can be applied to course work in the community college's School of Health. Milwaukee Area Technical College provided college credits to workers completing a 64-hour manufacturing skills upgrading program that was held at the community nonprofit's Learning Center.

Both the community college and the community nonprofit bring important resources and connections to make these

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*San Diego Housing Commission, Neighborhood Housing Association, Occupational Training Services and the Union of Pan Asian Communities/San Diego Community College District System*

The Individual Career Advancement Network (I CAN) project uses multiple partners to offer a neighborhood-based training system that prepares and connects disadvantaged individuals to the occupational training programs and career development services available at the three colleges of the San Diego Community College District System (SDCCDS) and its network of six Centers for Education and Technology. The initiative, spearheaded by the community college system, continues to evolve as the local workforce development system changes.

The project provides economically disadvantaged individuals with a comprehensive program of career assessment, career information and planning, and educational services, including basic education, workplace skills and short-term modularized occupational training in seven career clusters. Participants are also assisted with subsequent

job placement, retention and follow-up. The I CAN project uses the resources and strengths of each partner. The three community nonprofits take the lead in recruiting participants and helping them to access support services and develop and update their Personal, Educational and Placement Plans. They also provide job retention services. The San Diego Housing Commission assists with recruitment since many of the participants are residents of public housing, provides space with its Learning Centers for remediation and job readiness classes, and uses the resources of its Family Self-Sufficiency Program to offer enhanced support services. The SDCCDS and San Diego Housing Commission jointly provide overall coordination and management.

The SDCCDS offers its staff and resources to provide career assessment, placement assistance and skills training through a

variety of short-term programs easily accessed and used by participants. As noted earlier, the cost of training is not a significant issue in California. However, outside resources are needed for the extensive career assessment, planning and support services offered to participants. These sources include foundation funds, community college-allocated work-study dollars, and local welfare-to-work funds.

As of Fall 2000, I CAN had enrolled 225 participants, with 108 of these moving into vocational training. Almost 50 people have completed vocational training and moved into employment. Although many of these jobs are not high skilled or high wage, the expectation is that the training and initial work experience will allow participants to move into higher-wage jobs in the future and, perhaps, to reconnect with the community college for additional education and skills training.

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College credit is an important but sometimes overlooked component of a training initiative. Many participants in a Milwaukee training initiative attended college-level classes for the first time. In receiving their graduation certificates, which noted their college credits, several participants remarked that the college credits made them want to continue their skills upgrading.

things happen; however, only the community college can initiate the bureaucratic changes necessary for permanent reform within the education system. Having constituent support for such changes from community nonprofits and local businesses can be crucial to success.

### Supporting Participants During Training: Community Nonprofits Leveraging Resources to Serve Student Needs

Each initiative strives to prepare students for sustained and economically rewarding employment. Most recognize that this objective is best achieved when support and retention efforts start before rather than after placement.<sup>10</sup> Each of the initiatives acts to ensure that students have some level of individual support while striving to complete their training program.

In most cases, support services are provided by the community nonprofits. Their experience in leveraging and working with social service providers and other community resources is invaluable. Community colleges, of course, have counselors respon-

sible for helping students succeed in their studies. Most of the colleges consulted for this study, however, acknowledged that their counselors are more prepared to deal with the academic issues presented by more traditional students, particularly those seeking to matriculate to a four-year institution. Therefore, they highly value a community nonprofit's abilities to address the personal needs of low-income students enrolled in career-focused programs.

JVS and VVJET provide case management support for students both in the preparatory program and while enrolled in the health programs at CCSF. This assistance addresses such issues as transportation, child care, family and personal matters, and career planning and counseling. Case managers provide individual counseling to students and also hold group meetings with teachers and other staff to identify issues before they affect a student's school performance. The case managers also help teachers and staff to develop a more complete understanding of the personal and cultural circumstances of this student group.

Resources to support these efforts are generated from numerous social services agencies as well as private sources. In addition, students in the preparatory program receive a stipend of \$50 every two weeks. JVS's services are so well received that it now provides assistance to other CCSF students in the health care programs and partners with CCSF to offer a refresher course to immigrants with previous health care training.

In San Diego, support starts with remediation efforts and continues through training. Community nonprofit case managers provide traditional social service supports and devote significant attention to career exploration and counseling that leads to an individualized educational and placement plan. In addition, San Diego uses community college work-study funds to subsidize 16 hours of employment during training. For those places where the community nonprofit becomes a One-Stop, such as Instituto in Chicago and the Community Renewal Team in Hartford, the delivery of in-program support to students flows from the responsibility of providing core and intensive services.

Canada Community College has recognized and attempted to address this issue by hiring and placing counselors in the OICW training facility. This places them in a nonacademic setting and allows them to work in partnership with OICW to address student needs.

### Connecting to Work: Community Colleges and Community Nonprofits Responding to Employer and Industry Needs

An important characteristic of each initiative is the desire to produce program graduates who fill the immediate needs of the labor market. As a result, all the initiatives have strong connections to local employers and, sometimes, industry associations. In some instances, such as the OICW in Silicon Valley and NMIDC in Milwaukee, the connections come from the community nonprofit and result in a ready source of firms looking for qualified workers. Such community colleges as Capital Community College and the San Diego Community College District System use their own links with employers to generate internships and full-time positions. In each case, no matter what institution is serving the student, such functions as developing resumes and preparing for interviews are part of the traditional array of services.

Beyond basic services, these initiatives are taking steps to better connect their graduates to the labor force. Several places have focused on another aspect of placement: the ability to match program graduates with the right firm. Matching requires a more focused approach to job placement, as consideration must be given to such factors as transportation and child care needs, as well as identifying graduates that bring the best set of workplace skills and competencies to the job.

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In today's tight labor market, finding employers with job openings is not a difficult task for either partner. Effectively matching program graduates with the right firm is more challenging and requires community colleges and community nonprofits to think and act differently than in the past.

All the initiatives are providing skills training to meet the needs of an industry or sector rather than individual businesses. This focus equips workers with transferable skills that can be used with multiple firms. WIRE-Net's alliance with local manufacturers and their associations has provided them with a formidable ally in encouraging the adoption of skill standards among training providers and employers.<sup>11</sup> For example, the alliance encourages such training providers as Cuyahoga Community College to teach and test for formally recognized skill standards. All graduates of the manufacturing training program are now tested in the Level 1 skills specified by the National Institute for Metalworking Skills. In addition, WIRE-Net encourages its member employers to hire workers that have demonstrated specific skill competencies. This practice helps create a better match between worker and firm, as well as enabling worker mobility within an industry or sector.

While WIRE-Net and its industry allies have advanced this agenda in Cleveland, the Milwaukee Area Technical College has

taken the lead in its initiative by testing participants prior to training and on completion in order to demonstrate to local firms the value of the training. In Silicon Valley, OICW has structured its information technology training program to meet industry standards and thus is able to produce graduates that can obtain certificates recognized by members of the industry, such as Microsoft A+, the Cisco Certified Network Administrator, and the Sun UNIX Administrator.

### Achieving Economic Security: Community Colleges and Community Nonprofits Helping Workers to Advance and Succeed

Both types of institutions have important roles to play in helping workers achieve long-term economic success. Such efforts rely on sustaining a connection to the labor force and advancing to higher-skilled and higher-wage jobs.

Community nonprofits typically give participants some level of post-employment support in an effort to solidify their connection to the labor market. Most offer

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*Westside Industrial Retention and Expansion Network/Cuyahoga Community College*

In this partnership, a community nonprofit, Westside Industrial Retention and Expansion Network (WIRE-Net) works with Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) to help low-income and minority populations take better advantage of the college's manufacturing training programs. WIRE-Net is supported in this effort by local associations of manufacturing firms that want to improve the quality and quantity of workers available to Cleveland's still strong manufacturing sector.

Over the past two years, WIRE-Net has sought to combine the strengths of its organization and the community college to address two complementing and important labor market objectives in Cleveland: to connect low-income, often inner-city minority residents

with higher-skilled and higher-wage jobs; and to increase the supply of skilled manufacturing workers available to the Cleveland precision machining industry.

WIRE-Net is a 13-year-old community nonprofit that represents the economic and employment interests of firms and residents in an industrial area of Cleveland. Working with Tri-C, WIRE-Net has recruited and supported students to participate in a nine-month manufacturing skills training program. WIRE-Net helps graduates find employment and provides post-placement retention services. Tri-C provides a state-of-the-art educational and training facility, remedial education and a host of educational supports. In addition, Tri-C—with the encouragement of local employers, industry associations and

WIRE-Net—has modified its program to emphasize the acquisition of industry-certified skills standards so that its graduates meet the specific skill needs of local employers.

WIRE-Net has been able to engage Tri-C in this effort with the help of outside resources to finance the costs of training and support services for participants, as well as the support of local businesses. The cost per participant is approximately \$5,000. Over the past two years, WIRE-Net has supported several dozen participants in Tri-C's program, forged partnerships with other manufacturing and precision machining training providers in the region, and sent a significant number of participants to these programs annually.

some form of case management, with the level of contact diminishing over time. JVS encourages participants to use the organization's workshops and technology center and connects participants to a free e-mail account so they can stay in contact. In San Diego, the Housing Authority operates an Individual Development Account program that offers resources to match participants' earnings so they can accumulate assets to put toward the purchase of a home.

Organizations that become One-Stop operators can use their resources for providing core and intensive services for post-placement support. Instituto is planning to combine its personalized case management with the development of peer-to-peer support groups, in which recently placed women can share their experiences of working in the nontraditional field of manufacturing. Instituto also acknowledges the need to work with employers to address workplace situations. Hartford's Community Renewal Team, also a One-Stop operator, is effectively positioned to provide similar support to graduates of the Customer Service Institute.

Community colleges readily acknowledge that they have neither the resources nor the staff to provide post-placement retention services and, in the absence of the community nonprofit, are unsure how this function would be accomplished. Community colleges, however, do have the resources and experience to support skills upgrading and continuing education.

The Manufacturing Bridge Program in Chicago is structured to give participants a choice of employment or additional education, or both, on completing the 16 weeks of training. The program focuses on problem-solving, decision-making and learning abilities so that students have a broad foundation for learning throughout their careers. Approximately one-third of the graduates have continued in a community college, most in the advanced machining certificate program at Daley Community College. Some participants have even enrolled in the college's two-year Associate's Degree program. A recent effort by the college to improve basic skill levels while in the formal training program resulted in 9 of 11 Bridge participants passing the entrance examination for the advanced machining program. As noted earlier, the fact that college credit is awarded for the Bridge program is an important incentive to students pursuing additional education and training.

Capital Community College's Customer Service Institute, which operates under a college department with responsibility for both continuing education and economic development (i.e., contract education for firms), has a strategy to promote skills upgrading. The Institute targets firms that have hired graduates and offers to provide upgrade training for all of the firm's employees. The cost for this training is paid by the firm at market rate.

# Developing and Making Partnerships Work: Lessons for Practitioners

Partnerships provide the opportunity to add value to a newly developing or existing training program. They combine the strengths of two types of institution—community colleges and community non-profits—to teach the common goal of preparing low-income workers to succeed in the labor market.

This study has identified eight lessons pertaining to the development and operation of a partnership. The first set of lessons apply to those seeking to develop a partnership, the second to those working to operate a partnership.

Practitioners need to keep in mind that for all the benefits that partnerships can generate, they are not easily developed or managed. It takes two to partner and a shared willingness to change. Although there is increasing interest in partnerships across the country, the fact that only a limited number exist indicates the difficulty of working together.

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## *Key Lessons*

### *Developing a Partnership:*

- Secure the support of top leadership and other allies.
- Bring resources/money to the deal.
- Look for resources in every direction.
- Be clear on the division of labor.

### *Operating a Partnership:*

- Communicate, communicate and then do it again.
- Do not be afraid to change operations.
- Monitor and document results.
- Work to achieve scale and system changes.

## Developing a Partnership

Four key lessons surfaced from the partnerships studied. Common to each of these lessons is the need for practitioners to think and act differently. Leaders must be open to change, resources must be used in new and innovative ways, untraditional sources of funds must be obtained, and community colleges and community nonprofits must be willing to share responsibilities in new ways.

Aside from the desire to serve local workers and employers more effectively, there are no outside forces compelling the development of these partnerships. After all, no federal or philanthropic initiatives are designed to foster such partnerships; even existing public programs, such as the Workforce Investment Act, are not structured in ways to facilitate community colleges and community nonprofits working together.

The absence of a broader program to foster such partnerships leads to the question of which entity—the community college or the community nonprofit—should take the lead in promoting a partnership initiative? There is no simple answer. Different circumstances and environments create different opportunities. What is important is that each group recognizes the needs and opportunities, and has the ability to take action when appropriate. To accomplish these goals, the following four lessons must be considered:

### **1. *Secure the involvement of top leadership and other allies.***

In each of the mature partnerships studied, leaders of the respective institutions have publicly signaled their support for the partnership and the overall idea of meeting the training needs of low-income workers. For example, the chancellor of CCSF supported use of the college's grant program for systems innovation to support the development of the health care partnership. In Chicago, Instituto organized its community of residents and companies, and then worked with the Mayor's Office to get the attention of the community college and secure its commitment to developing a partnership, as well as upgrading the equipment in the college's manufacturing program.

Community nonprofits in both Cleveland and New Orleans used their strong ties to local employers to support their partnership goals. In New Orleans, the private sector has proved an important ally in gaining access to the leadership at Delgado Community College, which then proved to be strong advocates of faculty and administrative staff change.

WIRE-Net has used its alliance with local manufacturing firms and others to pursue its partnership goals with Cuyahoga Community College. To date, these efforts have had mixed results. On the one hand, WIRE-Net works closely with the college's precision metals training program, providing recruitment and support services when requested. On the other hand, the college

withdrew from a formal training partnership with WIRE-Net and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) after the first program cycle. The precision metals training program has continued at NASA's Glenn Research Center and is seen by NASA as a program worthy of replication across the country. Overall, WIRE-Net has established some positive connections with the college, but it has yet to gain the full attention of the college's top leadership. This lack of attention may explain why WIRE-Net's efforts have yet to result in a formal partnership between the college and the nonprofit, something WIRE-Net has achieved with other educational institutions in the area.

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### *Community Nonprofits Need a Champion*

It is particularly important for a community nonprofit to have the support of top leadership within a community college if an effective partnership is to develop. This person, a president or dean, has to champion the partnership and be willing to promote change within the institution.

## **2. *Bring resources, preferably money, to the deal.***

Most of the initiatives studied give participants a comprehensive set of services, such as assessments, remediation, skills training and support services. These activities cost. A common characteristic of the partnerships studied is the availability of resources, particularly money, to support the program initiative. Bringing resources and dollars to the deal helps garner the commitment of potential partners.

Both the New Orleans Jobs Initiative and WIRE-Net are part of foundation-funded national workforce development initiatives. This affiliation provides each with flexible funds for the various activities of an initiative. Each was able to gain the attention of a local community college by showing that it had resources to finance the cost of tuition, support services and other activities. Similarly, the San Diego Community College District System used a grant from a California-based foundation to engage the interest of local community nonprofits in delivery recruitment and case management services for its I CAN program.

While community nonprofits can access grant funds from foundations and others, there are also other ways to use resources in support of an initiative. Both Instituto in Chicago and the Community Renewal Team in Hartford have recently become part of their local One-Stop systems. This affiliation brings resources in the form of

staff support into the organization and creates an opportunity to support a partnership. The responsibility for delivering core and intensive services means that these organizations can provide participants with case management and post-placement support (among other things) during and after an individual's participation in a skills training initiative. This support can be a vital complement to a community college's skills training program.

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*One-Stops: A Potential Resource*

The Workforce Investment Act requires the local workforce development system to offer training and support services—referred to as core and intensive services—to participants seeking to become economically self-sufficient. In some places, community non-profits are being contracted to deliver these services to local participants. These contracts allow such groups to use One-Stop resources to provide support services to individuals engaged in skills training initiatives.

### **3. *Look for resources in every direction.***

Although foundations are a key source of funds for many of the initiatives studied, a variety of sources are being tapped to support these partnerships. Instituto, which recently became an affiliate of the One-Stop system, has used Chicago Empowerment Zone dollars and State of Illinois employment and economic development resources to support its Manufacturing Bridge Program. In addition, Instituto accesses federal Dislocated Worker funds from the Trade Adjustment Assistance program to finance its training efforts. These funds put less pressure on Individual Training Accounts or vouchers offered by the local Workforce Investment Board. Milwaukee's NMIDC uses city Community Development Block Grant funds to help support its efforts.

OICW in Silicon Valley has demonstrated the value of offering skills training that meets the demands of private sector employers. Many of the resources, both dollars and equipment, for its information technology training program, are provided by private sector employers. Several firms provide support both to generate additional workers and to foster the use of their systems and equipment. Capital Community College has had similar success partnering with the private sector to

finance the development and operation of its Customer Service Institute. In fact, private sector resources pay the tuition (\$3,100) of every student.

Resources do not necessarily mean dollars. The cost of training is virtually negligible for the San Diego and San Francisco partnerships since the state community college system has a very low per-credit cost (\$11) and tuition waivers for low-income individuals (tuition in other places averages \$60 to \$75 per credit). In addition, the two colleges can provide instructors for remediation and basic education without charging participants. These in-kind resources allow initiatives to use other funds to finance such critical functions as support services and, as noted earlier about San Francisco, stipends.

Some funding sources, however, have a downside that must be considered. As San Diego moved into the second round of its I CAN program it had to access other funds to compensate for a decline in foundation support. Although local welfare-to-work dollars were secured, the terms of the agreement required that 30 percent of participants had to be placed within 90 days and successfully retained in their work for six months. This requirement meant that the program's focus on remediation, basic education and skills training had to take a back seat to a "work first" strategy.

#### **4. *Be clear on the division of labor, but do not be afraid to change.***

The challenges of initiating a partnership are matched by the trials and tribulations of implementation. A key lesson articulated by the partnership initiatives was to be clear at the outset about who had responsibility for what functions and, wherever possible, institute accountability mechanisms to ensure that work is done. Instituto has developed formal agreements that outline roles and responsibilities that are signed by all partners. San Diego has established performance-based contracts for its community nonprofits in order to clarify expectations on the number of participants recruited and enrolled.

The JVS/VVJET health care initiative in San Francisco is an example of an initiative that has had to both clarify its division of labor and make changes in its approach. Early on, JVS and CCSF had difficulty recruiting students. Subsequent actions clarified the roles and recruitment strategy. At this point, VVJET joined JVS and CCSF in their recruitment efforts as the organization operated in a community that offered a large pool of potential candidates for the program. The program now has more than three interested candidates for every available training position.

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*To overcome barriers that impede partnerships, a community college needs:*

- A leader who values career training.
- Faculty and staff who are sensitive to the needs of low-income workers.
- An entrepreneurial environment that aggressively solicits outside funds to support non-traditional activities.
- A management culture that promotes and facilitates change.

### **Operating a Partnership**

Getting a partnership started is difficult. Keeping it alive and successful is equally challenging. As noted earlier, the Mission/Glide partnership continues to evolve and adjust as it confronts new and recurring issues. Such adjustment is common among all the partnerships reviewed.

Four operational lessons stand out. Inherent in each is the need to embrace new management styles and procedures as well as to work toward more long-term structural changes. Although any change is hard within existing institutions, change that turns responsibilities over to other organizations without any formal accountability is difficult and downright scary in most instances.

Community colleges are particularly challenged in taking the necessary steps to operate differently. Such major factors as state laws, academic traditions, funding criteria, faculty and staff unions all must be considered and addressed in any effort to change basic operating procedures. Although such factors can be addressed in a positive way, the small number of partnerships found nationally reflects the difficulties in dealing with these issues. Thus, it may be appropriate to think about these factors as possible barriers to change; community colleges probably need strong leadership and determination to overcome these barriers.

There are four major lessons to be learned from the initiatives that have worked to effect such changes.

## **1. *Communicate, communicate and then do it again.***

Partnership managers could not stress enough the importance of communication between the partnering institutions. One partnership manager noted that while they teach students workplace communication skills, they as managers need to practice what they teach in operating their partnerships. Three pieces of advice were offered.

First, designate one liaison from each partnering institution to communicate for and represent the institution. Although it is important that staff communicate and work well together, one person should be responsible for representing all interests of the partnering institution. Second, designate a regular time to communicate, preferably once a week in person. At this point, the liaisons should meet and, when necessary, include other staff in the discussions. Third, regularly exchange information and perspectives on instructors and students, since each institution is operating in a new culture in which some things are not easily communicated or understood. It is also important to quickly address any personal issues that may emerge and impede a student's classroom performance.

## **2. *Be prepared to change long-standing operations.***

As noted earlier, most of the initiatives took significant steps to ensure that their skills training activities are responsive to the needs of low-income individuals. For community colleges, some traditional approaches to instruction had to be altered

by offering more flexible times for courses (e.g., nights and weekends), shorter-term training periods, and programs with open entry and exit. Community nonprofits also made such changes as refocusing their support to provide a broader range of wrap-around services.

An important point in making any of these changes is to do so in the context of the overall mission and structure of the institution, and not just within the confines of the initiative. Westside Technical Institute of Daley Community College looks at the changes that have come from the Bridge program as the precursor to a multitude of changes that have to occur in order for the college to more effectively serve the area's low-income population. The New Orleans Jobs Initiative has now made its job readiness program mandatory for all participants making the transition to work and training.

## **3. *Monitor and document the results.***

Each one of the initiatives collects data and documents outcomes. In many cases, this is a requirement of financial support. Several of the initiatives, such as Instituto, New Orleans Jobs Initiative and WIRE-Net, have outside entities that either conduct or support them in these efforts. In the case of Instituto, researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago have gone so far as to support research that compares the wage records of program graduates with other workers' wage records in order to show the benefits of the program.<sup>12</sup>

Both the Capital and San Diego community college programs indicate that by monitoring the ongoing efforts of their programs, they have been able to learn and make modifications along the way. Capital has adjusted its class offerings so that participants can work and go to school at the same time. San Diego used an outside firm to assess the mix of services and the processes for delivering them. On the basis of the recommendations of the study, significant modifications were made in the initial program design.

As noted earlier, most initiatives have data that provide evidence that their efforts are leading students to well-paying jobs. Such data can help sustain outside funding and also demonstrate the overall value of skills training. As one partnership manager noted, given the bad rap on skills training in the past, the positive outcomes from these initiatives can demonstrate the benefits of skills training to a broader audience.

#### **4. *Work to achieve scale and system changes within community colleges.***

On average, each of these initiatives will train approximately 75 people a year, a small number considering the labor market demands in each of the communities. For some, such as JVS in San Francisco, the health care partnership is a starting point. JVS is planning to partner with Mission Community College in their information technology initiative. Similarly, the New Orleans Jobs Initiative is building on its success with the manufacturing program to focus on other training programs at the

college. Project QUEST, in serving more than 800 participants annually, provides evidence that scale can be achieved.

Helping community colleges to address the workforce needs of low-income workers is an objective shared by community college leaders and community nonprofits. For many, achieving this objective means changing some of the basic operating constructs of the community college system. As previously noted, many of these initiatives have already taken steps to make specific course offerings more accessible to low-income workers. However, some suggest there is a need to go beyond individual programs and look at issues that affect the college or system as a whole. Several key items that involve system change include:

- *Credit.* Several colleges recognize that skills training initiatives can be an entry point into the community college system for some who otherwise would never think about post-secondary education. Providing some college credit for their programs can be an important motivator to pursue additional education.
- *Full-time equivalent staff (FTEs).* Most community colleges survive on the FTEs generated by students enrolled in classes. Noncredit skills training initiatives typically do not produce FTEs. More important, FTEs are used to generate funding based on a formula that ties dollars to students served. As one college leader noted, a college can generate significantly more dollars by having a history class that enrolls 100 people versus a

manufacturing class that can only accommodate 15 to 20 people. In addition, the cost of conducting a history class (one instructor) versus a manufacturing class (several instructors and equipment cost) is significant. One suggestion for addressing this issue is to change the FTE funding formula to give more dollars to each FTE generated by skills training programs than to those for academic programs.

- *Counseling.* As noted earlier, many community colleges acknowledge that their counseling activities are primarily focused on the academic needs of students preparing for a four-year institution. Although some programmatic dollars are available to support other students, such as those pursuing career training, these resources are not institutionalized nor are they always available at the level necessary to provide meaningful support.
- *Adult basic education.* Many low-income workers and minorities enroll in ESL and other remedial classes in order to improve their ability to get a job. Colleges spend substantial resources on these programs but rarely connect them to the world of work or to assess their outcomes. Some colleges are talking about the need to reapply these resources so that they are connected to and complement skills training initiatives.<sup>13</sup> (Community nonprofits that also deliver adult basic education services need to connect these efforts to career development programs.)
- *Teachers.* One emerging impediment to skills training programs is the difficulty of hiring teachers that can effectively instruct and bring real-world experiences into the classroom. To do so typically means hiring outside instructors that have an ongoing connection to private sector work. The realities of the labor market, particularly in an industry like information technology, require that instructors receive wages commensurate with those in the marketplace. Generally, this is much more than traditional faculty receive.

Bringing change to community colleges is not easy and, more often than not, involves state-level laws and regulations. However, tackling the issues raised by a partnership that also attracts such important allies as the business community brings additional attention and credibility to the effort.

## Checklist for Considering Community College and Community Nonprofit Partnerships

### Issues for Community Nonprofits to Consider in Partnering With a Community College:

1. Is the community college ready to accept low-income/nontraditional students by doing such things as developing targeted marketing strategies?
2. Is the community college prepared to offer or support pre-training remediation and development to help prospective students meet entry standards and improve their chances to succeed?
3. Does the community college have resources to support the costs of serving low-income students?
4. Does the community college openly acknowledge the value that the community nonprofit brings to the partnership?
5. Is the community college willing to emphasize the learning of industry-based skills and competencies in its curriculum and change its approach to instruction (and instructors) to be more responsive/sensitive to the needs of non-traditional students?
6. Is the community college willing to work in partnership with the community nonprofit in assessing an individual's progress in the classroom?
7. Is the community college providing additional counseling or personal support to

students and/or willing to facilitate the community nonprofit's provision of such services?

8. Are classes available at times and in locations that meet the needs of working students?
9. Is credit provided for obtaining skills/competencies and completing the program?
10. Does the community college facilitate testing and skill certifications for students and provide career pathways for continuing skills development?

### Issues for a Community College to Consider in Partnering With a Community Nonprofit:

1. Does the community nonprofit have a clear vision of its role and value in the workforce development system?
2. Does the community nonprofit have experience in operating a program that provides services to individuals and is it prepared to engage in a structured program for the long term?
3. Does the community nonprofit have a stable and solid organizational funding base?
4. Does the community nonprofit have veteran staff as well as staff knowledgeable of the occupation or industry targeted for training?
5. Does the community nonprofit have a proven track record of recruiting the target population for training or employment programs?

6. Does the community nonprofit have experience in providing personal support to participants?
7. Does the community nonprofit have strong knowledge and ties to the workforce development and social service systems?
8. Is the community nonprofit recognized by business as a viable player in the workforce development system and does it have the ability to connect participants to jobs?
9. Does the community nonprofit have a track record of achieving tasks and doing so on time?
10. Does the community nonprofit have a track record of producing outcomes and a transparent system for documenting outcomes?

# Conclusion

The inescapable reality of today's economy is that education, occupational skills and lifelong learning are essential to success in the labor market. Skills training partnerships between community colleges and community nonprofits can be an important vehicle to help many low-income workers achieve this goal.

There are many ways to deliver skills training programs. Partnerships between community colleges and community nonprofits are just one. Many of those that have tried it—but not all—have found that the value of combining the strengths of two different types of institution to pursue one goal exceeds the difficulties of developing and operating a partnership. For these places, the partnership is a critical vehicle for helping low-income workers to navigate the complexities of today's workforce development and labor market systems. The ultimate outcome—attachment of a worker to an economically viable career—is a win-win situation for all involved.

There is no one model for constructing and operating a partnership. Different

institutions and local circumstances require different configurations of roles and responsibilities. They can also lead to different levels of skills training, ranging from office workers to information technology specialists. Common to these efforts, however, is the intent to provide workers with a broader foundation of learning and support that can lead to higher-skilled and higher-wage employment. Partnerships can help make this possible.

Initiating and sustaining a partnership may not be possible for every institution, whether it be a community college or a community nonprofit. The institution has to be secure in its own abilities and position within the community in order to acknowledge the value of the partnering institution. Furthermore, partnerships do not eliminate the ongoing challenges of long-term funding or reaching scale. They do, however, offer the opportunity to focus more attention on addressing these matters.

The small number of partnerships found in this study is probably a result of the difficulties inherent in developing such initiatives.

It is also, unfortunately, probably the product of a policy environment that fails to foster or support such actions. None of the major workforce development programs funded by the federal government—WIA, Welfare-to-Work, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Carl Perkins, Adult Education—provide incentives or mechanisms to facilitate these types of partnerships. The lack of targeted resources for skills training partnerships is a major barrier to their development.

In fact, the prevailing message derived from federal workforce policy in recent years contravenes the notion of skills training altogether. The emphasis on “work first,” which leads to workers being attached to the labor market without pre-employment occupational skills training, has limited the innovation needed to help workers succeed in an ever-more-complex labor market environment. It also ignores important research findings that support the idea that targeted, short-term skills training, and not “work first,” is the best means for achieving stable employment and livable wages.<sup>14</sup>

The outcomes generated by the current initiatives provide a foundation for demonstrating the value of such partnerships. Overall, these efforts generate three important benefits for both the workers and the businesses of a local community:

- They better serve low-income people by directing them to occupational skills training that can lead to better-paying jobs and lay the foundation for continued skills upgrading and education;
- They work closely with business to tailor their services to meet local labor market needs and community economic development goals; and
- They produce more favorable workforce development performance outcomes that emphasize sustained employment and wage progression, as well as demonstrate the value of skills training to public officials.

Finally, the partnerships between community colleges and community nonprofits found in this study represent perhaps a subtle but important evolution in the development and delivery of workforce development services. These efforts have stepped beyond the idea of coordination and collaboration to acknowledge that delivering effective services requires that workforce institutions address the problems of duplication and fragmentation. These partnerships have taken significant steps to tailor each institution’s roles and functions to those things that they do best and to allow their partner to do the things they do best. Students and workers thus get the best of both institutions, enabling them to build a foundation for advancing and succeeding in an increasingly complex labor market.

## Endnotes

1. For purposes of this paper, the term “community nonprofits” refers to local organizations—be they community-based development corporations, social service agencies, faith-based groups, etc.—whose overall mission is to improve the economic and social conditions of low-income people. Such groups may seek to achieve this objective by focusing on employment and training or economic development activities, or both, or on the provision of social services. This paper did not include or exclude such groups on the basis of such criteria as board composition and geographic focus.
2. Maguire, Sheila. *Surviving, and Maybe Thriving, on Vouchers: A Guide for Organizations Making the Transition to Individual Training Accounts Under the Workforce Investment Act*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures. April 2000.
3. The New Economy Task Force. *Making the New Economy Grow: An Action Agenda*. Washington, D.C.: Public Policy Institute. July 2000, p.12.
4. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *The Working Poor: 1998 Profile*. Available at <http://stats.bls.gov/cpswp98.htm>.
5. An exception is technical colleges, such as the Milwaukee Area Technical College discussed later in the report. These two-year institutions primarily focus on career training rather than academic preparation for a four-year degree. Some argue that these institutions should not be considered community colleges.
6. American Association of Community Colleges, at <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/allaboutcc/snapshot.htm>.
7. Weiss, Marcus, and Kevin Kelly. *Building Partnerships Between State TANF Initiatives and CDCs: A Guidebook for Practitioners and State Officials*. Washington, D.C.: National Congress for Community Economic Development. February 2000.
8. Jenkins, Davis. *Beyond Welfare-to-Work: Bridging the Low-Wage-Livable-Wage Employment Gap*. Chicago: Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois at Chicago. January 1999, p.8.
9. Interview with Craig McAtee, Executive Director, Manufacturing and Applied Technologies, Workforce and Economic Development Division, Cuyahoga Community College, on November 7, 2000.
10. Proscio, Tony, and Mark Elliott. *Getting In, Staying On, Moving Up: A Practitioner's Approach to Employment Retention*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures. Winter 1999.
11. WIRE-Net is part of the Northeastern Ohio Metalworking Association Consortium (NEOMAC), which also includes the Cleveland Chapter National Tooling and Machining Association, Cleveland District; Precision Metalworking Association, Northeast Ohio District, Lake Erie District; and Precision Machined Products Association. NEOMAC has gained the support of numerous local educational institutions, including

Cuyahoga Community College, to ensure quality graduates from metal-working education programs that meet industry and community needs.

12. Braza, Mark. *Employment Outcomes of Manufacturing Technology Bridge Graduates*. Chicago: Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois at Chicago. January 2001.
13. McCabe, Robert H. *No One to Waste: A Report to Public Decision-Makers and Community College Leaders*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Community Colleges. 2000.
14. Strawn, Julie, and Karin Martinson. *Steady Work and Better Jobs: How to Help Low-Income Parents Sustain Employment and Advance in the Workforce*. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. June 2000.

## Appendix

The four initiatives detailed in this report, although at different points in their development, have each evolved to the point of having recruited, trained, placed and retained at least one group of participants. As such, they provide a range of experiences for exploring the activities and issues that underlie efforts of this type. In addition, this study encountered but did not review in detail a number of other examples that warrant mention. These initiatives also involve different degrees of partnership.

*Capital Community College of Hartford, Connecticut, and the Community Renewal Team.* The Customer Service Institute of Connecticut was established in 1998 by Capital Community College with the support of Connecticut's business community. The initiative was designed to train, support and place students in jobs in financial services, telecommunications and health care, and was intended to address the short-term training needs of welfare and other low-income students. The institute has placed more than 100 participants in jobs with annual salaries averaging over \$20,000 with benefits. The college partners with private businesses and a number of community nonprofits. In particular, it has established a working partnership with the area's community action agency—the Community Renewal Team (CRT)—to help recruit students and support them during their training and after placement. In the past year, the partnership has continued to evolve and has become stronger as CRT became the local One-Stop operator for the

region. This has enabled CRT to use its resources for core and intensive services to support participants who enroll in the institute via the One-Stop system. It has also led to CRT placing their One-Stop business-services unit within the institute in order to better coordinate outreach to businesses in the community.

*Milwaukee Area Technical College and Northeast Milwaukee Industrial Development Corporation.* This initiative serves an old industrial community within the urban core of Milwaukee and is driven by the efforts of the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) to better connect its services with local neighborhoods and businesses. Five years ago, MATC opened a neighborhood-based learning center in collaboration with the Northeast Milwaukee Industrial Development Corporation (NMIDC). Jointly operated and supported by both institutions, the Learning Center provides a starting point for community residents to gain the basic skills to pursue additional occupational training. Although such training can be pursued at the college's campus, the Learning Center hosts training programs in clerical and office management for which MATC provides all computer equipment, curriculum development, related materials and services, and the partial time of an instructor. NMIDC recruits the students, provides support services, participates in the training, and does placement and job retention. The Learning Center also hosts training programs for general manufacturing and machining.

*New Orleans Jobs Initiative and Delgado Community College.* In an effort to improve the overall community environment for skills training that is accessible to low-income workers, New Orleans Jobs Initiative (NOJI) took direct aim at reshaping the career-training programs of Delgado Community College. NOJI, working with a group of private-sector employers, gained access to the college leadership, who supported the effort to recast its manufacturing training program to meet the needs of employers and low-income, minority students in the community. The program offers a seven-month training initiative that delivers a customized curriculum based on local industry-identified skill needs. NOJI prepares residents for the program by requiring completion of a 21-day pre-employment program and provides students with case management support during training and after placement. NOJI is also working with the community college to make similar improvements in training programs for construction and office systems, as well as to help community residents prepare to enter the college's strong health care programs.

*Organization for Industrial Cooperation West and Canada Community College.* Organization for Industrial Cooperation West (OICW) is a nonprofit community-based training center with 35 years of service to low-income residents. In February 2000, OICW expanded its array of training programs—electronics, construction, clerical, and so forth—to address the demand for information technology specialists in Silicon Valley.

The new Cisco/Sun Network Academy offers students a chance to gain skills and certifications at three progressive levels of training, each of which takes three months. Graduates earn starting annual salaries of \$35,000 to \$55,000. Although this training initiative is operated by OICW, Canada Community College leases space at OICW's training center and has full-time faculty offering a variety of classes designed to build residents' basic and technical skills. In addition, Canada has counselors at the center to work with students. Canada has also helped establish articulation agreements between the two institutions so that students can use their OICW training to continue their education at the community college.

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