



For Immediate Release

November 12, 2008

Contact

Michael Segner
202.387.8550 or ms@mcopr.com

**Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network Receives \$450 Thousand Grant
Cincinnati A National Fund For Workforce Solutions Site**

Washington D.C.— As America faces increasingly hard economic times, a promising \$30 million national initiative to address the nation's workforce shortages is gaining momentum as more and more communities across the country are looking for both innovative ideas and proven solutions to grow their economies.

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions (NFWS) announced the addition of 11 regional collaboratives, including the Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network (Workforce Network), to its national effort to move low-wage workers into higher paying jobs while providing employers with the skilled workers they need.

The newly formed Workforce Network is a community-based grant-making partnership for workforce development consisting of business, academic, government and workforce development funders, and will receive \$150 thousand annually over three years for a total of \$450 thousand from NFWS. Since NFWS invests 20 percent of the budget of a local collaborative, local funders will invest an additional \$1.8 million over three years.

"Developing our workforce to be better prepared for jobs today and tomorrow is one of our community's highest priorities," said Kathryn E. Merchant, President/CEO of The Greater Cincinnati Foundation and Chair of the Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network. "Support from the National Fund for Workforce Solutions will help propel us toward our goal of ensuring that our community's low-wage/low-skill workers have greater opportunities to be successful as we develop a unified system to bolster the region's economy."

The Workforce Network will join 20 other NFWS regional collaboratives from across the country implementing the NFWS approach, characterized by its sector-based, dual-customer workforce partnerships that seek to meet the needs of employers and low-skilled workers along with its emphasis on extensive public, private and community partners.

"The workforce challenges confronting America are too massive, too complex, and too urgent for any one public or private entity to solve alone," said Marlene Seltzer, President and CEO of Jobs for the Future, a national partner of NFWS. "To provide all workers—especially the lower-skilled—with the education and training they need to succeed in an increasingly demanding labor market, America needs an adequately resourced, comprehensive workforce development system."

In addition to the NFWS grant, the Workforce Network will participate in NFWS-supported technical assistance, peer learning, research, and evaluation with other funding collaboratives from across the nation to strengthen their ability to implement proven solutions, strategies and techniques for maximum impact on the area's economy.



The national aggregation of analysis and strategies is a tangible benefit for the collaborative, allowing them to reduce risk as they address the big picture of Cincinnati's economy and employment.

The opportunity to secure NFWS funding resulted in new partnerships all working together to ensure all of Cincinnati's workforce development funds have the largest impact possible. These partnerships include leaders from The Greater Cincinnati Foundation, the United Way of Greater Cincinnati, Macy's, KnowledgeWorks Foundation, Messer Construction, as well as the region's Workforce Investment Boards, state and local government, educational institutions, and service providers.

An emphasis of the Workforce Network is on the rapidly expanding health care sector. Employers in the health care industry have faced a shortage of workers qualified for jobs requiring more complex skills. As a result, the Workforce Network has worked with The Health Alliance and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center to support Career Pathways, a program that connects education and training programs to enable individuals to advance up the job ladder. By clearly establishing a pathway for educational and career advancement, employees will be given the motivation and knowledge of how to advance in their career.

"This project makes good business sense for Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and The Health Alliance of Greater Cincinnati hospitals. We have been able to design a career pathway that is employer led and meets hospital employment needs while simultaneously helping people achieve greater socio-economic self-sufficiency," said William Lecher, Senior Clinical Director, Specialty Resource Unit, Patient Attendant Department & Patient Escort Team. "Our experience working with the career pathway process tells a great story: our incumbent employees have higher academic achievement and higher academic retention compared to the general college student body. The pathway provides for genuine wage and income advancement. Our employee retention rate is strong."

NFWS is a five-year, \$30 million effort to strengthen and expand high-impact workforce development initiatives around the country. NFWS is dedicated to moving America's low-wage workforce into higher paying jobs, while providing employers with the skilled workers they need. NFWS is supported by the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Hitachi, John S. and James L. Knight, Prudential and The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg foundations, Microsoft Corp., and the U.S. Department of Labor. Jobs for the Future and the Council on Foundations are national partners with the National Fund for Workforce Solutions.

For more information, please visit the website at: <http://www.nfwsolutions.org>

###