



For Immediate Release

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**Omaha Workforce Development Group Receives \$450 Thousand Grant
*Omaha Workforce Funding Collaborative Joins NFWS Network***

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 with more and more communities across the country 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 Omaha Workforce Funding Collaborative, 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 Omaha Workforce Funding Collaborative 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.

"The Omaha Workforce Funding Collaborative has strategically engaged key partners who share the common goal of formulating partnerships to effectively address labor shortages in key industry sectors," said Wendy Boyer, Vice President of Education and Workforce Development at the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce. "Our goal is to provide low-skilled, unemployed residents with a continuum of services to gain self-sufficiency through clear, industry-sector pathways, while meeting local demand for workers in critical career fields."

The Omaha Workforce Funding Collaborative 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 Omaha Workforce Funding Collaborative 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 their 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 Omaha's economy and employment.

The Omaha Workforce Funding Collaborative is coordinated by the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, which represents the area's businesses and industries. To date, the Collaborative partners include the Chamber, Metropolitan Community College, United Way of the Midlands, and the Workforce Investment Board with support from the City of Omaha.

"The Omaha community achieves its greatest success when people work together," said Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey, Chief Elected Official of the Tri-County Workforce Investment Area. "This collaboration of government programs, private investment and local employers will provide opportunities for job seekers and an underutilized workforce for local businesses. As CEO of the Tri-County Workforce Investment Area, I am proud to play a role in this collaboration and am confident we will achieve great results."

The United Way of Midlands stated, "Financial stability is a dream of many in our community, and the absence of it causes a host of human service challenges that United Way works to address each year. This new partnership creates opportunities for individuals *and* industry to prosper."

The funding Collaborative's initial workforce partnership pilot program, currently underway, is addressing Mutual of Omaha's and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska's high demand for workers in the customer service and claims sectors. It is expected that this partnership will create a mechanism that recruits, supports and retains individuals in these career fields. With the extensive groundwork laid through this project, the Collaborative can build upon this experience and replicate the model in other industries and business sectors.

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>

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