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NFWS WELCOMES JOIN, NEW SOUTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATIVE, WITH \$450,000 GRANT

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 Job Opportunity Investment Network (JOIN) based in southeastern Pennsylvania, 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 JOIN 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 no more than 20% of the budget of a local collaborative, local funders will invest an additional \$1.8 million over three years.

Pennsylvania is ahead of the curve in workforce development because of the Industry Partnerships initiated by the Commonwealth with the support of NFWS funding several years ago," said Laura Boyce, a Director of Community Impact at the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, the lead agency in JOIN. "Our goal is to target marginally employed, low-skilled workers, and build their skills through these sector-based partnerships that are already in place and doing great work."

The Job Opportunity Investment Network will join 20 other NFWS regional collaboratives from across the country implementing the NFWS workforce 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."

"We must view the skills development of the nation's low-wage workforce as a critical economic investment, not a luxury or burden, or just an expense on the balance sheet. This is precisely the goal of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions," said Steve Gunderson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Council of Foundations, and a national partner in the NFWS initiative.



In addition to NFWS funds, JOIN will receive technical assistance as well as 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 southeastern Pennsylvania's economy and employment.

JOIN will focus on addressing the qualification deficits of low-skilled workers to prepare them for available mid-skill, living wage positions currently available in specific industry sectors. JOIN's innovative approach is to adapt and enhance the network of sector-based, workforce development partnerships (also known as "industry partnerships") that already exist in the region, so they can effectively reach low-skilled, underemployed workers. Many of those targeted for this initiative are the forty percent of working Philadelphians who are earning poverty wages, and more than one-third who have only obtained part-time work.

The founding partners in JOIN are the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A previous multi-year grant from the NFWS to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was instrumental in the development of Industry Partnerships throughout the state, which engaged business, labor, government, job training programs, and other interested parties in addressing employer workforce needs. The current NFWS grant focuses on the development of incumbent workers.

Among the strategies JOIN will utilize to effect change are grant-making, attracting new sources of funding for workforce development efforts, creating opportunities for peer learning and networking, and policy advocacy. JOIN hopes to develop and strengthen five to seven sector-based partnerships in its first grant cycle.

"The initiative holds great promise for the region for two reasons," said Matt Bergheiser, Philadelphia Program Director at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. "It brings new funders to the table to shape and influence how we prepare lower-skilled Philadelphians for work. And, by instituting a competitive RFP process for funds among industry partnerships, it will surface the very best ideas for addressing the dual needs of employers and workers."

The Prudential Foundation recently announced its support of the NFWS and will award \$1 million to the National Fund over the next three years.

"Prudential has always considered investing in the skills development of our workforce of tomorrow to be an important social strategy," said Gabriella Morris, President of The Prudential Foundation. "Prudential has decided to become a national investor in the National Fund because we saw the significant impact and results an organization with a national perspective can achieve in communities across America."

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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