



SkillWorksSM
PARTNERS FOR A PRODUCTIVE WORKFORCE

Overview of SkillWorks Outcomes: Summary

AUGUST 2009

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SkillWorks Funders

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund and the Frank W.
and Carl S. Adams Memorial Fund, Bank of America,
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Introduction

SkillWorks is an ambitious five-year Initiative that brought together a coalition of public funders and local and national foundations to invest in a set of activities that could lead to large-scale and sustainable improvements in the workforce development system in Boston. Its broad goals were to help low-income individuals attain family wage jobs, to improve the skills of the workforce for businesses, to increase the resources available for workforce development, to enhance the capacity of workforce development providers to meet the needs of low-income individuals and employers, and, finally, to promote changes in public policy that would support the advancement of low-income individuals into family sustaining jobs.

To accomplish these goals, the Initiative focused on three overlapping strategies:

Workforce Partnerships. The activities of the partnerships were to demonstrate best practices that were replicable, to identify barriers that could be addressed by public policy, and to develop sustainable activities through expansion to other employers.

Public Policy/Advocacy. The public policy activities were designed to address statewide policies that would improve the ability of the workforce development system to help low-income individuals advance to family supporting jobs.

Capacity Building¹. The capacity building activities focused on strengthening the SkillWorks partnerships through technical assistance and creating a learning community. Over the five years, SkillWorks funded six workforce partnerships. In addition to the partnerships, SkillWorks also made a five-year grant to the Workforce Solutions Group (WSG), a partnership of organizations responsible for designing and implementing the public policy advocacy component of the Initiative, and funded a capacity building team to support the partnerships.

A key element of the SkillWorks Initiative was the belief that unless the outcomes of the Initiative went beyond the direct participants involved in the partnerships and beyond the timeframe of the funders' five-year grant period, the overall goals of the Initiative would not be met. Thus, there were two categories of outcomes that were of interest to the SkillWorks funders:

¹ The approach to capacity building evolved over the course of Phase I of SkillWorks. Initially, capacity building activities focused on strengthening the organizational and programmatic capacity of mid-size community-based organizations in Boston. The primary strategy of the capacity building component of SkillWorks changed to focus more closely on the needs of the workforce partnership. As a result, outcomes related to capacity building are best viewed within the context of partnership outcomes. A more thorough evaluation of capacity building is contained in a separate document *Capacity Building in Support of SkillWorks Partnerships*, April 2009.

1. Participant and employers outcomes associated directly with the partnerships that were funded; and
2. System outcomes that involved larger scale and more sustainable changes in the broader workforce development system.

This report provides an overview of the outcomes that have been achieved during Phase I of the SkillWorks Initiative. It looks, first, at the outcomes associated with the participants in the partnerships—both individuals and employers—and then provides an overview of the types of outcomes that were achieved in terms of the larger system change goals.

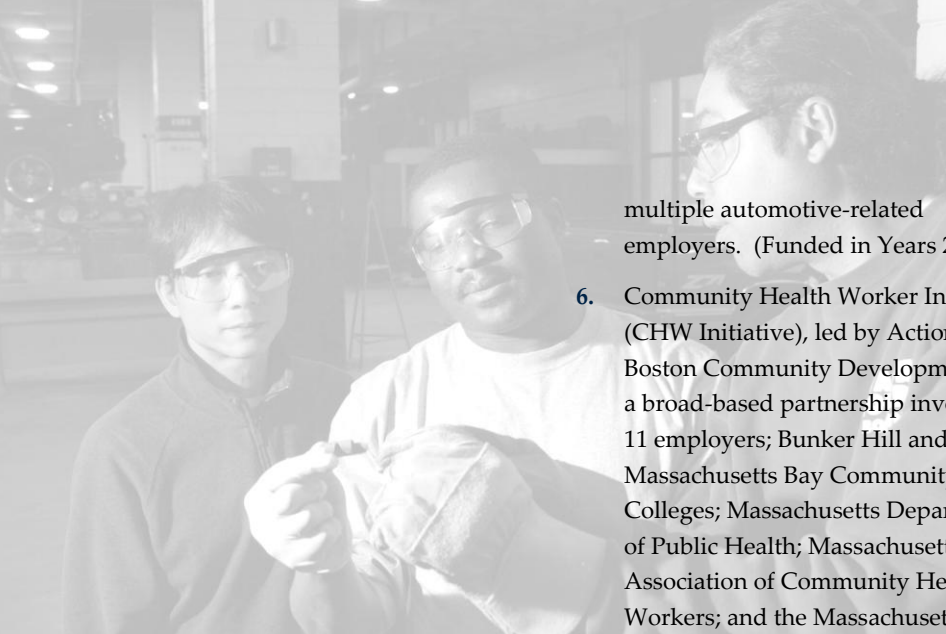
More detailed evaluations of each of the partnerships, the public policy investment, and system change have been completed as part of the Phase I evaluation of SkillWorks. These pieces, available online at www.skill-works.org, provide much deeper analyses of the history, services, and success factors associated with each element of SkillWorks.

Partnership Outcomes

SkillWorks invested in six workforce partnerships over the past five years. The partnerships varied in their industry sector and/or occupational focus, but they all sought to advance low-income individuals toward economic self-sufficiency by creating education and training programs that were responsive to the needs of partnering employers. In addition, each of the partnerships incorporated some degree of coaching or case management to individuals to support their progress along a career pathway. Four of the six partnerships

offered training programs for both pre-employment and incumbent workers, while the other two focused exclusively on incumbent workers. The six Phase I workforce partnerships funded by SkillWorks are listed below:

1. The Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute (HCRTI), now known as the Healthcare Training Institute (HTI), is a partnership among two CDCs, a CBO, a number of training providers, and multiple healthcare institutions in the Longwood Medical Area. (Funded in Years 1-5)
2. The Hotel Career Center (HCC) is a partnership led by the International Institute of Boston with participation by the Hilton Hotels. (Funded in Years 1-5)
3. Partners in Career and Workforce Development (PCWD) is a partnership led by Partners HealthCare, a network of hospitals and other healthcare organizations along with service providers including Project Hope, Jewish Vocational Services, and WorkSource Partners. (Funded in Years 1-3)
4. Building Services Career Path Project (BSCPP) is a partnership led by the Voice and Future Fund, a nonprofit union-led educational provider, in partnership with building owners and maintenance contractors. (Funded in Years 2-5)
5. Partnership for Automotive Career Education (PACE) is a partnership led by the Asian American Civic Association in partnership with two CBOs, Madison Park Technical Vocational High School, Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology, and



multiple automotive-related employers. (Funded in Years 2-5)

6. Community Health Worker Initiative (CHW Initiative), led by Action for Boston Community Development, is a broad-based partnership involving 11 employers; Bunker Hill and Massachusetts Bay Community Colleges; Massachusetts Department of Public Health; Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers; and the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers. This initiative is still in progress so its system change-related outcomes are not included in this analysis. (Funded in Years 4-5 and will continue into Year 1 of Phase II)

Since the CHW Initiative was funded late in Phase I and is on a different schedule for data reporting and evaluation, the outcomes of that partnership are not available for inclusion in this summary document. A report of the CHW Initiative's outcomes will be available separately. All figures for participant outcomes will include only the five partnerships for which data are available through Year 5.

Participant Outcomes

Participant Enrollment Profile

Nearly 2,900 individuals were served over the course of Phase I by the five partnerships. More than two-thirds of participants were incumbent workers. The majority (64%) of participants were enrolled in healthcare-related partnerships (HCRTI/HTI and PCWD).

Enrollment was highest in the second and third years of the Initiative. By Year 5, enrollment had slowed significantly to slightly more than a quarter of the enrollment in Year 2. The enrollment decline was due to a number of factors:

- ❖ partnerships focused on completing services for participants who had enrolled in previous years;
- ❖ some partnerships had already served the majority of individuals interested in the services at the targeted employer sites by Years 4 and 5, so class size declined;
- ❖ employer partners' declining demand for services combined with organizational leadership changes at HCRTI, which became HTI in Year 5, led to a revamping and scaling back of program offerings based on employer interest; and
- ❖ PCWD decided not to seek SkillWorks funding in Years 4 and 5.

Exhibit 1: Total Enrollment												
	Pre-employment					Incumbent					Pre-employment	Incumbent
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total	Total
BSCPP							60	142	32	80		314
HCC	52	53	50	44	41	38	75	26	34	12	240	185
HCRTI/HTI*	162	103	139	17		208	244	236	92	47	421	827
PACE		34	33	41	36		114	22	2	27	144	165
PCWD**	44	51	42			182	167	117			137	466
Total	258	241	264	102	77	428	660	543	160	166	942	1,957

* Includes unvalidated HCRTI data for Years 1–3. It is likely that some participants were double-counted, and there may have been individuals counted as enrolled that never fully enrolled for courses. As such, Year 1–3 HCRTI data will only be used for enrollment and demographic data. Year 1-3 data will not be used in subsequent outcome tables. Instead, HCRTI/HTI data will reflect only those active in 2007 and 2008.

** Over the first three years, 37 PCWD enrollees took classes at HCRTI.

Exhibit 2: Characteristics of Pre-employment Participants at Enrollment					
	Percent Boston Residents	Percent Primary Language Not English	Percent Less Than High School Education	Percent Completed High School Only	Percent Annual Household Income Under \$25,000
HCC	15%	82%	13%	33%	96%
HCRTI	98%	59%	5%	56%	93%
PACE	66%	51%	6%	83%	71%
PCWD	81%	19%	2%	91%	96%
Overall	69%	58%	7%	61%	89%

* Includes unvalidated HCRTI data for Years 1–3. It is likely that some participants were double-counted, and there may have been individuals counted as enrolled that never fully enrolled for courses. As such, Year 1–3 HCRTI data will only be used for enrollment and demographic data. Year 1-3 data will not be used in subsequent outcome tables. Instead, HCRTI/HTI data will reflect only those active in 2007 and 2008.

Participants generally fit the targeted demographic profile: low-income, low-skilled, Boston residents. The majority of participants were Boston residents although a smaller proportion of incumbent workers were from Boston. This is a natural occurrence since Boston-based employers tend to draw their employees from a broader region.

The majority of participants had no postsecondary education and roughly one in five did not have a high school degree. For more than half of participants, English was not their first language although that percentage varied from a high of 88 percent for BSCPP to a

low of 19 percent for PCWD’s pre-employment participants. While a significant portion of participants served were low-income, the proportion of extremely low-income varied for incumbent versus pre-employment participants. Since the majority of pre-employment participants were unemployed at enrollment, it is not surprising that 89 percent had household income of less than \$25,000 a year. Incumbent workers certainly earned more than their pre-employment counterparts, but 37 percent still had a household income below \$25,000.

Exhibit 3: Characteristics of Incumbent Participants at Enrollment					
	Percent Boston Residents	Percent Primary Language Not English	Percent Less Than High School Education	Percent Completed High School Only	Percent Annual Household Income Under \$25,000
BSCPP	43%	88%	46%	34%	D/U*
HCC	10%	52%	38%	47%	47%
HCRTI/HTI**	58%	40%	19%	35%	47%
PACE***	44%	78%	11%	67%	80%
PCWD	59%	49%	6%	80%	25%
Overall	51%	52%	22%	49%	37%

* BSCPP did not collect household income information because the traditional definition of a "household" did not hold for many of its participants. Participants frequently live in households with multiple unrelated adults and support dependents who remain in country of origin.

** Includes unvalidated HCRTI data for Years 1– 3. It is likely that some participants were double-counted, and there may have been individuals counted as enrolled that never fully enrolled for courses. As such, Year 1–3 HCRTI data will only be used for enrollment and demographic data. Year 1-3 data will not be used in subsequent outcome tables. Instead, HCRTI/HTI data will reflect only those active in 2007 and 2008.

*** PACE’s small number of incumbent participants

Pre-employment Outcomes

Over the five years, 87 percent of pre-employment participants graduated from their training programs. Graduation rates varied from a high of 93 percent in the Hospitality Training Program at HCC to a low of 74 percent in the automotive program at PACE. The percentage of graduates that was placed within the targeted sector was lower than the graduation rate.

While overall the percentage placed was 78 percent, that varied from a high of 89 percent at PCWD to a low of 52 percent at PACE. Low placement rates at PACE and HCRTI/HTI were caused by participant barriers to placement (e.g., CORIs, family issues, medical problems)

and low skill levels that did not meet employer standards. Among those placed, average starting wages varied from a low of \$10.26 to a high of \$13.19 depending on the year, the partnership, and the industry.

Incumbent Outcomes

A significant majority of incumbent participants received at least one wage increase at some point during the five years of the Phase I SkillWorks Initiative. However, evaluators were not able to substantiate a relationship between the wage increases and the service intervention provided by the partnerships. In many cases, the wage increases represented a contractual commitment or a cost of living increase.

	Percent Graduated Pre-employment Program	Percent of Graduates Placed in Target Sector Jobs
HCC	93%	86%
HCRTI/HTI*	84%	69%
PACE	74%	52%
PCWD	91%	89%
Overall	87%	78%

* Due to data validation concerns, only HCRTI/HTI participants active in Year 4 were included. Year 5 was excluded because there was no pre-employment program in Year 5.

	Year 1 Cohort	Year 2 Cohort	Year 3 Cohort	Year 4 Cohort	Year 5 Cohort
HCC	\$10.54	\$11.31	\$11.97	\$12.35	\$13.03
HCRTI**	\$12.27	\$11.92	\$11.99	\$13.19	
PACE		\$10.26	\$10.63	\$11.19	\$11.15
PCWD	\$11.43	\$12.00	\$12.32		

*Hourly wage rates of individuals in tip-eligible positions were not included in the calculation of averages.

** Due to data validation concerns, only HCRTI/HTI participants active in Year 4 were included. Year 5 was excluded because there was no pre-employment program in Year 5.

	Number of Participants Receiving Wage Increase	Percent of Enrolled Incumbents
BSCPP	311	99.04%
HCC	99	53.51%
HCRTI/HTI**	147	59.27%
PACE	51	30.91%
PCWD	466	100.00%

*Note that this table includes all wage increases, not necessarily those that were the result of program training.

** Due to data validation concerns, only HCRTI/HTI participants active in Years 4 and 5 were included.

A more accurate measure of the outcomes for incumbent participants can be seen from an examination of promotion and educational outcomes. Approximately 200 incumbent participants received promotions as a result of the services provided. This actually translated into a fairly low percentage of those enrolled, approximately 14 percent. The rate of progress along educational pathways was also slow. While the efforts of the workforce partnerships resulted in 81 individuals entering college and 23 graduating from college, this represents less than 6 percent and 2 percent, respectively, of enrolled participants. Matriculation and graduation rates were higher in the healthcare-related partnerships where career advancement generally requires postsecondary degrees, unlike the other targeted sectors (hospitality, building services, or automotive repair). More than 220 participants enrolled in some sort of credentialed program such as the ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) exam preparation to coursework leading up to HVAC (heating, ventilating, and air conditioning) certification. By the end of Year 5, 67 participants had received an industry-recognized credential.



	Promotions	Percent of Enrolled Incumbents
BSCPP	18	5.8%
HCC	50	27.0%
HCRTI/HTI*	27	10.9%
PACE	9	5.5%
PCWD	93	20%
TOTAL	197	14.3%

* Due to data validation concerns, only HCRTI/HTI participants active in Years 4 and 5 were included.

	Number of Participants Who Have Realized Skill Enhancement Outcomes					
	BSCPP	HCC	HCRTI*	PACE	PCWD**	Total
Enrollment						
Entered College	1	3	29	8	40	81
Enrolled in Credentialed Program	38	7	0	155	23	223
Enrolled in Sector-Specific Training	30	4	2	0	0	36
Completion						
Graduated from College	0	0	12	0	11	23
Received Industry-Recognized Credential	10	3	0	49	5	67
Completed Sector-Specific Training	29	3	0	0	0	32

* Due to data validation concerns, only HCRTI/HTI participants active in Year 4 and 5 were included.

** Totals for PCWD only reflect accomplishments through the end of Year 3. Though a survey was completed in December 2007 by current employees, there was no way for evaluation team to identify participants in order to avoid duplicate reporting from previous years.

Employer Outcomes

SkillWorks' goal was to engage a total of 35 employers during Phase I. The five initial partnerships only worked with a total of 23 employers. The sixth partnership, the Community Health Worker Initiative, which is not included in this report, engaged an additional 11 employers. Employers were generally satisfied with their participation in SkillWorks workforce partnerships, although few could document specific business improvements as a result. Employers involved in pre-employment programs, particularly at PCWD and HCC, reported that program graduates were preferred hires, often bringing superior attitude and industry knowledge. Employers were more hesitant to link these results to a reduction in shortages for key positions. PACE employers only hired about half of the PACE graduates, but they routinely interviewed PACE graduates and felt that PACE did increase the pool of applicants for automotive technician positions. Among PACE graduates who were hired, employers were able to document an improved one-year retention rate over new employees that had not completed the PACE training. Employers hiring HCC pre-employment graduates noted improved rates of retention as well. SkillWorks hires represented a small proportion of most employers' overall recruitment. Given the scale of SkillWorks pre-employment programs, it is reasonable to assume that cost benefits related to improved retention led to a minimal impact on the overall economic competitiveness of partner employers.

The clearest benefit to employers resulting from their involvement in SkillWorks incumbent worker training programs was the improved English

skills seen among participants. HCC, BSCPP, and HCRTI/HTI all focused on ESOL services and employers at each of these partnerships recognized increases in English proficiency as a result, although some employers did note that the pace of progress was slower than expected or desired. Several employers across partnerships noted that the English training improved participants' confidence and self-esteem, which appears to have made them more productive as a result. Tangible results from the increased language capability include improved customer service, increased interaction with vendors, and, in some cases, the ability to train other employees. Given the relatively low rate of promotions, it does not appear these enhanced communication skills alone routinely prepared participants for new, more skilled positions. Hence, it is not surprising that employers did not mention reduced shortages in key occupations as a result of the training.

System Change Outcomes

To better understand how the system has changed during Phase I of SkillWorks and to assess the role of SkillWorks in any of these changes, interviews were conducted with SkillWorks funders, public and nonprofit workforce development policymakers and practitioners, and with a large number of the partners involved in the funded partnerships. In addition, project partners were surveyed about their perceptions of changes in the system and in the culture of their own organizations and an online survey of workforce development practitioners in Boston was completed. These methods led to some conclusions about broad "perceptions"

about the types of system change outcomes that have occurred as a result of SkillWorks activities. Three types of system changes were assessed: public policy changes, increased capacity of workforce service providers, and the broader engagement of employers in workforce development.

Public Policy

Over the five years of funding, the Workforce Solutions Group, the public policy grantee, was actively involved in building a statewide constituency with an interest in improving the workforce development system; engaging in lobbying and advocacy for increased state funding for workforce development; authoring and lobbying for legislation that advances the goals and principles of SkillWorks; and providing assistance and oversight related to the implementation of public policies that were established as a result of its lobbying and legislative activities. In addition to the work of the WSG, the SkillWorks funders and SkillWorks director also were involved in public policy issues, sponsoring policy forums, and participating in statewide task forces and subcommittees related to workforce development policy.

Results from the survey and interviews of Phase I partners, funders, and other workforce development practitioners and stakeholders found the following outcomes associated with this public policy investment:

- ❖ **More funding for the workforce system:** SkillWorks was largely responsible for the increase in funding for workforce development over the past five years. Through the Stimulus Bill of 2004 and the Workforce Solutions Act of 2006,

there were \$24 million in additional resources allocated to workforce development in the state. In addition, through the implementation of the Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) Program, there has been increased federal funding coming into the state.

- ❖ **Raising awareness and building a constituency for workforce development:** The work of WSG was key to increasing the visibility of the workforce development issue for state policymakers. The building of a stronger statewide constituency and growing awareness of the importance of workforce development could lead to more sustainable increases in state funding for workforce development in the future as well as policy changes that conform to the SkillWorks goals.
- ❖ **Institutionalizing the sector career pathways model through the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund:** The continuing effort to further institutionalize sector workforce partnerships in the state through the WCTF was one of the important “system change” outcomes associated with Phase I of SkillWorks.²

² It is important to note that in 2009, due to the state fiscal crisis, many of the funding and policy gains achieved through SkillWorks are being threatened, including continued support for the WCTF. However, the governor and his administration, as well as some key members of the legislature, have continued to demonstrate strong support for the WCTF.



Capacity of Workforce Development Service Providers

The interviews and surveys provided evidence of some system changes in how workforce services are delivered in Boston:

- ❖ **“Culture” change in service providers participating in the partnerships:** Through their participation in the partnerships, a number of the service providers developed increased capacity and a new approach to workforce development that they are now able to apply to their other workforce development activities. In this way, some of the principles of SkillWorks are being more broadly diffused in the workforce development system in Boston. For example, Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) evolved from a contractor/vendor on a number of partnerships to an organization with a stronger orientation to meeting employer needs, to a new understanding of some of the challenges in meeting the needs of low-income residents, and to a general orientation towards becoming a workforce intermediary in the healthcare sector. Project Hope, which provided pre-employment screening and coaching for pre-employment participants in the PCWD project, has developed a number of new programs focusing on pipelines for low-income residents into healthcare careers and has gained a greater understanding of how to work with an employer. Voice and Future Fund (VFF), the nonprofit educational arm of the SEIU Local 615 union, has made a number of changes in its approach to ESOL services for its members. Finally, the International Institute of

Boston (IIB) developed a refined understanding of how to manage the logistics of running programs at employer locations and a new appreciation of the importance of using data to improve performance.

- ❖ **Incorporation of SkillWorks approach more broadly amongst workforce development practitioners in Boston:** Beyond the SkillWorks Phase I partnerships, the visibility of SkillWorks, as well as the application process itself, led to an increased awareness of many of the principles that have guided SkillWorks. The SkillWorks approach was broadly shared through capacity building activities. While primarily focused on the needs of the partnerships, an intentional effort was made to open capacity building training to a wider array of organizations. SkillWorks and the Commonwealth Workforce Coalition (CWC) co-sponsored a number of trainings and SkillWorks opened some of the group workshops to WCTF and City of Boston/Neighborhood Jobs Trust grantees. In particular, providers reported that they had an increased understanding of the workforce needs of both employers and low-skilled individuals. There has also been a more collaborative environment amongst those involved in providing workforce development services.

Employer Engagement in Workforce Development

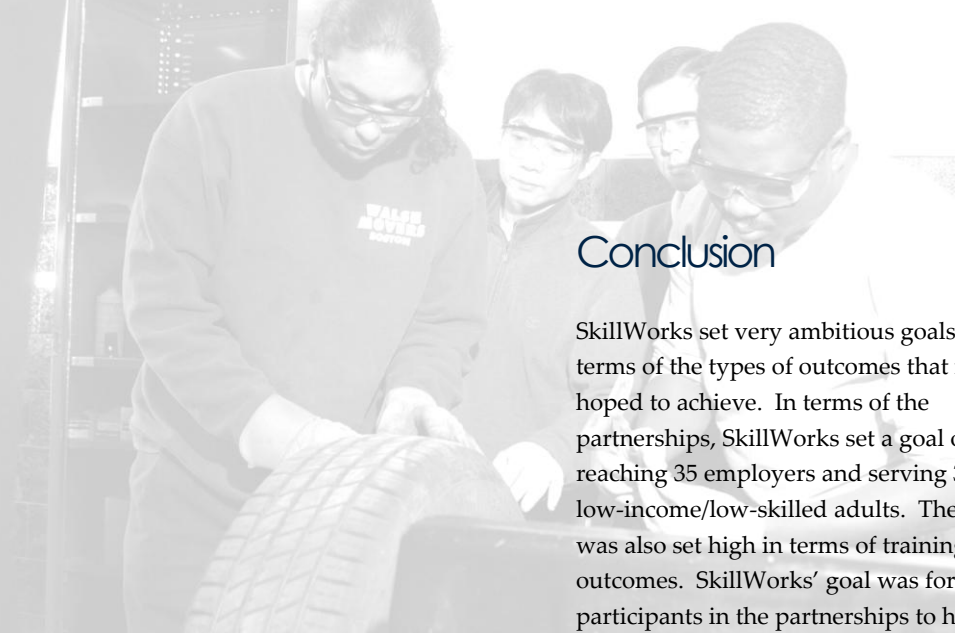
SkillWorks' system change agenda included the expectation that SkillWorks would "reach scale" in part by having employer partners fully embrace the model and change their overall approach to workforce development for their lower-skilled employees. This, in turn, would lead to wider adoption of SkillWorks-related goals by other employers in the sector. There is evidence that participation in SkillWorks did lead to some changes in the approach to workforce development amongst some participating employers, as well as some broader outcomes in the sectors.

- ❖ **Creation of a joint union-management training fund in the building services industry:** In contract negotiations completed in 2007, commercial employers agreed to fund a joint union-management training program supported by an hourly contribution that will provide ongoing support for educational activities of building services employees. BSCPP built support for the fund by serving as a pilot, which demonstrated the value of providing access to education and skills development for immigrant workers with limited English.
- ❖ **Individual employer changes in hospitality and automotive projects:** Hilton properties, which participated with HCC, implemented substantial changes in its work benefits and policies including expanding tuition reimbursement policies and allowing new employees to participate in training activities 90 days after hire. Involvement in PACE also brought attention to employee language

barriers and has led some of the employers to increase their commitments to tutoring and ESOL courses.

- ❖ **Diffusion of workforce development activity in acute care hospitals in Boston:** Two of the SkillWorks initiatives involved partnerships with hospitals in Boston. While neither project was sustained in the same form following the completion of Phase I, the learning associated with the efforts has transformed the overall approach to workforce development in healthcare in Boston. In the case of Partners HealthCare, workforce development has become a more integrated component of its human resource system. Both Brigham and Women's Hospital and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center have hired directors of workforce development and have developed their own internal coaching capacity. Both Dana Farber Cancer Institute and Children's Hospital, both participants in HCTRI, have also increased their staffing capacity related to workforce development. Moreover, other hospitals in the city have begun to participate in a wide range of workforce development activities.

There is little evidence of system change that occurred with employers outside of those that either participated directly in the SkillWorks partnerships or were in sectors targeted by the SkillWorks partnerships. Efforts by WSG to more broadly engage employers in workforce development policy advocacy did not meet with much success, and little has been done to diffuse the learnings of SkillWorks more broadly in the employer community.



Conclusion

SkillWorks set very ambitious goals in terms of the types of outcomes that it hoped to achieve. In terms of the partnerships, SkillWorks set a goal of reaching 35 employers and serving 3,000 low-income/low-skilled adults. The bar was also set high in terms of training outcomes. SkillWorks' goal was for participants in the partnerships to have achieved, or to at least be on the pathway to achieving, a family wage job over the five years of funding. Beyond the direct participant outcomes, SkillWorks also hoped that its investments would lead to improved outcomes for a broader set of low-income individuals and businesses through changes in public workforce policy, enhancements in the capacity and approach to providing workforce development services amongst nonprofit organizations, and recognition amongst a wider group of employers about the benefits of investing in their lower-skilled workforce.

SkillWorks came very close to meeting its goals in terms of the individuals served, having served close to 2,900 individuals. In terms of the numbers of employers involved, the initial five partnerships involved a total of 23 employers, about two-thirds of what was anticipated.³ Overall, the analysis of the outcomes of the partnerships and the broader system changes achieved during the first five years of the Initiative found that the scale of impacts anticipated by SkillWorks—in terms of the numbers of low-income individuals making progress towards a family sustaining job—has not been achieved.

³ The inclusion of the sixth SkillWorks partnership, the CHW initiative, brings the total to 34 employers.

The partnerships have been successful in placing about 639 individuals in jobs; have played a potential role in helping at least 200 individuals achieve promotions; and have helped about 120 individuals complete college, an industry recognized credential, or sector specific training. However, overall, the evaluation found that it takes a much longer time than anticipated for very low-skilled individuals to achieve either the skills, credentials, or degrees needed to make a significant advance in their career, taking them from low-wage employment to employment that pays a family wage.

To date, sector workforce partnerships remain “boutique” projects within the overall workforce system. The vast majority of employers in Boston have not been touched by the activities of SkillWorks. And, while efforts by SkillWorks have led to an overall increase in funding for workforce development, these gains have been offset by difficulties caused by the current fiscal environment. On the other hand, workforce partnerships involving employers have become much more common in Massachusetts, with over 30 such projects being funded through the WCTF. In addition, there are numerous efforts to make new state economic development and workforce development funding more responsive to employer needs.

Although some of SkillWorks' more ambitious goals with regard to the scale of participant and employer impact have not been met, there is evidence of positive movement. Specific areas of change attributable to the activities of SkillWorks include:

- ❖ *Institutionalization of WCTF and sector-based career partnerships in the Commonwealth.* Establishing sector-based partnerships to serve the workforce needs of low-income adults and employers has become much more widespread and has gained increased credibility amongst policymakers and practitioners over the past five years.
- ❖ *Culture changes in individual employer partners.* Many of the employers who have been involved in the workforce partnerships have learned from this experience and have made some changes in their approach to career advancement for their employees.
- ❖ *Achieving some level of scale in three targeted sectors.* Beyond the individual employers, the efforts of SkillWorks have contributed to some broader changes in how the healthcare sector in Boston is approaching workforce development, both in terms of new hires and incumbent workers. In addition, the creation of the joint union-management training fund in the building services industry is a significant system change in that sector that will likely greatly increase the scale of workforce development-related training in that sector.
- ❖ *Increased adoption of a dual customer approach on the part of workforce development providers.* Within the workforce system there has been an increased awareness of the importance of serving the needs of employers, as well as an increased capacity to develop education and training programs that meet the needs of employers.
- ❖ *More alignment between public and private funders with potential to create increased sustainability and scale over time.* In addition to the direct impacts that SkillWorks has had on various elements of the workforce development system, the Initiative has had some potentially longer-term outcomes associated with the new relationships that have been built amongst funders. Private philanthropy now has a more grounded understanding of the workforce development systems and, subsequently, a more realistic and pragmatic approach to addressing the workforce development challenges of the low-income, low-skilled constituency. In addition, the flexible funding and collaborative funding model associated with the SkillWorks Funders Group has helped to create a workforce system funded and supported by a broader coalition of funders including the state. Having state and city agencies, as well as local and private foundations, talking on the same page about the importance of workforce development is a potentially significant long-term outcome.

While it is too early to assess the full long-term outcomes associated with SkillWorks, its sustainability—through the successful launching of Phase II—and the impact that participation is having on the activities of the individual funders is in itself a system change outcome with strong potential longer-term outcomes. As the SkillWorks funders sought to continue their investment, they reflected upon the outcomes of Phase I and refined their approach in order to achieve greater impact through their investments in Phase II. Amongst the learnings from Phase I that guided the Phase II design were:

1. It takes a much longer time than anticipated for a low-income/low-skilled individual to make significant progress towards a family wage job.
2. Sustaining engagement by employers is challenging and requires high quality and consistent leadership and management by a strong lead organization.
3. In order to measure with any reliability the outcomes of the partnerships, increased investment in capacity is needed in tracking the progress of participants along a skill or career pathway.
4. It is important that the thinking about “system change” dig deeper into the specific changes that would need to take place at all levels of the

system in order to truly provide a “continuum of services” to workers and employers.

5. In order to achieve system change, a more strategic approach is needed to the interactions and relationships of the public policy component of the Initiative, the work of the funders, and the workforce partnerships.
6. It is important to balance efforts focused on increasing public resources for workforce development with a more specific policy agenda that addresses both legislative and administrative changes.
7. A more deliberate focus on disseminating the learnings of the project in the workforce development field and employer community is needed if the Initiative is to achieve scale beyond the participants in the partnerships.
8. Addressing the effectiveness of community colleges and other postsecondary educational institutions in terms of reaching and serving low-income, lower-skilled adults needs to be part of the overall SkillWorks strategic approach.

SEEING OPPORTUNITIES. CREATING SOLUTIONS.

SkillWorks, a public-private partnership, is addressing the needs of employers for more skilled workers and of workers for more and better access to jobs that pay a family-supporting wage.

SkillWorks Phase I Funders:

- **The Annie E. Casey Foundation**
- **Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund and the Frank W. and Carl S. Adams Memorial Fund, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee**
- **Boston 2004**
- **The Boston Foundation**
- **City of Boston's Neighborhood Jobs Trust**
- **The Clowes Fund**
- **Commonwealth of Massachusetts**
- **The Hyams Foundation**
- **The Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust**
- **The John Merck Fund**
- **The Paul and Phyllis Fireman Foundation**
- **The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**
- **The Rockefeller Foundation**
- **State Street Foundation**
- **The William Randolph Hearst Foundation**
- **United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley**

This report was made possible by SkillWorks' funders. The authors thank them for their support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented are the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of these funders.