



**Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP/BIG STEP)  
Quarterly Narrative Report: November 1, 2012 to January 31, 2013  
WRTP/BIG STEP-Milwaukee County Ready To Work Partnership**

**OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND**

The **WRTP/BIG STEP** is an innovative and nationally recognized workforce development intermediary. A not for profit agency, **WRTP/BIG STEP** has developed comprehensive systems to align the needs of unemployed and underserved community residents seeking family supporting careers. As an intermediary, **WRTP/BIGSTEP** is an integrated funding model leveraging public and private investments and partnerships in meeting the needs of the economy and connecting people with careers.

By working with industries to close the skills gap in workforce development, **WRTP/BIG STEP's Industry led, Worker Centered and Community Focused** approach substantially improves the economic strength of the entire Milwaukee community. As an industry led organization, **WRTP/BIG STEP** works with industry to develop training and employment programs to connect Milwaukee County residents with employment and training opportunities in the local construction and manufacturing industries, and emerging sectors of the economy. Labor market data and recent news highlight the need to develop a skilled and qualified workforce in a coordinated manner.

**WRTP/BIG STEP** is a “high road” approach to put real people on real family supporting career pathways by facilitating recruitment, training, direct hire, placement and retention services for Milwaukee County Residents. Complimentary to traditional “jobs programs”, **WRTP/BIG STEP** has developed a flexible and industry responsive model that identifies construction and manufacturing workforce needs first, and then develops strategies and programs to connect Milwaukee County residents with those jobs. This ensures that the training we provide our participants prepares them for placement in pre-targeted jobs upon successful completion of the programs. Our participants are placed in employment through industry designed and credentialed on the job training programs where they learn and earn as they begin their new career pathways.

**PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

The Ready To Work program was launched in August of 2012 with the goal of connecting Milwaukee County residents to career pathways and employment. This narrative report covers Quarter Two (Q2) of the partnership. The project is designed to engage industry and develop education and training programs and partnerships that lead to careers and meet the needs of public and private sector employers and emerging needs within Milwaukee County. The Narrative Report is complimentary to Data & Fiscal Reporting providing to Milwaukee County, and highlights work completed in the three

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areas of the project design – working with industry and Milwaukee County to identify employment opportunities, expanding and enhancing community workforce partnerships, and implementing effective workforce strategies to connect individuals with education, training, and employment.

## **INDUSTRY & MILWAUKEE COUNTY PARTNERSHIP**

### **Construction Program Highlights**

In January, we doubled the numbers of participants entering our tutoring programs for those interested in careers in the construction and building trades. With major road building, deconstruction, demolition, and building projects planned within the county in the next three years, Milwaukee County’s Ready to Work program in conjunction with **WRTP/BIG STEP** is well positioned and at the table during the planning phases to ensure that these major projects are creating opportunities for Milwaukee County residents to begin preparing for apprenticeship in the building trades immediately.

On Friday January 25, 2013, **WRTP/BIGSTEP**, in conjunction with our Milwaukee County Ready to Work partnership, the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council, the Construction Advisory Board, local construction contractors and the Association of General Contractors, the State of Wisconsin Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards, and over a dozen building and construction trades, hosted the 2013 Apprenticeship Awareness Fair. The Fair was targeted to connect individuals interested in the building and construction trades with representatives from the various trades and contractors. Over 130 individuals gathered information and registered for the **WRTP/BIGSTEP** construction apprenticeship tutoring and career pathway preparation assistance.



**Dan Large, Training Director from International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), explains the apprenticeship process to participants interested in entering the electrical trade at the WRTP/BIG STEP Apprenticeship Awareness Fair, January 25th.**

With several major building and construction projects scheduled for 2013 through 2015, the event represents the first of several efforts to ensure Milwaukee County residents are able to access new careers and employment opportunities in the construction industry. As the construction industry begins to recover, the Ready to Work effort will provide individuals with the training and preparation needed to access apprenticeship and other employment opportunities throughout the industry.

Our **WRTP/BIG STEP** Construction program met regularly with the Joint Apprenticeship Committees and the Construction Labor Management Council to assess the construction needs of the community at large and identify trends in construction employment in the next year. This allows **WRTP/BIG STEP** to target its apprenticeship training programs to fields in the construction trades that will be hiring in the near future. Through these partnerships in Q2, we have identified several trades actively recruiting for new apprentices. Our increased tutoring is in direct response to the projected rise in demand from industry as we develop the pipeline for these family supporting careers.

In addition to our work in identifying private workforce development needs through our work with employers and labor, **WRTP/BIG STEP** has also begun the process of identifying public workforce needs under the Ready to Work program. In the first quarter, **WRTP/BIG STEP** met with the Milwaukee County Department of Public Works, the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services and the Milwaukee County Parks Department to preliminarily assess their department workforce development needs, establish a communication channel, and begin a working relationship with the heads of those departments for future workforce training partnerships. The results of these meetings in the second quarter are plans in development to train all 800+ of Milwaukee's incoming seasonal workforce in job readiness, essential job skills, and Milwaukee County Workforce Rules, Regulations and Requirements. These trainings are designed to ensure that the county's seasonal workforce is well prepared to work, new entrants are aware of county work requirements, that the transition into specific jobs is done with a base knowledge of the working environment, and that Milwaukee County residents are well prepared to transition to work.

### **Manufacturing Program Highlights**

Our partnerships with local industry employers including Harley Davidson, OilGear, and Masterson continue to grow under the Ready to Work partnership. In partnership with MATC, WCTC, industry, and our Manufacturing Advisory Council, two manufacturing classes trained during the second quarter including a class sponsored by GE Energy of 18 people and another class of 17 sponsored by HB Performance Systems that began in December 2012. Many of the people trained in these specialized industry driven programs make up the placements noted in January and February. We are anticipating continued strong demand in Manufacturing through the spring, and are ramping up our training programs with more frequent Entry Level Manufacturing Skills (ELMS) trainings that will include MSSC-Green Production Module training and certification in our Center of Excellence.

Our outreach continues to local industry employers including Harley Davidson, OilGear, and Masterson under the Ready to Work partnership. Placement of our manufacturing trainees has been a top priority. The results of the manufacturing needs assessments of 300 employers in Wisconsin completed in the second quarter shows that manufacturing demand is on a steep rise. As a result of the survey, **WRTP/BIG STEP** is significantly increasing ELMS trainings with MSSC-Green Production Module to meet the anticipated rise in demand.

Mr. Edmund Northern was in post correctional transitional living when he attended a WRTP/BIG STEP manufacturing orientation on 12/5/2012. Our intake staff identified that Mr. Northern had a pressing issue, find a job or enter a training program by December 31, 2012 or he would be homeless. Either

would buy him another month of housing and stability. Mr. Northern impressed the interviewers from the company and after our discussions with HB, the company decided to give him a chance. Mr. Northern excelled in Entry Level Manufacturing Skills training both in the classroom at **WRTP/BIG STEP**, and in On The Job (OJT) trainings held at HB's plant. He began working for HB on 1/7/2013 and graduated from **WRTP/BIG STEP's** programming on 01/18/2013. In five weeks, he went from potential homelessness to a career pathway and personal stability. HB hired 16 of the 17 trainees and also hired trainees from other training programs through **WRTP/BIG STEP** as a result of this success.



Picture of Mr. Edmund Northern and other graduates at the HB Performance Systems graduation on January 18, 2013.

## **COMMUNITY WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP**

**WRTP/BIG STEP** facilitates monthly Community Workforce Partnership meetings held in December 2012 and January 2013. Community based organizations attending these meetings include the Northcott Neighborhood House, the Milwaukee Community Service Corps, the Milwaukee Christian Center, Legal Action of Milwaukee, Wisconsin Community Services, Interfaith Coalition of Milwaukee, Center for Self Sufficiency and the Wisconsin Seasonal Workforce Coalition. The Community Workforce Partnership's goals are to coordinate, expand and enhance, **WRTP/BIG STEP's** community outreach efforts by coordinating our programming with existing community based activities. By coordinating referrals between agencies to ensure that underprivileged community residents find our programs, are prepared to enter them and have access to the full breath of community support available we ensure they are successful while training and transitioning into their new career pathways.

In Q2, we expanded the Resource Information Sessions to include CWP partners from several agencies who work one on one with participants to identify barriers to employment they are facing and enroll them onsite into community based programs to remove those barriers. Participants are encouraged to return to **WRTP/BIG STEP** once they are career ready. **WRTP/BIG STEP** is currently running these sessions twice monthly and anticipates some results of it by Quarter 5 of the partnership. Since the program began in August 2012 under the Ready to Work partnership, 71 people have attended an RIS, 17% of them did not have the degree or certificate required to enter our programs and 81% of them did not have a valid and current WI State Driver's License. We are continuing to build the CWP through outreach that includes regular emails to over 80 community groups we work with regularly on coordination of services for our participants.

## **CAREER PATHWAYS & PLACEMENT ACTIVITIES**

The **WRTP/BIG STEP-Milwaukee County Ready to Work Partnership** is off to a fast start. Under the program we have doubled the number of General Information Sessions (GIS), implemented bi-monthly Resource Information Sessions (RIS) sessions and related career pathway workshops, and ramped up

significant field work within our targeted employment sectors. In the second quarter according to our third party verified reports, we saw 340 individuals come through the COE eligible for services through the R2W program, we placed 106 individuals into a career pathways program; began to identify the future private and public industry workforce development needs; addressed the needs of industry partners to begin to close the skills gap that hampers the progress of their businesses; expanded and are seeing the results of our new forum for community based organizations to coordinate referral and support services to ensure the success of the participants as they transition to family supporting careers and out of poverty; and finally our most important accomplishment is that we have placed 31 individuals in employment that will lift their families out of poverty and provide them with the economic stability to strengthen the economic success of Milwaukee County. The following list of construction and manufacturing companies hired **WRTP/BIG STEP** participants in Q2:

Asig	Hartland Lab Products	Regency Janitorial Service
Butters-Fetting Company	Heating & Cooling Solutions	Rock Room Shoes
C & D Technologies	HB Performance Systems	Rodney's General Repair
Current Electric Co.	Nelco Electric	Uihlein Electric Co., Inc
Eckert Door	Oilgear	Wellenstein & Sons, Inc.
Harley Davidson	Onsite Staffing	White Construction

The initial successes of Milwaukee County Ready to Work in the early phase of the program are due to **WRTP/BIG STEP's** well developed formula. The Milwaukee County Ready to Work partnership enables us to identify and plan for a major scaling of programming to meet the industry demands forecasted in manufacturing and construction. **WRTP/BIG STEP** is on track to meet and exceed the goals of the program to serve 1,000 new participants and place 500 Milwaukee County residents in family supporting careers.