



Background

The United States is in the midst of a demographic metamorphosis. Currently, 22.6 percent of the U.S. population is over the age of 55. The graying of America will be reflected in its workforce: between 2006 and 2016, the number of workers 55 and over is projected to increase by 36.5 percent, a significant jump when compared to younger populations. The local workforce investment system is America's primary means of delivering publicly-funded employment and training services to workers and businesses. Because of demographic changes, the number of older workers who desire and need its services is expected to rise dramatically. Similarly, due to possible labor shortages in some regions and high-growth industries, many businesses will seek out qualified, trained older workers as a labor pool.

Aging Worker Initiative Overview

The Aging Worker Initiative (AWI) seeks to expand the workforce investment system's understanding about how to best serve the older worker population and develop models to share with all local workforce investment areas. Its ultimate goal is to provide better, more expansive services to older Americans for many years to come. Grants awarded under the AWI focus on providing training and related services for individuals age 55 and older that result in employment and advancement opportunities in high-growth sectors. The proposed strategies take place in the context of regional talent development efforts, and each is implemented by a strategic regional partnership.

Ten awards of approximately \$1 million each were made to organizations in Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin (complete list on page 2). The grants target older individuals who have been laid off and are seeking re-employment; who need to stay in the workforce beyond the traditional retirement age, but need training to increase their skills; and who face other barriers to employment such as disabilities or low levels of English proficiency. Industries that grantees have chosen to focus on include: Healthcare, Energy, Advanced Manufacturing, Specialized Construction/Skilled Labor, Green Construction, Engineering, Architecture, Transportation, Information Technology, Accounting and Financial Services, and Administrative Support Services.

AWI Partners

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) has launched a unique public-private partnership for this effort, with The Atlantic Philanthropies investing an additional \$3.6 million for technical assistance to grant winners. The Atlantic Philanthropies have funded the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and the Council on Competitiveness (CoC) to provide this assistance to grantees and document and disseminate effective strategies to promote career opportunities for older workers. CAEL



and CoC will provide data and technical assistance options, ranging from plan development to implementation. Assistance will be provided at no cost to grantees. Additionally, they will facilitate annual project-wide learning institutes to share ideas, challenges, progress, and strategies nationally.

AWI Evaluation

ETA has funded Social Policy Research Associates (SPRA) and Mathematica Policy Research (MPR) to conduct a process evaluation, which will provide detailed information on how grants were used and identify key issues for future policy, administrative guidance, and technical assistance. The SPRA/MPR team will report on topics such as the types of training and services offered; number of older workers served; types of employers involved; integration with regional economic development; relationships among partnering organizations; measurement systems; and the sustainability of demonstration activities after grants expire.

Grantees

Award-Winning Organization	Location
Tecumseh Area Partnership, Inc.	Indiana
Quad Area Community Action Agency, Inc.	Louisiana
Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc.	Maine
Baltimore Country Office of Workforce Development	Maryland
Macomb/St. Clair Workforce Development Board, Inc.	Michigan
South Central Workforce Investment Board	Pennsylvania
Goodwill Industries of Houston, Inc.	Texas
Vermont Associates for Training and Development, Inc.	Vermont
Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council	Washington
Fox Valley Workforce Development Board	Wisconsin

Aging Worker Initiative: Strategies for Regional Talent Development

Tecumseh Area Partnership

Grantee: Tecumseh Area Partnership (Indiana)

Industry Focus: Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing, Information Technology, and Transportation

Location of Grant Activities: West Central Indiana

Key Partners: Indiana Department of Workforce Development; West Central Indiana Region 4 Workforce Board; Purdue University; Ivy Tech Community College; Matthew Warren Industries; Grow Direct, Inc.; Experience Works; National Able Network; Windows of Opportunity for Women; JobWorks, Inc.; AARP Indiana State Office; Area 4 Agency on Aging; Community Action Program of Western Indiana.

Grant Amount: \$1,000,000

Leveraged Funds: \$600,000

Challenge: Nearly 25 percent of the population in the West Central Indiana region is over the age of 55. The region faces challenges in the economic downturn as major manufacturing and transportation companies have reduced their workforces, and potential retirements of aging workers pose difficulties for employers in other economic sectors. Older workers in the region lack an understanding of essential technology skills for employability. Yet they also lack awareness of the services offered by the public workforce system, and are hesitant to take advantage of the available education and training programs which would help them overcome these and other barriers to employment.

Addressing the Challenge: This project will establish an Older Worker Skills Network within the WorkOne system (Indiana's One Stop Career Center system). The network will address the workforce challenges faced by both older workers and employers. A Career Transition Hub will be established within regional WorkOne Centers to provide "one-stop" information, services, counseling and training for older workers. Tools such as the WorkKeys assessment and the Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotient will be used to identify transferable skills and expand older workers' career pathways. Education partners will provide training for participants to earn credentials such as the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council Certification and the International Business Training Association Certification. Employers can participate in the Managing Your Mature Workforce seminars that will be conducted across the region.

Projected Outcomes:

- 300 older workers will participate in grant-related activities.
- 90 older workers will begin education/training activities.
- 70 older workers will complete education/training activities.
- 60 older workers will receive a degree/certificate.
- 66 WorkOne staff will receive training.
- 12 training seminars will be available for employers.
- 60 older workers will participate in peer support and network groups.
- 30 older workers will participate in internships.



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Quad Area Community Action Agency, Inc.



Grantee: Quad Area Community Action Agency, Inc. (Louisiana)

Industry Focus: Healthcare/Science, Construction/Skilled Labor, Energy, Transportation, Architecture/Engineering, and Financial and Administrative Office Support

Location of Grant Activities: Ascension, Livingston, East Feliciana, West Feliciana, St. Helena, Tangipahoa, and Washington Parishes in Louisiana

Key Partners: LWI20 Job Services; LWI20 Career Solutions; St. Amant Academy; Florida Parishes Louisiana Technical College; Ruth Cook Computer and Medical Training School; Turnaround Adult Education; Ferrara Fire; Gainey's Concrete; Sanderson Farms; King Barber Construction Company; Young Electrical and Air-Conditioning; Senior Community Service Employment Program; Foster Grandparents; Retired Senior Volunteer Program; District Attorneys Sam D'Aquila and Scott Perilloux; Parish Sheriff Department; Make-A-Start; Office of Mental Health; Office of Addictive Disorders; Harvest Family Church; Office of Elderly Protection; Frances Special Services, My Brother's Keeper; Daily Star; Channel 17.

Grant Amount: \$1,000,000

Leveraged Funds: \$321,000

Challenge: There is not currently a focused, organized, method of recruiting older workers in this region. Because of the impact of Hurricane Katrina, a mismatch exists between qualified labor supply and labor demands. Results from a local independent survey show that eighty-percent of older workers in this region need to increase their skills to keep pace with technology, but have limited access to training; eight-percent need flexible work arrangements due to health problems and disabilities; and ninety-percent lack the confidence to search for a new position.

Addressing the Challenge: The *SilverForce* project will create a talent development model that recognizes older workers as a valuable labor pool, and includes employment and training strategies to retain and/or connect them to high-growth, high-demand industries. The model will:

- Expand and increase skill-development opportunities for older workers in high-growth, high-demand industries;
- Cultivate career opportunities with employers providing flexible work arrangements;
- Increase support services for job search, placement and retention through case management;
- Increase microenterprise and microenterprise education opportunities;
- Advocate against discrimination of older adults in the workforce through public awareness and legal advice.

Projected Outcomes:

- 500 older workers will be served by the project annually with 300 completing education/training activities each year.
- 270 older workers who complete their education/training activities will enter employment annually.
- A *High-Growth Career Information Handbook* will be developed.
- Six applied learning and clinical experiences, internships, and simulations will be developed and implemented.



Aging Worker Initiative: Strategies for Regional Talent Development *Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc.*

Grantee: Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc. (Maine)

Industry Focus: Healthcare and Energy/Green Construction

Location of Grant Activities: Maine

Key Partners: Tri-County Workforce Investment Board (WIB); Central/Western Maine WIB; Local Area 1 Aroostook/Washington WIB; Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Elder Services; Maine Department of Education; Seasoned Workforce LLC; Goodwill Industries of Northern New England (Senior Community Service Employment Program-SCSEP grantee); National Able Network (SCSEP grantee); AARP (SCSEP grantee); University of Southern Maine-Muskie School of Public Service; Bonnie Staffing Center; Augusta Career Center; Kennebec Valley Community College (CC); Southern Maine CC; York County CC; Northern Maine CC; Eastern Maine CC; Maine Chambers of Commerce.

Grant Amount: \$1,000,000

Leveraged Funds: \$643,682

Challenge: Maine’s population, like our national population, is facing a significant demographic shift and aging rapidly. The state faces a severe workforce shortage with nearly a quarter of their workforce eligible to retire at age 65, and not enough younger workers to replace them. To combat this problem, assistance must be available to experienced older workers transitioning from full-time careers to part-time jobs, and employers must find ways to adjust to hiring entry-level older workers. These older workers will require alternative work arrangements and flexibility from employers, as well as specific skills training.

Addressing the Challenge: Through the development of a statewide education strategy, the *Seasoned Worker Opportunity Project* will promote strategies for connecting older workers to occupations critical to Maine’s economy and simultaneously educate employers about the value of older workers. The statewide education strategy will encourage older workers to remain on the job beyond the age at which they might retire, and will identify, recognize, and promote Maine employers whose practices match the needs of mature workers. The capacity of Maine’s Workforce Investment System will be expanded to connect older workers to employers by establishing Seasoned Worker Navigators in each local area, expanding the Seasoned Worker Forums and establishing pilot Service Network Access Points (SNAPs) in older worker-focused organizations. In addition, older workers will be offered education and training opportunities through work-readiness and short-term training programs.

Projected Outcomes:

- 200 older workers will begin education/training activities.
- 155 older workers will complete education/training activities and 153 will receive a degree/certificate.
- 126 older workers who complete education/training activities will enter employment, and 118 will enter training-related employment.
- Four Employer Educational Seminars will be conducted.
- 4,000 employers and job seekers will attend the Seasoned Workforce Forums.
- 1,920 older workers will be served by the Service Network Access Points.

Ageing Worker Initiative: Strategies for Regional Talent Development

Baltimore County Office of Workforce Development

Grantee: Baltimore County Office of Workforce Development (Maryland)

Industry Focus: Healthcare

Location of Grant Activities: Baltimore City and Baltimore County, Maryland

Key Partners: Baltimore County Workforce Development Council; Mayor's Office of Employment Development; Baltimore Workforce Investment Board; Governor's Workforce Investment Board; Baltimore County Department of Aging (SCSEP grantee); Baltimore City Commission of Aging and Retirement Education; Maryland AARP; Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare; Johns Hopkins Health System; University of Maryland Medical Center; Northwest Hospital; Maryland Hospital Association; Community College of Baltimore County; Baltimore City Community College; University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Grant Amount: \$967,005

Leveraged Funds: \$829,216

Challenge: A shortage of skilled workers is a pressing concern among healthcare employers, and vacancy rates for skilled positions are steadily increasing even though older workers could meet the industry's workforce demand. Older workers – many of whom are displaced or retirees attempting to return to work – face unique challenges as they seek employment, such as lack of computer/technological skills, gaps in employment history, and desire for flexible or part-time hours. In addition, One Stop Career Center professionals are not sufficiently trained to address barriers to employment among older workers, and regional employers are not developing comprehensive strategies to attract or retain older employees.

Addressing the Challenge: To address the region's high demand for skilled workers in healthcare, the *Maturity Works: Tapping Older Workers for High Growth Healthcare Careers* project will strengthen the pipeline of entry-level older workers into the industry; move lower-skill older workers up career ladders; and retain experienced technical and professional workers after retirement age. One- Stop Career Center capacity will be expanded to provide job readiness opportunities tailored to older adults' learning styles and to provide career guidance to older workers on employment and training opportunities in the healthcare industry. Participants in the project will receive training in four types of health occupations, as well as basic skills training in language and math targeted to the health field. In addition, a regional campaign that encourages employers to hire and retain older workers will be implemented.

Projected Outcomes:

- 312 older workers will begin education/training activities.
- 260 older workers will complete education/training activities and receive a degree/certificate.
- 249 older workers who complete education/training activities will enter training-related employment
- 20 workforce development professionals (Older Worker Specialists) will receive training on serving older workers.
- A self-paced instruction tool for the Older Worker Specialists will be developed.
- 500 employers will be educated through various employer engagement strategies.
- An employer outreach communication toolkit will be developed.



Ageing Worker Initiative: Strategies for Regional Talent Development

Macomb/St. Clair Workforce Development Board

Grantee: Macomb/St. Clair Workforce Development Board (Michigan)

Industry Focus: Demand occupations in multiple industries

Location of Grant Activities: Southeast Michigan

Key Partners: Detroit Workforce Development Department; Oakland County Michigan Works; Southeast Michigan Community Alliance; Livingston County Michigan Works; Washtenaw County Michigan Works; Macomb Community College; Macomb Small Business and Technology Development Center; Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce; CVS; Bank of America; AARP Foundation and AARP Michigan; Detroit Area Agency on Aging (SCSEP grantee); Operation Able; Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan; United Way of Southeast Michigan Senior Collaborative; Michigan Office of Services to the Aging; Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth.

Grant Amount: \$979,400

Leveraged Funds: \$10,840,900

Challenge: Unemployment rates in southeast Michigan are among the highest in the nation. There has been a continuing loss of high-wage jobs related to the auto and construction industries over the last decade, and the skill sets of many unemployed workers do not align with those in growing industries. Due to the state of the regional economy and the auto industry, older workers are experiencing job loss and forced retirements before they may be ready – or financially able – to leave the workforce. Unemployed older workers have specialized needs with regards to developing career pathways, identifying relevant and obtainable vocational training, and receiving guidance to develop their own businesses. However, at this time the One Stop Career Center system in the region does not provide special consideration or customized services to older workers.

Addressing the Challenge: This project establishes a system to help unemployed older workers navigate and take advantage of the workforce and training services available in their local areas. Older Worker Navigators will be trained and implemented in One Stop Career Centers throughout the region. Navigators will facilitate the process of career exploration, development of appropriate career ladders, selection of vocational training and/or basic skills remediation, as well as provide job search, assessment, and case management assistance to older workers. A local community college is developing a Credit for Prior Learning program that will give credit to older workers for their prior learning and experience and help them obtain a degree/credential in a shorter period of time. The project will leverage significant Workforce Investment Act funds and the Michigan No Worker Left Behind program to provide training in demand occupations to project participants.

Projected Outcomes:

- 2,823 older workers will receive services from Older Worker Navigators.
- 1,397 older workers will begin education/training activities.
- 1,117 older workers will complete education/training activities and receive a degree/certificate.
- 894 older workers who complete education/training activities will enter employment, and 760 will enter training-related employment.
- 30 workforce development professionals will receive Older Worker Navigator training.

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South Central Workforce Investment Board



Grantee: South Central Workforce Investment Board (Pennsylvania)

Industry Focus: Healthcare, Information Technology, and Advanced Manufacturing

Location of Grant Activities: South Central Pennsylvania

Key Partners: Harrisburg Area Community College; MANTEC-Industry Resource Center; Ben Franklin Technology Partnership; Health Care Industry Partnership; South Central Manufacturer's Association representing the Advanced Manufacturing Industry Partnership and their member companies; Technology Quest representing the Information Technology Industry Partnership and their member companies; Harrisburg Chamber of Commerce/Central Region Economic Development Corporation; York County Economic Development Corporation; Experience Works; AARP of Central Pennsylvania.

Grant Amount: \$971,200

Leveraged Funds: \$612,500

Challenge: Demographically, Pennsylvania is one of the "oldest" states in the U.S. Nearly one-third of the workforce in central Pennsylvania can be defined as older workers. A shortage of skilled workers exists in the information technology, advanced manufacturing, and healthcare industries of this region. These shortages could be addressed by recruiting and training older workers, but many of these potential employees lack understanding of today's technologies. At this time, the regional workforce system provides limited services, and no organized effort or specialized service is offered to support the thousands of seniors who are unemployed or interested in upgrading their professional and technological skills.

Addressing the Challenge: This project seeks to modify the current Talent Development System operating in south central Pennsylvania by capitalizing on existing industry partnerships to focus on the unique needs of older workers. The project will focus on the development of support systems for unemployed older workers, job-specific and other training for incumbent older workers, and progressive training for older workers interested in starting new businesses. It will also build the capacity of the regional workforce system by creating Older Worker Service Specialists and Business Liaisons at six One Stop/PA Career Link Centers. Industry partnerships will identify training needs, establish specific skill training courses, and determine the certifications and/or credentials to be issued to project participants.

Projected Outcomes:

- 318 older workers will begin education/training activities.
- 280 older workers will complete education/training activities.
- 259 older workers will receive a degree/certificate.
- 256 older workers will enter employment.
- *An Interactive Guide to Serving Older Workers* will be developed.
- *A Technology Skills* course for older workers to become computer literate will be developed.



Aging Worker Initiative: Strategies for Regional Talent Development

Goodwill Industries of Houston, Inc.



Grantee: Goodwill Industries of Houston, Inc. (Texas)

Industry Focus: Accounting and Financial Services, Healthcare, Computer Technology, and Specialized Construction

Location of Grant Activities: Texas Gulf Coast

Key Partners: Workforce Solutions (The Gulf Coast Workforce Investment Board); Houston Community College; Goodwill Houston Academy of Career Development; Burnett Staffing Services; Greater Houston Partnership; Houston Volunteer Lawyers' Program; Senior Citizen Bureau; Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE); Women Business Owners; Alliance for Multicultural Community Services.

Grant Amount: \$999,949

Leveraged Funds: \$110,970

Challenge: This project targets a 13-county area in Southeast Texas that is home to 5.7 million people, a million of whom are over the age of 55. Many of these individuals are seeking employment but need assistance to re-enter or transition within the job market. Those who have lost jobs they held for years need support and training as they learn new job skills and begin new careers. They also need an updated understanding of modern job search techniques. In addition, many older workers have not kept up with basic changes in technology, which presents a significant barrier to accessing the resources of the local workforce system and severely limits their career opportunities.

Addressing the Challenge: This project will demonstrate that broad-based training options and flexible schedules assist in promoting self-esteem and job retention for older workers. The project will utilize a case management approach to identify and eliminate barriers that keep older workers from reaching their employment goals, which will encourage a uniquely coordinated effort to provide comprehensive services to older workers. The program will offer training to older workers that fosters mastery of today's technologies; employability in high-growth jobs; understanding of opportunities for entrepreneurship; and self-esteem and confidence to excel in employment opportunities.

Projected Outcomes:

- 450 older workers will begin education/training activities.
- 375 older workers will complete education/training activities and receive a degree/certificate.
- 300 older workers who complete education/training activities will enter employment, and 157 will enter training-related employment.
- The Career Redevelopment for Experienced Workers curriculum will be developed and implemented.



Aging Worker Initiative: Strategies for Regional Talent Development

Vermont Associates for Training and Development, Inc.



Grantee: Vermont Associates for Training and Development, Inc. (Vermont)

Industry Focus: Information Technology, Finance and Administrative Support Services, and Healthcare

Location of Grant Activities: Vermont

Key Partners: Vermont Department of Labor; Agency of Commerce and Community Development; Vermont Business Roundtable; Vermont Country Store; Vermont Information Technology Center and Champlain College; KnowledgeWave Training; Vermont Association of Adult Technical Education Coordinators; Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living; AARP; The Windham Foundation.

Grant Amount: \$1,000,000

Leveraged Funds: \$25,304,610

Challenge: Vermont's population is the second-oldest in New England. The state is facing critical workforce challenges due to the impending retirement of the Baby Boom generation and an out-migration of college graduates. Employers are faced with challenges in recruiting, hiring, retaining, and training employees, as well as loss of institutional knowledge and experience when individuals retire. Furthermore, older workers in the region lack the skills to access web-based services and training and are unfamiliar with updated workplace communication tools, such as email, internet, and other fast-paced workplace models. The aging population calls for strategies to educate and train older workers to enable them to enter, re-enter, or remain in the workforce. Employers across all industries who understand the shifting demographics within the state will recognize the need to provide older workers with this essential training and view older workers as assets, not liabilities.

Addressing the Challenge: The *Vermont Older Worker Demonstration* will establish a statewide model coordinating "innovation assets": people, institutions, capital, and infrastructure. It will synchronize existing training resources and create new opportunities for older workers who are disadvantaged, unemployed, incumbent workers, and retired to increase their workforce participation and technology efficiency. In addition, the project will investigate current employer responses to the aging workforce, as well as develop new strategies to focus on the needs of employers and the opportunities presented by the aging workforce. The One Stop Career Center system will be enhanced to better serve older workers better the development of a statewide network of affiliate Career Centers called Mature Workers Resource Centers. Additionally, for older workers interested in starting their own business, entrepreneurial training will be offered through Champlain College BYOBIZ and other e-Commerce courses.

Projected Outcomes:

- 300 older workers will begin education/training activities.
- 285 older workers will complete education/training activities and 214 will receive a degree/certificate.
- 200 older workers who complete education/training activities will enter employment, and 180 will enter training-related employment.
- Four Statewide Network of Mature Workers Resource Centers will be established.



Ageing Worker Initiative: Strategies for Regional Talent Development

Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County

Grantee: Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (Washington)

Industry Focus: Healthcare, Information Technology, and Green Jobs

Location of Grant Activities: City of Seattle/King County and Snohomish County, Washington

Key Partners: Snohomish County Workforce Development Council; King County Work Training Program; King County Labor Council; Bellevue Community College; South Seattle Community College; Everett Community College; Edmonds Community College; Seattle Community College District; Shoreline Community College; Small Business Administration; Puget Sound Regional Council; enterpriseSeattle; Snohomish County Economic Development Commission; Health Work Force Institute; McKinstry Company; Microsoft Corporation; AARP Foundation; National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (SCSEP grantee); Seattle Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens (SCSEP grantee); Washington Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Services for the Blind.

Grant Amount: \$1,000,000

Leveraged Funds: \$2,990,395

Challenge: While the region is facing challenges due to the economic downturn, key regional industries – healthcare, information technology, and the emerging green jobs sector – are seeking a pipeline of skilled workers and hiring in specific occupations, even during the downturn. Older workers in the region lack access to high-quality, short-term occupational skills training customized to their needs. They are also unfamiliar with information and communication technologies widely employed in today's workplace. Furthermore, need exists for customized case management and support strategies that provide instruction and training as well as access points for older workers with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and ex-offender status.

Addressing the Challenge: To meet these challenges, the *Reinvesting in Older Workers* project will enable workforce partners to provide direct training and placement of older workers in order to close skill gaps and create new career pathways. This project is a regional expansion of the Mature Workers Alliance of Puget Sound and will target three disadvantaged populations of older workers: individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, and individuals with low-level English proficiency. The project's alignment with and customization of regional postsecondary training options will increase the number of access training points for older workers. Workshops and trainings in information and communication technology will be customized to the needs of older workers. Entrepreneurial training will help participants better understand their skills, marketability, and options for self-employment.

Projected Outcomes:

- 148 older workers will begin occupational education/training activities.
- 118 older workers will complete occupation education/training activities and receive a degree/certificate.
- 89 older workers who complete occupational education/training activities will enter employment, and 80 will enter training-related employment.
- 300 older workers will receive information and communications technology training.
- 112 older workers will receive entrepreneurial training.
- 90 older workers will receive limited English proficiency "bridge" training in green jobs.

Aging Worker Initiative: Strategies for Regional Talent Development

Fox Valley Workforce Development Board, Inc.



Grantee: Fox Valley Workforce Development Board, Inc. (Wisconsin)

Industry Focus: Healthcare, Telecommunications, Manufacturing

Location of Grant Activities: Southwest Wisconsin

Key Partners: Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board; Fox Valley Technical Colleges; Blackhawk Technical College; Fox Valley Healthcare Alliance; ADVOCAP Inc.; Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resource (SCSEP grantee).

Grant Amount: \$1,000,000

Challenge: This program will serve the thirteen counties that make up the Fox Valley and Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Areas. Both areas have recently experienced significant increases in layoffs. Fox Valley layoffs nearly doubled from 2007 to 2008, and have continued to increase in 2009. In the Southwest area, the two largest cities had unemployment rates of 9% and 11.4% in December 2008, with more than 5600 layoffs in 2008.

Addressing the Challenge: The *Wisconsin Regional POWER (Paths to Older Worker Employment Readiness)* will employ a six-step plan to train older workers over the next three years. Step one includes an orientation and series of customized workshops. The workshops train participants in areas such as teamwork, communication, problem solving, and computer skills. Step two is comprehensive career counseling leading to one of the high-demand industries targeted by the project. After participants chose an industry, they will be placed into cohorts that will meet regularly to study, discuss the program, and network. Participants then complete an educational program and earn a credential. Step three includes job readiness training, including resume workshops, mock interviews, and sessions on techniques for re-entering the workforce. In step four, participants take their new skills and credentials and enter employment. Step five includes follow-up activities to monitor the success of the participants and the project. The final component, step six, is an innovative feature which will recruit successful program participants to become mentors to new participants. These recruits will give presentations at the initial orientation and continue in their industry cohort group to provide peer mentoring.

Projected Outcomes:

- 80% of participants will complete their education/training and receive a degree or certificate.
- 75% of participants will complete education/training activities and enter employment.
- At least 50% of participants will engage in mentoring in some way after successful completion of program.

