

## **Greater Philadelphia Funding Collaborative Shares in Council on Foundations' Highest Award for Distinguished Grantmaking**

*Local workforce development initiative is part of a national effort that has been recognized as innovative and groundbreaking*

Philadelphia, PA (April 27, 2010) – The Job Opportunity Investment Network (JOIN), one of 22 national sites supported by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, is driving innovative approaches in Greater Philadelphia to prepare workers and businesses to succeed in a post-recession economy. Today, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions received the Distinguished Grantmaking Award for Collaboration from the Council on Foundations, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit membership association of some 2,000 grantmaking foundations and corporations.

“This award is a recognition of a track record of innovative investments in the jobseekers, employees, and businesses here in Southeastern Pennsylvania,” said Laura Boyce, Associate Vice President of United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania and Chair of the JOIN board. “To date, we have raised \$4 million for job-training partnerships that simultaneously meet the needs of low-wage workers and area businesses. Over the next two years, we expect to train more than 1,000 unemployed and low-wage workers, helping them to move into careers that pay family-sustaining wages.”

The Distinguished Grantmaking Award puts the spotlight on an individual or individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of philanthropy. First presented in 1984, this award celebrates those who exemplify the values and practices that the Council promotes and encourages.

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions partners with more than 200 local funders to work closely with employers and workforce leaders from the public and nonprofit sectors to help prepare workers to succeed in a post-recession economy. The National Fund tests how the lessons learned from these groundbreaking pilot projects in workforce development can be applied on a national scale.

“At a time when the Council brings all elements of the philanthropic field together to see ourselves as a movement, there is no better example of leadership than the National Fund for Workforce Solutions,” said Steve Gunderson, President and CEO, The Council on Foundations. “The vision and leadership that has brought together hundreds of funders nationwide in an unprecedented effort to help low-income Americans build careers and businesses compete, represents our collective work for the future.”

The National Fund is led by nine national investors who work closely with approximately 200 funders in states, regions, and communities nationwide: Annie E. Casey Foundation; the California Endowment; Ford Foundation; John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Microsoft;

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation; The Hitachi Foundation; The Prudential Foundation; and the Walmart Foundation.

“There are approximately 80 million adults in the workforce who fear for their future because they don’t see how they can gain the skills to be valuable in the 21st century economy,” said Barbara Dyer, president and CEO of The Hitachi Foundation and chair of the National Fund. “We have employers that cannot find workers with the kinds of skills they need to propel their businesses forward. Ultimately, it’s a problem for the competitiveness of the nation. It’s the role of philanthropy to create an environment that sparks innovative solutions.”

Five general strategies provide unity to the National Fund approach nationwide, but implementation varies greatly in each community:

- 1) Create regional funding collaboratives that bring together government agencies, foundations, and other philanthropic organizations to target financial resources and strategic thinking on creating jobs and careers;
- 2) Organize workforce partnerships that create long-term relationships between employers and service providers;
- 3) Develop strategies for specific industry sectors, focusing on the sectors that are important to the local economy;
- 4) Build career pathways that, practically in a step-by-step fashion, offer entry-level workers and people seeking employment real opportunities for advancement to jobs that pay good wages; and
- 5) Align and coordinate the many programs, organizations, and funding sources that, together, make up a community’s approach to preparing people for new careers.

The successful approach of the National Fund can be seen in the experiences of James Ballard of Philadelphia. Ballard is just completing a program, operated by The Federation of Neighborhood Centers in Philadelphia, that is preparing jobseekers for green jobs. The program, part of a National Fund site, is making sure workers have the math, language, and “soft skills” they need to move into training for solar panel installation, weatherization, and foam insulation. In just eight weeks, his computational math skills increased 4.5 grade levels. “Hopefully, I’ll become an installer,” he says. “I’ll not only do the panels but also the drop down of the wiring from the solar panels to the electricity grids. Maybe in four or five years I’ll start my own business.”

The Council on Foundations is a national nonprofit association of approximately 2,000 grantmaking foundations and corporations. As a leader in philanthropy, the Council strives to increase the effectiveness, stewardship, and accountability of the philanthropic sector while providing its members with the services and support they need for success.

The Job Opportunity Investment Network (JOIN) seeks to increase the number of Greater Philadelphia workers earning family-sustaining wages. JOIN accomplishes this mission by investing in and advocating for industry-led partnerships that prepare low-skilled adults for

high-demand, mid-skilled positions. Through these efforts, JOIN ensures that workers have career pathways; businesses, a talent pipeline. JOIN, which is a site of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, is a public-private partnership of five institutions who share a common interest in the prosperity and vitality of Greater Philadelphia: the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, the William Penn Foundation.