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The Economic Opportunity Program

How the public workforce system and social service agencies successfully address the employment challenge of Portlanders with barriers



The Economic Opportunity Program is supported by



PORTLAND HOUSING BUREAU
Dan Saltzman, Commissioner

Key Agency Partner



Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc.

This program is financed in whole or in part with funds provide through Worksystems Inc. from the U.S. Department of Labor. The programs are equal opportunity employers/programs. Auxiliary aid and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. To place a free relay call in Oregon dial 711.

The Economic Opportunity Program, funded by the Portland Development Commission and Worksystems, helps disadvantaged individuals gain career-track employment. The EOP is comprised of nine agency partners – including Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. – that serve low-income residents of Portland through programs tailored to meeting the needs of specific populations.



Oregon Tradeswomen Inc., (OTI) is a nonprofit organization that promotes success for women in the trades through education, leadership and mentorship.

“For women without a college degree, working in the trades—skilled blue-collar professions in construction, manufacturing, transportation, utilities, and so on—represents the difference between poverty and the middle class,” says Connie Ashbrook, executive director of Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. “Since the pathways to get into the trades are hidden, we’re here to show girls and women the way and to encourage them to show others.”

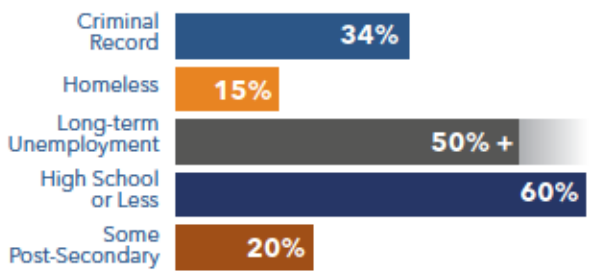
The strategy is working. “In 2013, our graduates flew into jobs,” says Ashbrook.

Based in Portland, OTI was founded in 1989 as a small support group led by four tradeswomen: an elevator constructor, two carpenters, and an operating engineer. Today, with the support of trades-industry employers, the organization comprises some 400 members, provides three core programs, and sponsors many events, including an annual trades-career fair attended by more than 1,000 teenage girls from all over Oregon and southwest Washington.

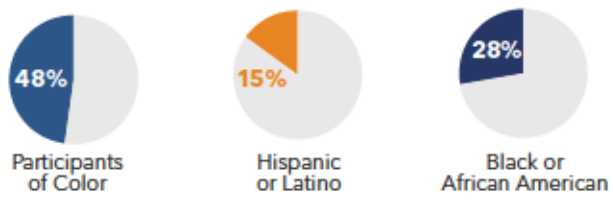
Mandy Kubisch, OTI program manager and a lead classroom instructor for the Trades and Apprenticeship Career Class (TACC) points out, “We’re the only organization in Oregon doing this work. Nationally, only three percent of people working in the construction trades are women; in Oregon, almost six percent now are women.”

Program-Wide EOP Snapshot

EOP participants contend with **longstanding challenges** that make it difficult to pursue and attain career-track employment.



In a city where Census data indicates that 76% of residents are caucasian, the EOP serves a disproportionately **diverse** group.



The EOP model empowered participants to take advantage of WorkSource services. More than 70 percent of program participants exited into employment at an average wage of \$12.82/hour – a per hour rate that is 40% higher than Oregon’s minimum wage. Some participants now earn as much as \$20/hour. Most importantly, many of these placements are on the initial rungs of actual career ladders that promise ongoing advancement opportunities.

EOP SUCCESS WITHIN THE FIRST 18 MONTHS

nearly **700** participants in various stages of job readiness

5 average number of **skill development activities** offered by WorkSource that EOP participants took part in

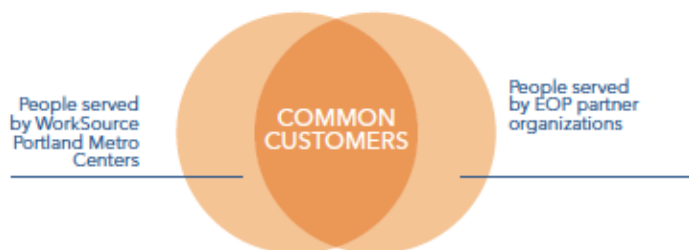
2,000 workshops attended

1,460 coaching appointments with WorkSource Career Specialists

164 participants **started occupational training programs** (24% of those enrolled in the program)

The Economic Opportunity Program Model

Each of the nine EOP partner projects provides a combination of services to specific populations. When customers, like Heather, are ready for occupational training or employment, EOP staff help them develop a career plan and introduce them to WorkSource Portland Metro job seeker services. This enables partner organizations, like OTI to focus on their strengths while tapping the strengths of the public workforce system.



The EOP model focuses on Portlanders served by WorkSource Portland Metro and an EOP partner organization, like Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc.

EOP provides each organization's customers a complete, complementary, coordinated suite of services that exceeds what any one organization could do. By improving access to employment-related education, training, and services, the EOP model helps address the equity gap for communities of color, ex-offenders, public-assistance recipients, people experiencing homelessness, and others facing barriers to living-wage employment.

Through the EOP partnership, customers have access to a wide variety of preparatory, training and employment services such as National Career Readiness Certification, On-the-Job Training opportunities, industry hiring events, and job placement services.

According to Ashbrook, "No agency can operate in a vacuum. We're stronger when we work with other agencies. That connector-convenor function supported by the EOP has meant a lot to us. We benefit from the structure, the programmatic approach, the guidelines, and the consistent reporting format that Worksystems provides to the partner agencies."

Ashbrook describes that Worksystems also makes it possible for us to get the word out to people who otherwise wouldn't know we exist. And they help us compare our practices with other agencies, giving us benchmarks and helping us ensure that we're doing a quality job."

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— Connie Ashbrook, Executive Director of Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc.

As for the support that OTI receives from the Economic Opportunity Program, Mandy says, "We host four classes a year with about 25 women per class. Without the EOP funding, we might have to cut classes in half. As it is, we always have a wait list. I wish we had even more funding so that we could add staff."

"More than half of our adult students are EOP-eligible, meaning that they live in the City of Portland and qualify as low income," adds OTI executive director Ashbrook. "About a quarter of our funding comes through EOP and our collaborations with Worksystems. Without that funding, we would have to reduce the number of women we serve."

Mandy finds it gratifying that many OTI graduates come back to volunteer in the TACC classrooms or in the field or at summer camps. "It shows that we're doing good work. I'm helping women start careers that will change the trajectory of their lives and their children's lives. They may never have experienced self-sufficiency before. It's an amazing feeling."

*"We're the
only organization
in Oregon doing
this work."*

— Mandy Kubisch
OTI program manager



Heather's Story

In 2010, Heather Mayther, a student at Portland Community College working part-time, found out that she was expecting triplets. Complications related to the pregnancy forced her to drop out, and the high school where she had been working closed.

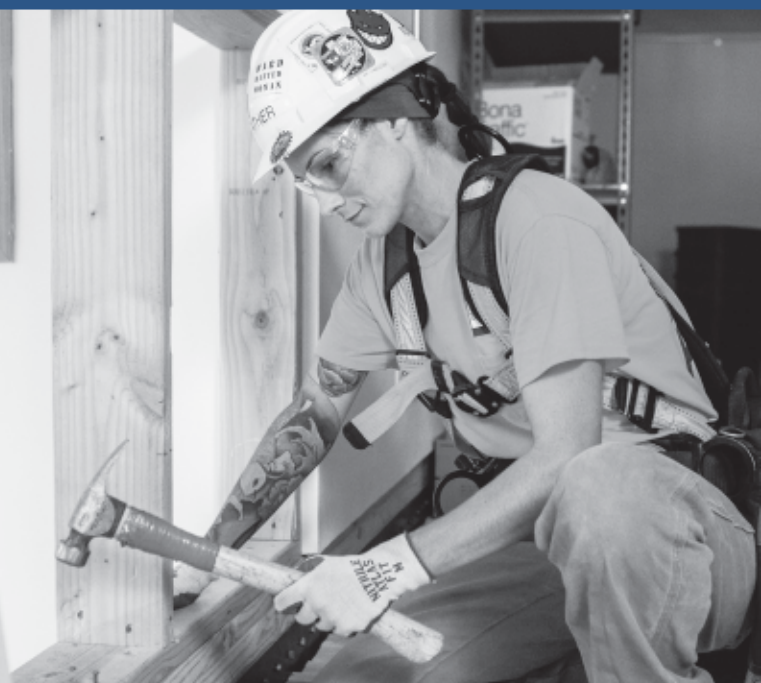
"I didn't know what to do," says Heather, "I got on assistance while I scrambled to figure out how I was going to support myself and my three babies."

In October 2013, she spotted a flyer for Oregon Tradeswomen. She read about their Trades and Apprenticeship Career Class (TACC)—a seven-week, pre-apprenticeship training offered without charge to help women prepare for high-skill, high-wage careers in construction. Having worked with her uncle remodeling houses, this class, and the future that it promised, appealed to Heather.

With support from a grant she was awarded through WorkSource Portland Metro, Heather joined the ranks of OTI's TACC graduates. She sums up the WorkSource-OTI partnership in one word: "Genius."

"At that point, I thought I might want to join the carpenters' union," she says, "but I felt lost. It's a man's game. How could I succeed in that world?"

Heather's instructor let her know that the Pacific Northwest Carpenters Institute was offering a



bridge-building course. She took the course, earned a 4.0 and entry into the Carpenter's Union. She explains that the course was offered in partnership with the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) to encourage more women to get into the Union, for higher wage jobs. She adds, "They provide money for tools and continued support such as daycare assistance."

In June 2014, Heather started in the Union ranked as a second-term carpenter's apprentice earning \$19.69/hour, plus having \$14/hour applied to benefits. She has since risen to the rank of a third-term apprentice. When she "journeys out," (advances to become a journeyman carpenter), she'll earn \$34/hour plus benefits. Heather notes, "That's good money for someone who didn't finish college. I feel confident when I think about my future."

"Without the opportunity OTI gave me, I don't know how I'd support my three little girls."

Heather says, "I'm doing something I love. People don't want to sit home and be stagnant. People want to create and earn their keep and be part of something awesome. What's better than building something new every day?"

"It matters to me, and it's going to matter to my three girls, that I can provide them with more than surviving. Surviving is hard enough. Providing a living for my kids is a big deal."

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SE Works strengthens the economic health of a diverse community by facilitating successful connections between job seekers and employers.

"For the past 18 years, SE Works has intentionally built services targeted to returning citizens," says Holly Whittleton, Executive Director of SE Works. That effort has nurtured a growing list of second-chance employers. SE Works staff are screened to do pre-release work to help people transition out of prison. Ninety-three percent of the program's customers never return to prison.

As a partner in the Economic Opportunity Program, SE Works coordinates services with WorkSource Portland Metro to provide career paths to people returning to their communities from incarceration. Known as "PREP," the Prisoner Re-entry Program is one of two initiatives run by SE Works as part of the Economic Opportunity Program (EOP).

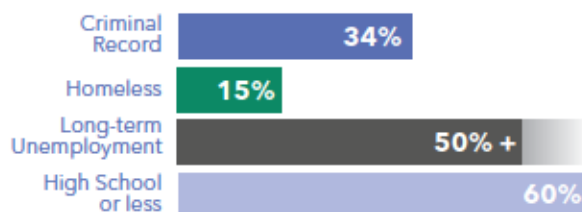
PREP helps returning citizens prepare for, find and keep career-track employment. The program uses a person-first approach, teaming vocational case managers one-on-one with customers to develop an individualized job plan and placement support.

Both EOP programs fit well with SE Work's efforts to move the needle on poverty. Holly explains: "We tailor our services and training so that the people walking through our door get what they need to become successful. Our services can transform lives and communities. I see amazing turnarounds every day."

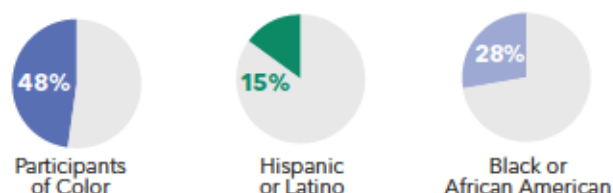
Cindy Knotts, a Career Coach in the Prisoner Re-entry Employment Program (PREP) at SE Works handles a caseload of some 40 returning citizens. She describes her customers as men and women who have served their sentences and want to rebuild their lives. Cindy explains "they want decent jobs to pay rent and put food on the

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Through the EOP partnership, career coaches have access to a WorkSource liaison, a person that trains them on the career-mapping process and is dedicated to keeping them informed about WorkSource Portland Metro services and programs, as well as provide ongoing technical assistance.

"With funding for programs like the EOP, we are moving mountains," Holly says. "Poverty can paralyze people. They want to move ahead and provide for their families and they need a supportive place to turn to. For many people in the Portland area, SE Works and the EOP programs are that place."

"For the past 18 years, SE Works has intentionally built services to target returning citizens."

— Holly Whittleton, Executive Director of SE Works

table. They face high but surmountable barriers that include self-imposed limits as well as institutional and cultural stigmas.

"I'm passionate about this population. They are some of the hardest workers you will ever find," says Cindy.

She tells the story of a woman who was being denied a job because of her past, "She looked the employer in the eye and said, 'Every employer has the opportunity to become a second-chance employer. I hope that starts today with you when you hire me.' They used their attorney and their HR (department), and they changed their policy and hired her."

She's there for her customers as they deal with rejection. "I have grown men cry at my desk all the time," she says. "Constant coaching helps them not to see themselves as felons anymore but as job-seekers with skills, talents and abilities."

At SE Works, Cindy and another case manager offer coaching, career mapping, building of targeted resumes, and access to support services such as clothing and public transportation for interviews.

"I believe everybody deserves a second chance."

— Cindy Knotts
vocational case manager,
SE Works/PREP

Co-located with the WorkSource Portland Metro-SE Center on Foster Road, SE Works creates an accessible environment that responds to the community's needs and concerns. "I love being embedded in the WorkSource Center," Cindy says, adding that her PREP

participants accessed up to 500 WorkSource services in 2014 alone. Holly adds, "The integrated model of EOP and WorkSource brings the one-stop concept to the customer."



Bill's Story

Bill Beall celebrated his 60th birthday in June and his first year as a Forensic Peer 1 Support Specialist at Cascadia Behavioral Health Services. Tall and trim, with clear blue eyes and a warm laugh, Bill loves his work and is excited for his future.

The contrast to his past is stark. He spent most of his life in and out of the criminal justice system, beginning with a drug conviction at 15. Half of the next 40 years were marked by drugs, crime, disappointment and heartache. He lost family, jobs and self-respect.

The turning point came in 2010. Arrested on his eighth felony charge, he was told, if convicted again, he would be prosecuted as a career criminal and sentenced to 25 years to life, before the possibility of parole.

"When they released me from jail and I realized that I was out on the streets again, I knew something had changed." Bill says. "I just wasn't supposed to do 25 years in the penitentiary. I was supposed to be doing this."



Bill Beall with PREP Career Coach Cindy Knotts.

Bill came to SE Works in late 2013 to participate in the Discover Your Road to Success Job Club. Then he enrolled in the Prisoner Re-entry Employment Program (PREP). His vocational case manager, Cindy Knotts, helped him with resumes, cover letters, interview coaching and support for interview clothing and transportation.

"For the first time in my life, I felt like there were people who really cared about me. If I missed an appointment or Job Club, my vocational case manager would call to see if I was okay."

"Now I get to give back."

– Bill Beall

Today he helps seriously persistent mentally ill offenders make better choices in the community and stay out of jail. "Now I get to give back."

He credits much of his success to the help he got from staff at SE Works.

"Who would've thought five years ago that I'd be where I am today? I just never in my wildest dreams ever saw a life so full and rich with so many opportunities. I can't thank SE Works enough for their dedication to help me reach my goals and succeed."

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SE Works strengthens the economic health of a diverse community by facilitating successful connections between job seekers and employers.

"I've been working in non-profit organizations for thirty-five years for one reason: to move the needle on poverty," says Holly Whittleton, Executive Director of SE Works, Inc.

"Poverty is about lack of choice and opportunity. SE Works works with people and assists them with the tools and support they need to find jobs that pay them a living wage," Holly continues. "Many doors lead out of poverty. We help people find the opportunities to help open those doors."

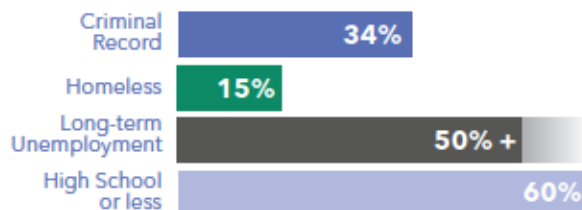
She credits SE Works' dedicated, experienced employees and volunteers for delivering diverse programming that successfully engages multi-barriered, low-income, underserved populations including at-risk youth involved in the justice system, unemployed adults, immigrants, people experiencing disabilities, and people returning from incarceration.

Holly explains: "We tailor our services and training so that the people walking through our door get what they need to become successful. Our services can transform lives and communities. I see amazing turnarounds every day."

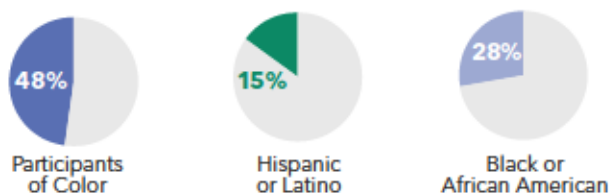
Conveniently co-located in a Portland Worksource Metro Center, SE Works creates an accessible environment that responds to the community's needs and concerns. While the "SE" in their name derives from their original focus on southeast Portland—where they continue to have a strong presence—they now manage a range of federal and local programs that serve several counties.

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From her position as SE Works Executive Director, Holly feels optimistic. "With funding for programs like the EOP, we are moving mountains," she says. "Poverty can paralyze people. They want to move ahead and provide for their families and they need a supportive place to turn to. For many people in the Portland area, SE Works and the EOP programs are that place."

"Our services can transform lives and communities. I see amazing turnarounds every day."

— Holly Whittleton, Executive Director of SE Works

SE Works' involvement with the Economic Opportunity Program (EOP) supports the Professional Immigrant Credential Program (PICP) and the Prisoner Reentry Employment Program (PREP).

"I see daily results with my customers," says Lyubov Tsinovkina, the PICP Career Coach. She helps immigrants and refugees who come to the US as professionals—doctors, engineers, scientists, managers, social workers—from all around the globe.

"It's exciting to help these qualified people prepare for professional jobs," says Lyubov. "It's a struggle for them to succeed in the US. Their certifications aren't recognized. They lack references. They lack professional networks. They lack money for transportation and for appropriate work clothing. Potential employers may discriminate against them. They may lack language skills. PICP offers lots of ways to help people who face these obstacles."

For example, PICP participants get help translating and evaluating their professional credentials for the local job market, a vital step to getting the right professional

certifications/licenses and continuing education.

"It's rewarding to be part of the process of changing lives and improving communities"

— Lyubov Tsinovkina
PICP Career Coach

She adds, "I'm always happy when a customer gets an interview call and then a job offer. It's rewarding to be part of the process of changing lives and improving communities."

Claudia's Story



Claudia at Willamette International Travel with colleague Kathy Blaster

As of this writing, Claudia is as an accountant at Willamette International Travel. Eventually, she hopes to get her CPA certification. On the path to her current position, Claudia worked two part-time jobs: one as a cook in a home for the elderly and one as a bookkeeper in a Portland CPA's office. In assessing her career path, Claudia acknowledges the help and support SE Works and particularly Lyubov. "Lyubov made me feel safe. I knew I could call, email, or text, and she was always willing to give me advice. She's a wonderful person, a professional. She helped me feel confident in going out to look for jobs."

"When I found SE Works and the PICP, I felt that I was in the right place," says Claudia Acaroaie-Pop, who moved to the Portland area in July 2013. Back in Romania, she had been an accountant. She needed help getting started in her profession in this new country. Several people told her about SE Works, so she went there, joined the PICP, and spent several months working with Lyubov, the program's vocational case manager.

"Lyubov taught me that job hunting is different here," Claudia says. "I had to prepare my resume differently, and I had to interview differently. I also had to get certified in the United States. For this, I had to have a company officially evaluate my bachelor's degree. It's not as easy as translating my transcript; our grading systems are different. In Romania, we don't have grades A through F. Students get graded on a scale of one to ten."

"People who have learned skills in their home countries can do a lot in the US if they're given the chance."

Claudia continues: "It's confusing to move to the US. You have to learn everything. You're a capable adult, and suddenly you're like a baby. You need somebody to help you understand how to be your best, how to do what you do in a new way. People who have learned skills in their home countries can do a lot in the US if they're given the chance."

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Human Solutions provides affordable housing, family support services, job readiness training and economic development opportunities to low-income and homeless families and individuals.

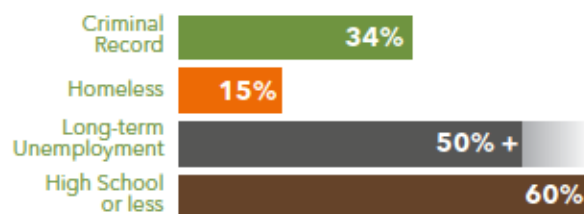
"Many of the people who we serve do not have English as a first language or have other significant barriers to employment," says Ricardo Lopez, Human Solutions' Employment and Economic Development Manager. "Our programs are designed to assist the individual to maximize existing strengths and to gain new skills to obtain a living wage job."

"Our ultimate goal is to end homelessness and poverty in the high-need areas of outer East Portland and East Multnomah County, which have absorbed thousands of low-income families displaced from closer-in Portland neighborhoods due to gentrification. Our clients very often break the stereotypes of the homeless or the very poor in our community. We often work with individuals or families that have been laid off from work or have had their work hours cut back. Over 47 different languages are spoken by the people who we serve."

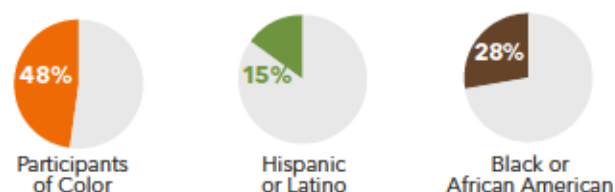
For more than 27 years, Human Solutions has helped families and individuals in need gain self-sufficiency. Human Solutions' participation in the Economic Opportunity Program (EOP) connects them to the public workforce system giving their clients more resources, choices and opportunities. Funded by the Portland Development Commission and coordinated by Worksystems, the EOP was started to facilitate collaboration between public agencies and

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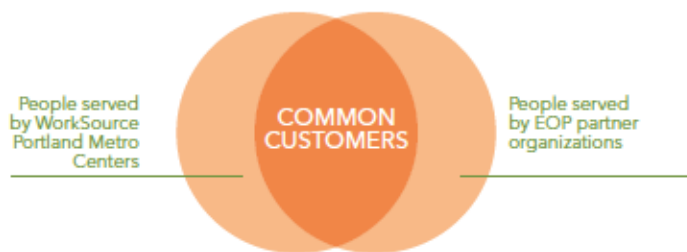
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EOP provides each agency's customers a complete, complementary, coordinated suite of services that exceeds what any one organization could do. By improving access to employment-related education, training, and services, the EOP model helps address the equity gap for communities of color, ex-offenders, public-assistance recipients, people experiencing homelessness, and others facing barriers to living-wage employment.

Through the EOP partnership, career coaches have access to a WorkSource liaison, a person that trains them on the career-mapping process and is dedicated to keeping them informed about WorkSource Portland Metro services and programs, as well as provide ongoing technical assistance.

"We have established strong partnerships with other service providers to ensure that each family has access to the specific resources they need to resolve the issues that caused their homelessness," says Jose of Human Solutions.

"We have worked very hard to form a partnership with Worksystems so that we would have the resources to assist individuals and families obtain employment and living wage jobs - this is the real solution to homelessness and poverty."

"People need someone to believe in them – to give them hope to be successful. That's what we do."

– Ricardo Lopez, Employment and Economic Development Manager

community-based organizations to help Portlanders with barriers to employment embark on sustainable career paths.

Jose Luis Garcia, lead vocational case manager for Human Solutions' Pathways to Success Employment Program, says "People need someone to believe in them – to give them hope to be successful. That's what we do. I'm amazed how the program creates positive change in a short period of time. I've always wanted a job where I can make a difference and have a positive impact on my community. Here, I'm surrounded by highly driven people who genuinely care about the people we work with.

"We're not just changing individual's lives – we're impacting the poverty cycle. I've seen the children of my clients working harder and striving to succeed because they see their parents working harder.

"It's exciting," says Garcia, "to see people who have never had a job becoming a professional in a trade or certified, making wages that can support their family."

"We're not just changing individual's lives, we're impacting the poverty cycle."



Amber's Story

"I've had epilepsy since I was two years old," says Portlander Amber Booth. "I had two children at a young age, and raised them by myself. I volunteered at an elderly daycare center for a while, and the feeling of giving and helping these people is overwhelming to me. I got a job as a caregiver in a home, but then my seizures came back and I couldn't work for ten years."

About one and a half years ago, Amber got another caregiving job, but the work environment wasn't ideal. That's when Amber decided to "get a step up and take CNA classes."

"I know this is what I want to do with my life - I want to help people, especially elderly with mental disabilities - but I didn't think I had the intelligence to do it. But a friend pushed me to do it, and told me about how WorkSource had helped her get funding for CNA classes."

At WorkSource Portland Metro, Amber earned the National Career Readiness Certificate, a nationally recognized certificate that documents that job seekers have the foundational skills needed to be successful on the job; attended a scholarship application workshop, and other job skills workshops that helped her update her resume for the healthcare industry. WorkSource also provided partial funding for her CNA classes and connected her with a case manager



Amber meeting with Jose Garcia, her Vocational Case Manager at Human Solutions.

at Human Solutions, who helped her find additional funding and job opportunities.

"He's not just a social worker - he's been a mentor, he's helped me with everything," says Amber. "When I'm down, when I couldn't find a job, and he's like 'no, no - come talk to me!' I could possibly have done the funding and the job search by myself, but I really needed the mentoring to push me to be better and stronger. 'It's inside you,' he'd say."

Today, Amber is working at a behavioral facility in Troutdale, caring for elderly patients with mental disabilities.

"I love helping them, having a bond with them. Letting them know that someone cares about them, respects them, is willing to be in their corner. I treat them like I would want someone to treat me if I was in that wheelchair or bed. Even if they forget it after five minutes, I like making them smile."

"I wouldn't have kept this dream of mine without these programs and the people who helped me along the way."

"I hope someday to be a domestic violence counselor or a nurse."

I wouldn't have kept going with this dream of mine without these programs and the people who helped me along the way. A lot of people think WorkSource and Human Solutions just help with rent or the utility bill. I just thought you could use the computer and look for jobs - it was much more than that. So many doors opened for me through their help; they're not just a person behind a desk - they are people who care.

"There are other people with disabilities who think they can't do anything. These programs showed me a whole new world. Don't use your disability as an excuse for life."

Funded by the Portland Development Commission and Worksystems, the EOP was started to facilitate collaboration between public agencies and community-based organizations to help Portlanders with barriers to employment embark on sustainable career paths.

Worksystems provides program coordination to support the seamless integration of the partners into a cohesive program aligned with the public workforce system. These activities include program management, common performance measures and service definitions, implementation of a system-wide client tracking and performance reporting system, and training and technical assistance.

The Economic Opportunity Program

How the public workforce system and social service agencies successfully address the employment challenge of Portlanders with barriers



The Economic Opportunity Program is supported by



PORTLAND HOUSING BUREAU
Dan Saltzman, Commissioner

Key Agency Partner



CENTRAL CITY CONCERN
HOMES HEALTH JOBS

This program is financed in whole or in part with funds provided through Worksystems Inc. from the U.S. Department of Labor. The programs are equal opportunity employers/programs. Auxiliary aid and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. To place a free relay call in Oregon dial 711.

The Economic Opportunity Program, funded by the Portland Development Commission and Worksystems, helps disadvantaged individuals gain career-track employment. The EOP is comprised of nine agency partners including Central City Concern that serve low-income residents of Portland through programs tailored to meeting the needs of specific populations.



Central City Concern serves single adults and families impacted by homelessness, poverty, mental illness, and addiction.

"Getting out of poverty is complicated," says Clay Cooper, Central City Concern Director of Social Enterprises and Employment Services. "We've been helping people do it since the seventies, and we've learned a lot.

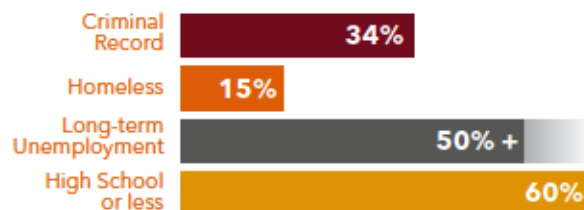
"In the early days, we focused on treating the chronic inebriate population in Old Town. Then, we saw that we needed to address housing. Then, we saw that housing alone wasn't enough; people needed to develop new peer relationships. They needed health care and ongoing recovery support. And they needed to prepare for the workplace and find employment.

"As we've evolved," Clay continues, "we've brought together a lot of services under our roof. At the same time, we realize that Central City Concern can't fill all these needs alone. We do a lot of collaborating with other nonprofits. Part of our strength comes from our partnerships with other organizations that specialize in the services our customers need to transform their lives."

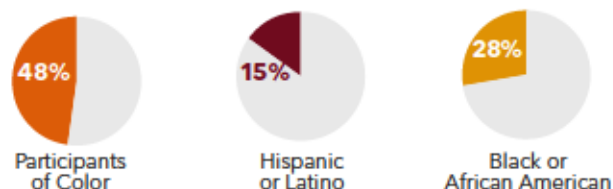
Central City Concern's involvement with the Economic Opportunity Program (EOP) provides an example of their partnership with other organizations. Funded by Worksystems and the Portland Development Commission, and coordinated by Worksystems, the EOP was started to facilitate collaboration between public agencies and community-based

Program-Wide EOP Snapshot

EOP participants contend with **longstanding challenges** that make it difficult to pursue and attain career-track employment.



In a city where Census data indicates that **76%** of residents are caucasian, the EOP serves a disproportionately **diverse** group.



Despite their barriers to participation, participants are empowered to use the EOP model to take advantage of WorkSource services. More than 70 percent of program participants exited into employment at an average wage of \$12.82/hour - a per hour rate that is 40% higher than Oregon's minimum wage. Some participants now earn as much as \$20/hour. Most importantly, many of these placements are on the initial rungs of actual career ladders that promise ongoing advancement opportunities.

**EOP SUCCESS
WITHIN
THE FIRST
18 MONTHS**



nearly **700**
participants
in various stages of
job readiness

WorkSource Skill Development Activities

5 average number of **skill development activities** offered by WorkSource that EOP participants took part in

2,000
workshops attended

1,460
coaching appointments
with WorkSource Career
Specialists

164 participants **started occupational training programs** (24% of those enrolled in the program)

The Economic Opportunity Program Model

Each of the nine EOP partner projects provides a combination of services to specific populations. When their customers, like Amy, are ready for occupational training or employment, EOP case managers help them develop a career map and introduce them to WorkSource Portland Metro job seeker services. This enables partner organizations, like Central City Concern, to focus on their strengths while tapping the strengths of the public workforce system.



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Through the EOP partnership, case managers have access to a WorkSource liaison, a person that train them on the career-mapping process and is dedicated to keeping them informed about WorkSource Portland Metro services, and programs, as well as provide ongoing technical assistance.

"Our collaboration with Worksystems and the WorkSource staff extends our ability to support underserved populations," says Freda of Central City Concern. "Without this partnership, we couldn't have the same sustaining impact on people's lives. Central City Concern enrolled 175 people in WorkSource last year. WorkSource empowers people to move beyond minimum-wage jobs, to increase their earning power so that they can enrich their lives, their families, and their communities."

"When one of our customers gets a job, someone rings this cowbell, and we all hoot and holler. That simple phrase – I got a job – means a lot."

– Freda Ceaser, Program Manager

organizations to help Portlanders with barriers to employment embark on sustainable career paths.

Freda Ceaser, program manager for the CCC Employment Access Center says, "Employment is a huge part of a person's self-sufficiency. It's natural for any of us to light up when someone asks us what we do for a living. Folks are proud of finding a job. Every day, I get to help people explore careers, find decent jobs with livable wages, move out of our housing, and move on with their lives.

"It can be hard for people to walk through our door. But if they're here, they need us. They have to overcome barriers to housing and barriers to work. They may have convictions or mental-health problems. They lack self-confidence. They don't come to us prettied up. The folks we encounter are complex. For them, the help we offer is a big deal."

Freda continues: "At CCC we have a ritual. When one of our customers gets a job, someone rings this cowbell, and we all hoot and holler. That simple phrase—I got a job—means a lot.

"Employment is a huge part of a person's self-sufficiency."

Amy's Story



Amy talking with her Career Coach, Freda Ceaser.

"I started drinking and smoking pot when I was fourteen," says Portlander Amy Simpson. For twenty-five years, I used marijuana and alcohol. I drank a lot. Toward the end, I became addicted to methamphetamine. I led a dual life. I was good at deception. I held jobs. I functioned—at least during the day. At night, life became an increasing mess. Finally, I lost my job and my apartment, and I ended up in jail."

In the summer of 2011, Amy entered DePaul Treatment Center in downtown Portland. That's where she heard about Central City Concern.

"Central City Concern had housing options," Amy says. "They had a mentor program and an employment-readiness program for people like me coming out of treatment. With their help, and with the help of my family, I got a studio apartment downtown in a 'clean and sober' building, and I became part of the Central City network."

"My supportive, gentle, patient, inspiring case worker spent a lot of time with me. I was fragile. He listened and helped me figure out what I wanted to do with my life. He helped me get my driver's license back and helped me apply for a training scholarship through WorkSource Portland Metro. He also put me in touch with an employment specialist who knew all about WorkSource. She was a lightning bolt of direction and connection! With her assistance and WorkSource resources, I was able to earn an Alcohol & Drug training certificate at Portland Community College."

"I then landed an internship at Old Town Recovery Center, and then I got my current job as a Subacute Technician with the Hooper Detox Center, a Central City Concern program for people with addictions. I love Central City Concern, and I love working for them."

"He listened and helped me figure out what I wanted to do with my life."

Amy goes on: "Three years ago, I thought I was going to die a drug addict. I was full of desperation and despair. Today, I have a chance to tell others, 'Hey, I get it. You're scared. I felt that way. Look at me now.' This has all been the realization of a dream."