WEST PHILADELPHIA SKILLS INITIATIVE

A MODEL FOR URBAN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

KATZ & HUMES

DREXEL UNIVERSITY
Nowak Metro Finance Lab
Lindy Institute for Urban Innovation

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Drexel University Nowak Metro Finance Lab

The Nowak Metro Finance Lab was formed by Drexel University in July 2018. It is focused on helping cities find new ways to "finance the inclusive city" by making sustained investments in innovation, infrastructure, affordable housing, quality places, and the schooling and skilling of children and young adults. It is situated within the Drexel's Lindy Institute of Urban Innovation.

Centre for Public Impact

The Centre for Public Impact is a not-for-profit founded by Boston Consulting Group. Believing that governments can and want to do better for people, we work side-by-side with governments—and all those who help them—to reimagine government, and turn ideas into action, to bring about better outcomes for everyone. We champion public servants and other changemakers who are leading this charge and develop the tools and resources they need, like our Public Impact Fundamentals, so we can build the future of government together.

University City District

University City District is a partnership of world-renowned anchor institutions, small businesses and residents that creates opportunity, and improves economic vitality and quality of life in the University City area of West Philadelphia. Our primary mission is community revitalization. We work within a place-based, data-driven framework to invest in world-class public spaces, address crime and public safety, bring life to commercial corridors, connect low-income residents to careers, and promote job growth and innovation.

Accelerator for America

Accelerator for America is a non-profit organization created by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti in November 2017. It seeks to provide strategic support to the best local initiatives to strengthen people's economic security, specifically those initiatives that connect people with existing jobs, create new opportunities and foster infrastructure development.

About the Authors

Bruce Katz is the inaugural director of the Nowak Metro Finance Lab at Drexel University and the co-author (with Jeremy Nowak) of The New Localism: How Cities Can Thrive in the Age of Populism. Bruce also leads New Localism Advisors, whose mission is to help cities design, finance and deliver transformative initiatives that promote inclusive and sustainable growth, in addition to serving as a Partner in the Accelerator for America. In all these roles, he regularly advises global, national, state, regional and municipal leaders on public reforms and private innovations that advance the well-being of metropolitan areas and their countries.

For more information please visit www.drexel.edu/nowak-lab.

Megan Humes is a Senior Associate supporting the economic mobility program at the Centre for Public Impact. Her work focuses on helping all levels of the U.S. government understand and reimagine the public initiatives that enable, and inhibit, residents' economic opportunity and usher in an era of inclusive growth. Previously, Megan helped a variety of federal government agencies improve the efficiency of their operations and strategic sourcing functions through rigorous data analysis with Censeo Consulting Group. Megan received a Bachelor of Science in Economics from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, concentrating in Business Economics & Public Policy and Social Impact & Responsibility.

For more information visit https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/

Acknowledgements

This paper, in a series of Nowak Metro Finance Lab City Cases, aims to build on the existing research evaluating innovative local models for solving problems. Cities need a new generation of community institutions that can pursue development, enable creative financing, grow local entrepreneurs, unlock public assets, and upgrade the skills of local residents. The goal of this series is to distill enabling features, financial mechanisms, and governance structures, to encourage large-scale adoption and adaptation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WPSI—A TIMELY, REPLICABLE MODEL TO SOLVE URBAN LABOR MARKET CHALLENGES

The rise of cities is the defining dynamic of the world today. Cities are natural magnets for the creative and highly-educated talent required by the growing digital economy.

This dynamic has created a complex challenge: urban economic growth is uneven, concentrated in very few neighborhoods with highly skilled talent, often displacing less skilled workers from neighborhoods that have been redeveloped as a result of new investment. In fact, this type of economic inequality within cities has worsened since the recession.[1] For example, in Atlanta and D.C., the top 5% of households now earn incomes 18 times greater than the bottom 20%.[2]

The mayors and civic leaders who are seeking to address this challenge and create pathways to good, stable jobs for all their residents currently have limited ability to test and develop effective workforce development models due to strict bureaucratic requirements, such as a lengthy reporting process and prescribed services mandated from upper levels. Rigid public systems are not designed for the new, rapidly changing economy, and many postsecondary education programs are inaccessible to those that need them most. At the same time, large employer organizations have legacy hiring functions that struggle to reach new potential labor pools and focus training resources on mid- to upper-level workers. As a result, many low-wage workers are unable to find ways to train for higher-paying, available jobs in their areas, furthering the cycle of poverty and disenfranchisement.

As an intermediary able to navigate the worlds of jobseekers and employers alike, the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative (WPSI) delivers a targeted program at a cost similar to the public workforce system, around $4,500 per placement, with vastly better results. For example, WPSI connected 97% of graduates to employment in fiscal year 2019, while Philly's public system placed 68% of completers in fiscal year 2015, the last year in which data was published.[3] WPSI graduates also earned an average of $1,500 a year more than their public system counterparts.

WPSI provides a replicable model for the collective action needed to solve these urban labor market challenges across the nation.

WHY WAS WPSI FORMED?

In 1997, West Philly hit a crisis point. Years of increasing poverty, blight, and crime culminated in the murder of a University of Pennsylvania (Penn) grad student just off campus. To reduce crime and improve economic vitality and quality of life in West Philly, the leaders of local anchor institutions

and businesses created the University City District (UCD), a nonprofit economic development organization modeled like a Business Improvement District (BID). UCD's first mission was to make the neighborhood "clean and safe" and focused on removing trash and supporting public safety ambassadors, quickly improving the neighborhood's look and atmosphere. Programming soon expanded to creating public spaces, encouraging economic development, and promoting University City to residents, tourists, and businesses alike.

However, in 2009, UCD and its board determined that their successful economic development and placemaking initiatives were not addressing two big problems: too many unfilled or high turnover jobs at University City's largest employers, and too many unemployed West Philadelphians. To fill this gap between employers and residents, UCD decided to pilot a workforce development initiative that would enable all members of the community to benefit equitably from economic growth, which led to the creation of WPSI in 2011

The WPSI model was designed to solve three systemic problems that plague existing workforce development initiatives:

Jobseekers rarely fully understood or utilized the tools available to them

Traditional program graduates lacked training in "soft skills" like conflict management

Employers struggled to adapt their hiring and retention processes for diverse candidate pools in a shifting talent landscape
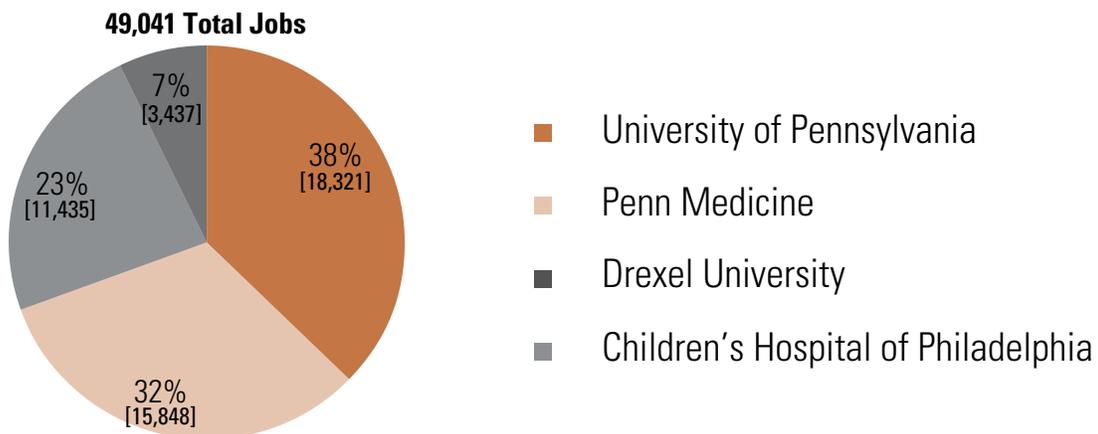
> **UCD is instrumental to economic development, creative placemaking, and with WPSI, workforce development. Matt [Bergheiser] saw an opportunity to develop WPSI and leverage the relationships with all of the major employers for the good of the community.**
>
> *Jamie Gauthier,*
> *Councilperson-Elect,*
> *Philadelphia City Council,*
> *3rd District*

As a critical intermediary, WPSI reimagined the status quo of 'one-size-fits-all' programs that were not connected to specific or quality jobs and did not meet the needs of employers. Instead, it trains unemployed residents for in-demand positions with the anchor employers that represent over half of University City's 80,000 jobs.[4]

HOW DOES WSPI WORK?

WPSI follows a thorough, established process high quality graduates for a variety of industries.

Engage the employer to understand their unique needs

WPSI works closely with employers to identify which positions routinely experience retention and performance problems and would benefit from the WPSI model. By analyzing personnel data and interviewing frontline workers, WPSI staff reveal the root causes of hiring and turnover problems, and identify the skills necessary to excel in the position. The employer chooses the size and graduation date of the cohort, and WPSI works backwards to create a program that meets those criteria.

Number of Jobs in University City at WPSI-partner Anchor Employers [8]

49,041 Total Jobs

- University of Pennsylvania
- Penn Medicine
- Drexel University
- Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Design a bespoke program

WPSI staff take time to design a bespoke curriculum with the employer. This includes completing site visits to understand the day-to-day demands of the job and interviewing stakeholders, such as people currently in the position. Employers noted that no other workforce partner had worked as hard to understand their needs. The employer partners also identify who will teach the technical training (e.g., the employer or a third-party provider) and determine if federal workforce funding can reimburse the provider.

Recruit and select participants that are a strong fit for the job profile

WPSI opens a program application and co-hosts an information session about the position with the employer. Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED, be over 18, and be unemployed. Most cohorts only accept applicants from the 7 zip codes in West Philly, which contain 245,709 residents, 16,366[5] of whom are unemployed. WPSI also places citizens returning from incarceration in gainful employment at UCD's landscaping company, Green City Works. The program is promoted to the community online and through the WPSI alumni network. By personally reviewing each application, WPSI staff identify the best-suited candidates for each program.

What makes WPSI uniquely successful?		
They provide staff with the resources and freedom to continously improve services	**They invest in rigorous, individualized program design and execution**	**They prioritize fostering relationships with local residents and employers**
1. Staff with workforce development experience understand the system and are committed to improving it	4. Cohorts are only created when local employers are trying to fill vacancies	7. Acting as an intermediary connects a robust network of partners to new resources
2. Flexible funding encourages program innovation and attracts top talent and partnerships	5. Financial stipends, individual coaching, and high performance standards focus participants on personal and professional development	8. Residents trust WPSI to act as an ambassador between them and large local institutions, building social capital and credibility
3. Agile and entrepreneurial governance lets the team take risks and quickly iterate to solve problems	6. Customized programs are built for each employer, familiarizing candidates with their culture and nuances	9. As an effective intermediary, WPSI connects a robust network of stakeolders to untapped resources
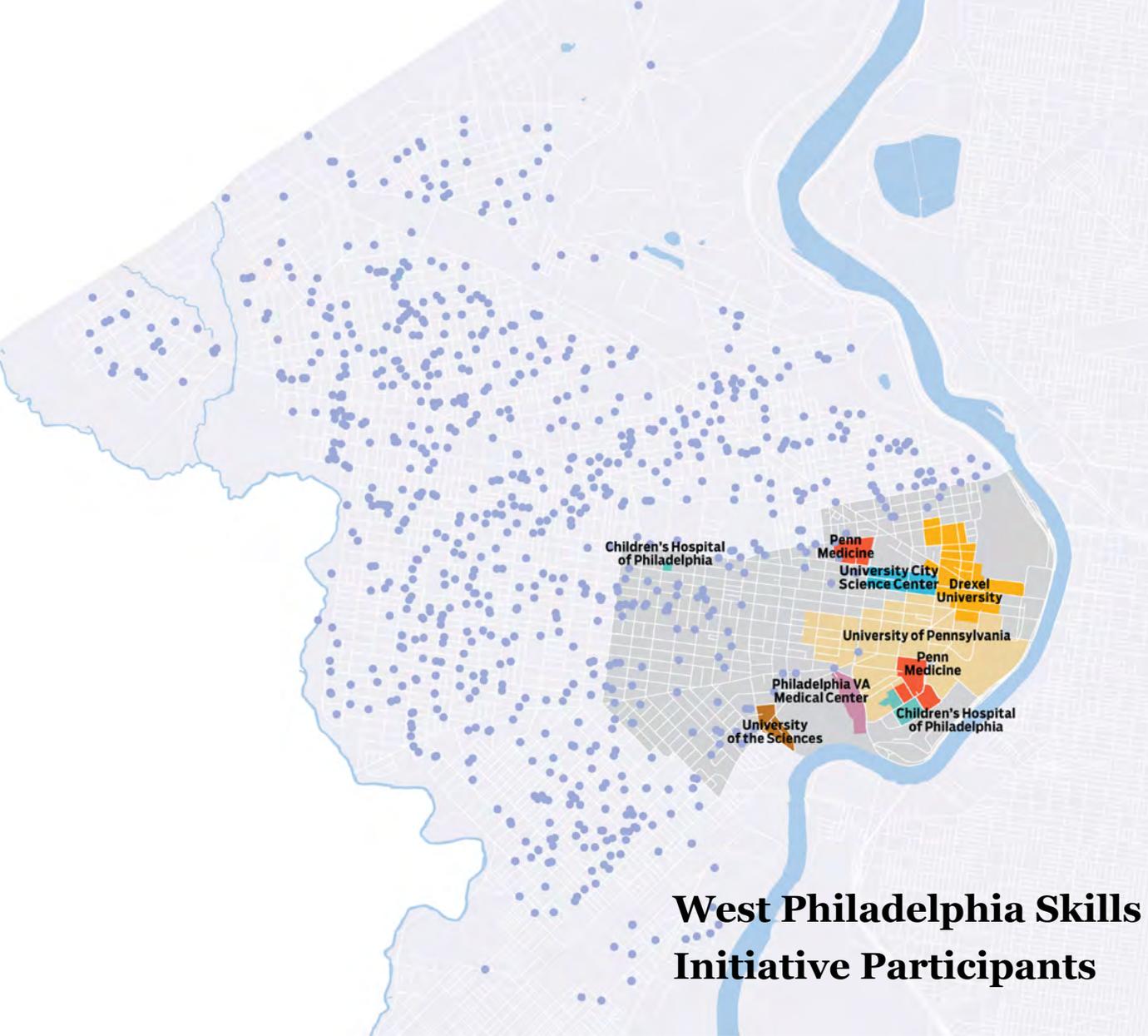
West Philadelphia Skills Initiative Participants

> **The Skills Initiative has changed lives. The people who have gone through the program have a pathway to greater confidence in their abilities to work and take care of their families.**
>
> *Craig Carnaroli,*
> *Executive Vice President,*
> *University of Pennsylvania*

Deliver the program with excellence

Every program begins by cultivating the "foundational skills" needed to succeed in any professional job (e.g., workplace norms, self-regulation, critical thinking, self-confidence), before moving into technical training specific to the position. Experienced facilitators and executive coaches lead group classes and individual sessions to develop participants' foundational skills. WPSI collaborates with employers or a third-party provider to teach technical skills, sometimes in on-the-job training that allows participants to earn wages to complement their program stipend.

Connect participants to employment

After completing mock interviews, participants are guaranteed an interview with the employer partner. While employers have no obligation to hire graduates, they have hired from all cohorts thus far; at the same time competitors are also able to make offers to candidates. As a result, an astounding 95% of graduates are connected to employment. After placement, WPSI staff hosts a formal debrief with the employer to determine how the programming could be improved for the next cohort, further building trust and understanding of employer needs.

Provide post-program support.

WPSI offers continued personal coaching and assistance, increasing new employees' chances of retention and success in their new position and helping those that did not receive an offer find a job that utilizes their skills. WPSI hosts multiple alumni events annually to reconnect graduates and expand their personal networks.

HOW IS THE WPSI MODEL DIFFERENT FROM TRADITIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT?

Many traditional workforce development organizations offer social services as well as general skills training and try to help as many residents as possible. WPSI's key differentiator is that it only delivers training for the number of participants that its employer partners are able to hire, increasing the likelihood that its graduates enter full-time employment. For this reason, the

Ages of WPSI Participants[9]	
18-24	12%
25-34	50%
35-44	22%
45-54	9%
55+	7%

Demographics of WPSI participants and West Philadelphia		
Race / Ethnicity	WPSI Participants[10]	West Philadelphia[11]
Black or African-American	93.2%	76.2%
White	2.4%	17.2%
Hispanic or Latino	1.3%	2.0%
Other	3.1%	4.7%

WPSI model is not immediately scalable to move large groups of people into good work. Instead, it creates long-lasting, positive economic impact for a precisely targeted group of residents.

WHAT HAS BEEN WSPI'S IMPACT?

In the last six years, WPSI has increased labor participation from the local community, reduced turnover costs for local employers, and increased disposable income and tax revenue. WPSI has placed nearly 530[6] West Philadelphians into either full-time positions with benefits, or positions with a direct promotion path to full-time employment. Importantly, WPSI has linked employers to an underutilized labor pool and a traditionally hard-to-reach population, as the average participant had been unemployed for an average of 33 weeks before joining the program. The average graduate records a 25% increase in wages over their last job prior to unemployment, amounting to nearly an additional $7,000 a year for a single earner. In total, graduates have earned over $37 million in wages over the last 8 years, increasing local purchasing power.

WPSI has also helped employers' bottom lines and improved their recruitment processes. For example, one private employer's new hires from the WPSI program turn over at half the national rate of their industry. Another employer, Drexel University, found that

> **"The West Philadelphia Skills Initiative has changed my life. When I came here, I knew I had the skills to land a job, but working closely with the staff, they brought out my potential to build a future career and to pull out my best self."**
>
> *Tyler Wood, Landscape Technician, Brightview*

WPSI hires were 36% more likely than traditional hires to remain in the position for 2 years or more. Turnover costs are an estimated to be 33% of an employee's salary, so the turnover of a full-time worker at WPSI's average postgraduate wage of $14.51 would cost an employer $10,100.[7]

WPSI's work connecting unemployed individuals with good jobs in West Philly has helped improve the vitality of a high-poverty neighborhood suffering from chronic disinvestment. West Philadelphians now have greater opportunity to share in the success of the large institutions they have always lived beside, but have felt far removed from. Overall, 95% of graduates have been placed in local jobs, indicating that the participants shared the benefits of inclusive growth.

HOW CAN THE WPSI MODEL BE ADAPTED IN OTHER CITIES?

As with any urban transformation, there are elements of the WPSI story that are unique to Philadelphia and the University City neighborhood, with its particular civic landscape, at a specific moment of growth and appetite for innovation. Any attempt to adapt the model should be heavily informed by the nuances of the people, businesses,

Creating a WPSI-Inspired Model: Estimate of 2 Year Start-Up Cost[12]

Category	Year 1	Year 2
Program Expenses (e.g., wage supports, coaches, training materials)	33%	37%
Direct Staff	30%	32%
Operating Costs	15%	11%
Indirect Costs* (Salaries for external support functions, e.g. accounting)	13%	10%
Office Expenses	9%	9%
Marketing	0.3%	0.5%
Estimated Total Budget	**$710,000**	**$1,000,000**

relationships, and socioeconomic conditions of that community. However, we strongly believe that the enabling features of WPSI present valuable principles and approaches for any workforce development institution to adopt.

The WPSI model is particularly appropriate in a context of urban cores with a geographic concentration of:

Strong anchor employers, such as universities and hospitals experiencing chronic labor shortages or unsustainably high rates of turnover in entry-level professional jobs

A large jobless or underemployed population who are eager to connect to high quality organizations but face barriers to employment

A central intermediary like UCD to broker strategic relationships. While this could be a local Workforce Investment Board, Business or Neighborhood Improvement District, or Chamber of Commerce, what matters is that the intermediary is in a position to develop trusting relationships with and meet the needs of jobseekers and employers.

With those three ingredients in place, organizations aiming to implement the WPSI model must tailor the following tasks to their local context:

Focus on in-demand professional entry-level jobs, where there is usually a gap in public and private funding and quality programming—train to place, rather than "train and pray"

Build credibility with residents by partnering with organizations that have established trust with the community (e.g., trade schools, community organizations) and understand the strengths and needs of the local labor supply.

Find local experts to lead the initiative who understand the nuances of the target neighborhoods and employers and can quickly solve problems

Generate sufficient levels of funding an estimated $1.7M in start-up costs over 2 years, tapping local employers and philanthropies, or adopting an alternative financial model, such as fee-for-service or property assessment taxes

Reduce risk of failure by setting expectations that this model is not an immediate cure-all, but the beginning of systemic changes to hiring and training, and start small and build momentum as results are realized

Understand the context of the local labor market by evaluating existing programs and nuances that may make some positions more or less attractive to applicants

Collaborate with a strong network of partners, including the public workforce system to identify municipal labor shortages (e.g., bus drivers, EMTs) and what training programs they could fund

As cities redevelop their cores, meeting the needs of both the long-term residents and new residents will challenge many institutions seeking to offer a high quality of life and opportunity to all citizens. Organizations like WPSI can provide communities with a framework for inclusive economic growth. They can foster collaboration across different stakeholders—such as businesses, philanthropists, universities, hospitals, governments, and residents—and create a common vision for the city.

INTRODUCTION

HOW CAN URBAN AREAS ACHIEVE INCLUSIVE GROWTH?

Across the world, cities are rising rapidly as the engines of national economies. Cities are natural magnets for the creative and highly-educated talent required by the growing digital economy. At the same time, with national and supranational politics increasingly polarized, local leaders are now among the most trusted leaders in solving the world's toughest challenges.

Unfortunately, U.S. mayors and other local leaders face a complex challenge: urban economic growth is uneven, concentrating in very few neighborhoods with highly skilled talent or—what is worse—displacing less skilled workers from neighborhoods that have been redeveloped as a result of new investment. In fact, economic inequality within cities has worsened since the recession.[13] For example, in Atlanta and D.C., the top 5% of households now earn incomes 18 times greater than the bottom 20%.[14]

Mayors and civic leaders who are seeking to address this challenge will need to deploy local resources to connect existing residents with high-quality training programs that lead to well-paid jobs. However, they currently lack effective workforce development models.

Traditional public models were not designed for the new economy. Legacy federal systems have rigid requirements that deter change, despite $5 billion in annual federal investment.[15] Higher education programs, which include industry certificate programs as well as 4-year bachelor degrees, remain difficult to navigate and largely unaffordable to those that need them most.

Cities and employers also neglect workforce training investments. Only 2% of the country's $50 billion of economic incentives that cities give to attract employers fund customized, skill-specific job training, even though the returns from investments in targeted workforce development are 10 times greater for businesses than capital investments.[16]

Large organizations have difficulty changing their established recruitment processes to reach new labor markets and focus their training resources on mid-to upper-level employees, most of whom have already completed college. As a result, many under-skilled workers are unable to find ways to train for well-paid, available jobs in their areas, furthering the cycle of poverty and disenfranchisement.

A TIMELY, REPLICABLE MODEL TO SOLVE URBAN LABOR MARKET CHALLENGES

For 8 years, the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative (WPSI) has provided a replicable model for the kind of collective action needed to solve these urban labor market challenges. The model creates a career pipeline of unemployed residents to hard-to-fill jobs at local anchor institutions—moving residents into higher-wage jobs, while reducing turnover and hiring costs for WPSI's employer partners. Three unique components enable WPSI's success: providing staff with the resources and freedom to continuously improve services; investing in rigorous, individualized program design and execution; and prioritizing fostering relationships with local residents and employers. The replicable governance structure includes community voices and

defines clear, interdependent roles for its partners, whether residents, employers, or funders.

This WPSI case study is timely, given the attention investors and developers have paid to the federal tax incentive introduced under the Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017, which aims to spur private investments in low-income areas that have been designated as Opportunity Zones. This new tax incentive could attract hundreds of billions of dollars in private capital, making it one of the largest economic development initiatives in U.S. history.[17]

In addition to opportunities for capital investment, Opportunity Zones contain and are adjacent to underused labor markets—concentrations of jobless and underemployed residents. To create inclusive economic growth, communities must complement Opportunity Zone investments with strong workforce development strategies, linking residents to the jobs in their own communities. While WPSI emerged long before the enactment of Opportunity Zones, it is a viable model for cities aiming to expand economic opportunities for the citizens and places that have been left behind.

The Drexel University Nowak Metro Finance Lab has partnered with the Centre for Public Impact to conduct this analysis. We seek to better understand the types of innovation in leadership, program delivery, and collaboration that can regenerate cities. The WPSI model teaches us important lessons about the partners, resources, and agility an organization needs in order to change the trajectory of neighborhoods in urban centers currently plagued by poverty and unemployment.

THE WPSI MODEL:
KEY ENABLING FEATURES

THEY PROVIDE STAFF WITH THE RESOURCES AND FREEDOM TO CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE SERVICES

DEDICATED EXPERIENCED STAFF

Led by President Matt Bergheiser and Vice President Sarah Steltz, all WPSI staff are "nimble experts," with professional experience in workforce development or HR departments in Philadelphia, dedicated to improving the system. All external interviewees (i.e., employer partners, board members, and community leaders) noted the excellence of the reliable and attentive staff as a key component of success.

FLEXIBLE RESOURCES TO EXPERIMENT AND IMPROVE

The majority of WPSI's funding comes from philanthropic grants as general program support, providing staff with the freedom to allocate funding and iterate program structure as needed. This includes paying staff competitive salaries to attract and retain top talent.

AGILE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL GOVERNANCE

The minimal amount of bureaucracy within the small team enables collaboration, iteration, and quick implementation of new ideas. The strict chain of command and low risk tolerance at larger institutions often prevents innovative process change, especially in a function as critical as recruitment. Outcomes-focused governance enables the WPSI team to be creative, directly control the process, and offer bespoke services to their clients.

THEY INVEST IN RIGOROUS, INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAM DESIGN AND EXECUTION

TRAINING FOR GETTING (AND KEEPING) IN-DEMAND JOBS

Unlike the traditional "train and pray" model (i.e., programs that teach generally marketable skills and hope participants find a job), WPSI only accepts and trains applicants for vacancies that local employers are actively trying to fill. Training focuses on the foundational skills that prepare participants for demanding roles in a professional environment, while technical skills training ensures that they meet the qualifications for the position.

PARTICIPANT SUPPORTS AND EXPECTATIONS

WPSI Participants are held to high standards of excellence, such as timely and consistent attendance, and are exited if those standards are not met. WPSI provides supports to participants to meet those expectations, such as a financial stipend that reduces the need to take a job outside of the program and one-on-one coaching sessions to develop personal strengths and navigate external obstacles. Employers note that WPSI graduates have much better soft skills and show greater levels of professionalism and commitment than most traditional hires.

CUSTOMIZED PROGRAMMING FOR EACH EMPLOYER

Each partner noted that WPSI staff took the time to understand the needs and culture of the employer and to craft a true partnership. Interviews with current staff and site visits—such as riding along with emergency medical technicians (EMTs) or bus drivers—help WPSI staff craft customized training for each partner. WPSI staff check in frequently with the employer, creating a constant feedback loop to improve programming. Employers have recorded reductions in turnover of up to 50% as a result of their partnership with WPSI.

THEY PRIORITIZE FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS AND EMPLOYERS

EMPLOYER TRUST

WPSI has developed a reputation for delivering consistently excellent services that meet employers' specific needs. At first, UCD leveraged its existing relationships with anchor institutions to convince them to work with WPSI. The partnership quickly proved to be a smart business decision, as WPSI reduced hiring, training, and turnover costs, building a deep reservoir of trust with their partners.

INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN A ROBUST NETWORK OF PARTNERS

WPSI connects a wide range of stakeholders to new resources. Federal workforce programs have rigid funding requirements and require burdensome documentation that discourages private partnerships. Meanwhile, large private institutions can be reluctant to increase their budget to fund HR experiments. WPSI can more easily navigate public resources, and the resources of the clients, due to its position as an intermediary.

COMMUNITY CREDIBILITY

UCD and WPSI have spent years building credibility with the residents of West Philly and understanding their strengths and struggles. Participants' homes, training locations, and jobs are in the same neighborhood, reducing barriers such as access to transportation and creating a sense of pride working in their community. This dedication to place has fostered residents' trust in WPSI to act as an ambassador between them and large, local institutions, building social capital in the community for the benefit of all.

THE WPSI MODEL: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

West Philly faced population loss, residential and commercial vacancies, and disinvestment throughout the 1990s. While Philadelphia is the sixth-largest city in the U.S., with 1.5 million residents, today's population is lower than its peak of 2.1 million in 1950.[18] Deindustrialization and suburbanization caused nearly 5,700 manufacturing and wholesale firms—the base of the city's economy—to leave Philadelphia between 1960 and 1990.[19] As jobs left the city, so did the people who could afford to buy homes in the suburbs. West Philly lost a third of its residents between 1950 and 2000, and the families who stayed had a median income of $27,657, with nearly 16% of families living below the poverty line.

By 1994, the crime rate in West Philly had risen by 10% in 10 years, and local elementary schools ranked at the bottom of state-administered math and reading tests. However, east of this distress was "University City", home to such world-class institutions as Penn, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), and Drexel University. In 1996, a Penn graduate student was robbed and murdered in front of his wife just off campus, pushing the issue of student safety to the forefront of Penn's agenda. Students fled the neighborhood for Center City. In 1997, only 25% of Penn's graduate students lived in University City, compared to 60% in 1988.[20] Local institutions and businesses realized their viability was tied to the wellbeing of their neighborhood.

Urgent action was needed to rewrite the narrative of West Philly. In 1997, Penn's President Judith Rodin and Executive Vice President John Fry led the development of the West Philadelphia Initiatives (WPI), a partnership between Penn-sponsored investments, local businesses, and politicians. The WPI aimed to create clean, safe, and attractive streets and neighborhoods; excellent school options; high-quality, diverse housing choices; thriving local businesses; and increased job opportunities through economic inclusion.

University City District (UCD) was founded as an independent, 501(c)3 nonprofit[21] to coordinate initiatives in the special-services district established by the WPI. Fry invited over 25 local institutions to join and voluntarily pledge 5 years of funding for public services in the neighborhood. Institutions such as Penn, Drexel University, University of the Sciences, the Penn Health System, and the University City Science Center joined the board of the nascent organization. Together with local landlords, residents, and businesses, they donated around $22 million to fund a pilot project to clean up litter in public spaces, following the mantra of "clean and safe". This pilot was the start of a suite of services that UCD would eventually provide for residents.

> **"** *Philadelphia is a tale of two cities: One that is prospering and another that is falling behind. That dichotomy was especially acute in West Philadelphia, where deep poverty coexisted in the shadow of a vibrant cluster of universities, hospitals, research centers and innovation firms.* **"**
>
> *John Fry, President, Drexel University*

A growing capacity and influence to solve local economic development challenges

Today, UCD's mission is "Changing places, changing lives". It has evolved to support work in three key areas:

1. Public safety and space maintenance
2. Marketing and communications
3. Placemaking (i.e., economic development and planning)

UCD has continued to transform the neighborhood, creating public spaces such as The Porch at 30th St. Station, providing security services in the neighborhood on foot as well as on bikes, and running the Loop through University City (LUCY) shuttles. Today, 35 employees of UCD and around 85 contractors manage programming in 2.4 square miles of West Philly, roughly running from 30th Street to 50th Street and from Haverford Avenue to Woodland Avenue.

UCD's 25-member board is composed entirely of volunteers, including executive leadership of every major employer, local business owners, and representatives of 5 residential civic associations. Both John Fry and current chairman Craig Carnaroli have served as board chairman, in addition to their full-time positions as Executive Vice-Presidents of Penn, the largest employer in West Philly and the largest financial backer of UCD. Importantly, the board shares governance by providing each entity—whether the largest health system or the smallest neighborhood group—with one vote on how to invest in the community.

A civically funded model for neighborhood improvement

Fry modeled the special-services district on the Center City District, a Business Improvement District (BID) responsible for revitalizing Philadelphia's Center City neighborhood. Both UCD and traditional BIDs aim to promote and attract businesses to their district through marketing campaigns, placemaking efforts, and public programming. While the majority of BIDs are authorized by local government and funded by mandatory taxes on commercial property owners, UCD is funded by voluntary contributions.

The universities and hospitals in the district are not subject to the property taxes that fund other BIDs, and UCD did not want to levy taxes on residents or small businesses to fund its initiatives. Instead, UCD raises around $10 million each year, nearly half of which is board contributions, supplemented by grants, donations, and program revenues (e.g., LUCY shuttles, Green City Works).

A new partnership for neighborhood workforce development

In 2009, a separate initiative called the West Philadelphia Partnership (WPP) approached UCD. The WPP was founded in 1959 to improve the quality of life for those who work in West Philly. However, the WPP board had determined that other nonprofits had emerged to serve most of their core functions and decided to disband the program. Only one crucial project, an employer-driven workforce development program with The Netter Center for Community Partnerships at Penn, which connected youth to positions in academic medical centers, was at risk. WPP knew that the program's success required strong relationships with multiple institutions, leading them to UCD.

Around this time, UCD hired a new Executive Director, Matt Bergheiser, who believed that UCD could use its board members' influence to create job opportunities in West Philly. He had a fresh perspective on Philadelphia's workforce development ecosystem, after developing a community

> **"** *At its heart, UCD is the table where local anchor institutions, private companies, and community leaders do business together to solve problems and seize opportunities for the broader public good.* **"**
>
> *Matt Bergheiser,*
> *President, UCD*

Source	2012	2016	2017	2018
Board Contributions	48.5%	50.9%	45.4%	39.8%
Fee-for-Service Income	24.1%	27,2%	31.5%	27.1%
Grant Support	21.2%	14.6%	16.5%	26.7%
Other	6.3%	7.3%	6.5%	6.4%
Total	$8,440,117	$9,034,212	$10,156,367	$11,807,015
*Other includes Community contributions, sponsorships, in-kind contributions, and interest				

Breakout of UCD Funding 2012–2018 [22]

and economic development investment strategy for the Knight Foundation. Bergheiser also brought local economic development experience, having led the revitalization of downtown Trenton, New Jersey.

UCD's board was concerned about mission creep from safety and public services the original and traditional function of the BID, but ultimately agreed that the proposed model would benefit both residents and employers in University City. The board drew inspiration from the Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (BACH), which drew upon local employers and funders to create an employer-centered training model to fill critical shortages in Baltimore area hospitals. The board agreed to a two-year pilot of a neighborhood-focused workforce development system, essentially taking on the operations of the WPP program, but with limited staff support and no additional funds from UCD. Penn agreed to transfer ownership of the program and the remaining $64,000 in grant funding to UCD, which became the foundation of the pilot.

UCD presented its vision for employer-focused training programs, and received a $150,000 grant from the Job Opportunity

Investment Fund Philadelphia (JOIN) for the pilot. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), a national nonprofit that supports community development initiatives, provided an additional $330,000 in 2010 for the first program—training high-schoolers for STEM-focused internships at Penn Medicine. Over the next two years, this model was adapted and focused primarily on adults, forming the backbone of WPSI.

In 2010, UCD appointed its first full-time employee, Director Sheila Ireland, who had extensive experience in workforce development and hiring processes. She had formerly established

performance management and other crucial HR functions for a healthcare company, which had reduced turnover and decreased performance-based disciplinary actions. Ireland had also served as the Training and Organization Development Director for the City of Philadelphia, managing a $1.4 million budget and establishing a strategic vision and internal operational infrastructure.

In 2012, WPSI graduated its first official cohort, proving that its new approach to workforce development worked for employers and residents searching for better jobs

Drexel's College of Medicine, WPSI created an employment pipeline for Certified Medical Assistants (CMAs). This position was chosen because a turnover rate of 35% was raising the hiring and training costs for Drexel, causing internal turmoil. WPSI staff interviewed hiring managers, HR, and current CMAs to determine what was behind the high turnover and what skills were needed to excel in the position.

From there, WPSI sought applications from unemployed residents of five targeted zip codes, who had already earned their Medical Assistant Certificate, many with private, for-profit programs that failed to connect graduates with jobs. To connect with residents, WPSI staff visited local trade schools that offered CMA programs and presented students with an opportunity to gain real work experience.

WPSI's staff-developed curriculum taught foundational skills (i.e., soft skills), while Drexel led the technical training needed to begin employment. As participants gained technical skills from on-the-job training, they received increasing hourly wages from Drexel, on top of the training stipend provided by WPSI. At a time when Drexel was receiving about 400 applications for each job opening, partnering with WPSI for three cohorts resulted in cost-savings of $526,260 in wages and training due to reduced hiring and turnover costs. Successful graduates spread the word about WPSI, catching the attention of people who saw the results they expected from other programs come to life in their community.

DREXEL CMA PIPELINE RESULTS

- 51% average wage increase (from $7.66/hr to $11.59/hr)
- 95% of graduates found jobs within weeks of graduation
- 82% still employed 12 months later
- 36% more likely to remain with Drexel for 2 years than non-WPSI hires
- $526,260 in savings of wages and training costs for Drexel

THE WPSI MODEL: HOW IT WORKS

A NEW MODEL TO ADDRESS ENTRENCHED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

WPSI's success is attributed to the innovative model developed by Ireland, the founding director, and built on by Sarah Steltz, the former Director of Workforce and Economic Inclusion at Drexel University and current Vice President of Workforce Solutions at WPSI. Reinventing workforce development required experienced staff willing to solve the problems they encountered in the field. Ireland had observed three systemic issues in workforce development initiatives:

1. Jobseekers rarely fully utilized the tools available to them
2. Traditional program graduates lacked training in "soft skills" like conflict management
3. Employers struggled to adapt their hiring and retention processes to evolving challenges.

To address these issues, Ireland and Bergheiser created an intermediary that breaks from the standard 'one-size-fits-all' approach to workforce training. It runs adaptable training programs that connect ambitious, under-resourced residents with the specialized jobs at anchor employers—such as hospitals, universities, transportation authorities, and laboratories—that coexist in West Philly.

This new model was piloted and continuously refined by WPSI staff, now led by Steltz, who all have previous experience in the workforce development field, to tackle the system's major pain points. The major differences from the traditional public model include:

- Forming deep partnerships with employers to inform training
- Running a rigorous application and selection process
- Focusing training on foundational skills
- Requiring early exits for participants who fail to meet performance criteria
- Paying stipends and wages during the program
- Providing individualized coaching for participants every step of the way.

At $4,500 per placement, WPSI costs about the same as traditional federal workforce development programs (2015 data in 2019 dollars), but delivers better results. Overall, WPSI is more effective at placing graduates in higher-earning positions. WIOA's cost per placement rises to $6,423 for completers that earn at least $30,000 in the year after the program, the average earnings of WPSI participants.[23]

Much of this difference is likely due to WPSI's ability to select applicants for a specific job, and remove participants who do not meet strict performance criteria, such as consistent and timely attendance. WPSI offers one type of program to participants they believe will be successful, as opposed to federal workforce centers, which must cater to a wide variety of needs, lack the flexibility to segment or batch their participants, and cannot remove participants. Many prioritize placement in any job at any time or offer training that is not connected to a clear job or employer.

The WPSI model was not created to replace the public workforce system, but can benefit from it. In Philly, WPSI has collaborated with Philadelphia Works, the city's Workforce Development Board, to compensate training organizations for in-demand certifications, such as EMTs and Class A CDLs, with public funding. As an intermediary, WPSI navigated the government's reporting requirements for their private employer partners, unlocking funding streams and creating new partnerships.

Our anchor employers can be internal career ladders for entry-level workers, and we just have a connection problem. This isn't a for-profit model training people who have no clear path when they're done. Instead, WPSI is connecting people to actual jobs.

John Grady, former President, Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation

> **" UCD has a board that is entrepreneurial and takes risks, and leadership that has earned their trust to start an innovative program like this. The board also understands the value because the institutions they represent often become clients of WPSI. "**
>
> *Brian English, Director, Green City Works*

GOVERNANCE: AN ENTREPRENEURIAL, INFLUENTIAL BOARD AND TALENTED STAFF

As a subsidiary of UCD, WPSI operates under the same board of directors. The board approves an annual budget for UCD, which includes WPSI's operating costs. The board approves major expenses like WPSI's lease for office and training space and receives regular updates on its progress, but does not vote on individual cohorts or programs.

WPSI is funded by separate philanthropic grants and donations from UCD. It benefits from some support from UCD staff, including Bergheiser, now President of UCD, and from its functions, such as marketing and finance. The allocation of grant dollars is determined by the six full-time employees of WPSI: the Vice President of Workforce Solutions Sarah Steltz, the Senior Manager of Employer Services

Josh Park, the Senior Manager of Learning and Development Caitlin Garozzo, the Manager of Continuous Improvement Patrick Bayer, the Operations Coordinator Fontaine Gutierrez, and the Participant Services Coordinator Tiffany Smith.

ESTABLISHING TRUST WITH EMPLOYERS AND RESIDENTS

In lieu of direct financial backing, the UCD board has provided other essential support to WPSI. The existing relationships between UCD and its board members opened the door for WPSI to pitch its new workforce development model to potential employers. Highly collaborative partnerships with the largest employers in University City enabled UCD to test an entirely new "train and place" model of workforce development.

Organizations like Penn, which had participated in WPP's internship programs, helped WPSI secure an early opportunity to train high

schoolers for job vacancies. The first adult programming, training incumbent workers at Penn to improve performance, gained the trust of employers. Soon after that, Drexel agreed to work with WPSI to evaluate which positions would benefit from a more in-depth workforce analysis. After successful placements of 80% of graduates in the first year, and 83% in the second, more organizations opted to collaborate with WPSI. Today, employer partners outside of the UCD board are keen to approach WPSI to collaborate on training programs.

Equally important was establishing trust with the residents of West Philly. This work started by operating quality young adult internship programs. To raise awareness of the new adult program, specifically the Drexel CMA pipeline, WPSI and Drexel staff visited trade schools, talked to advisors, and presented students with an opportunity to gain work experience. Having the employer at these presentations signaled to the students that this program was different than the others. After the first cohort graduated and achieved the results they had hoped for in other programs, word spread around the community, especially to unemployed CMAs. Meeting people where they were already working toward success and bringing the employer to early presentations were essential to building trust with the community.

Metric	WPSI (2019)	WIOA (2015)	WIOA PHI (2015)
Cost Per Placement	$4,500	$4,975	N/A
Connected to Employment	97%	75%	68%
Average Earnings [25]	$14.54/hr ~$30,243	~$13.82/hr $28,747	$12.59/hr $26,189

Comparison of WPSI and PA WIOA Outcomes [24]

WPSI SERVES AS AN INTERMEDIARY SERVING BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND MAJOR EMPLOYERS

WPSI is committed to training West Philly residents for specific positions at local employers, one cohort at a time. This approach requires both personal investment in each applicant and understanding of the unique hiring needs of its employer partners.

Steltz has emphasized and shaped WPSI's role as a "talent consultancy," whereby WPSI develops expertise both in understanding resident labor supply and in meeting employer talent demand. Additionally, WPSI leverages its growing network to share knowledge between stakeholders. The staff's experience with federal workforce systems helped two partners access funding for in-demand job training where the cost of the required certification was limiting labor supply.

We built a reputation for quality programming through our work preparing high school students for full-time summer internships at Penn. That proved to funders and partners that we could produce real results in the community.

Sheila Ireland, Director of Workforce Development of Philadelphia & former Director of WPSI

BOARD MEMBERS

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Keith Kasper
—Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Penn Medicine
Daniel Liberatoscioli
—President, The Restaurant School at Walnut Hill College
Margaret Livingston
—Community Representative, Walnut Hill Community Association
Mark Mills
—Owner, Metropolis Group / 40th Street Live
Donald Moore
—Vice President of Real Estate and Facilities, Drexel University
Phil Moses
—Principal, Vice President, INTECH Construction, Inc.
Brad Paul
—Co-Owner and General Manager Central City & Ardmore Toyota
George Poulin
—Community Representative, Powelton Village Civic Association
Joe Reagan, Jr.
—Vice President, Development, Wexford Science and Technology
Joe Ritchie
—Vice President of Development, Brandywine Realty Trust
Josh Sevin
—President and CEO, International House
Douglas Smith
—Vice President, External Affairs, Verizon Pennsylvania

By harnessing the might of the institutions driving University City's economic boom, WPSI legitimized themselves to funders and leveraged name recognition with residents. In turn, WPSI reimagined their legacy hiring systems, building a bridge to dynamic local labor sources, who have access not only to employment, but also to pathways to career success. Since its first cohort, WPSI has proactively sought feedback from both participants and employers, so that programming can be adjusted where necessary. WPSI views this iteration as essential to improving their services and fostering strong, trusting relationships with, and between, stakeholders.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Staff Selection

A key component of WPSI's success is its staff. While people are not replicable, the core competencies of the team can be found in any city. Staff must be local experts, able to understand the needs of the employers, jobseekers, and funders in their community. As the team is serving several customers at any given time, they must also be comfortable facing ambiguity and solving problems quickly and gracefully. Importantly, they must be able to identify their own competitive advantages. WPSI contracts out aspects of its work, such as résumé-building, so the full-time staff can focus on their core competencies.

Partnership Selection

WPSI has also rejected some potential employer partners in the hospitality, retail, and insourcing industries in order to maintain its reputation with residents. If a potential partner is unable to articulate a clear career path for entry-level workers, or does

We don't have a way to connect to people in that way, and we heard that WPSI is great at recruitments. They are the convener, they know the community, and we provide the skills.

Chief Crystal Yates, Assistant Deputy Commissioner of EMS, Philadelphia Fire Dept.

We are responsible for serving two customers —employers and participants —so it is important to find staff that can meet the balance between operating like a business and a social service provider.

Caitlin Garozzo, Senior Manager of Learning and Development, WPSI

not offer workers a high enough wage, WPSI will not accept its partnership offer. WPSI has even convinced employers to raise wages, after showing the employer that it was losing prospective employees to competitors paying more for the same work.

Participant Selection

Applicants are required to have a high school diploma or GED, be over 18 years old, and be unemployed. For most cohorts, applicants must be residents of one of 5 or 7 targeted zip codes

WPSI'S COHORT CREATION PROCESS INVOLVES SIX STEPS

1. Engage the employer to collect performance data and establish the business case for the program, get employer-buy-in, and determine program logistics

2. Design the program around the foundational skills needed to succeed in any professional job and determine who will teach the technical skills specific to the position (e.g., the employer or a third-party provider)

3. Recruit and select participants by reaching out to a wide range of potential participants through listservs and community organizations and leaders, host an information session on the cohort with the employer, and review applications to choose the cohort

4. Deliver the program by collaborating with employers to deliver technical skills and bringing in experienced executive coaches to develop participants' foundational skills

5. Place participants in employment after completing mock interviews and the interview with the employer partner guaranteed by graduating from the program

6. Provide post-program support through continued personal coaching and assistance to increase participants' chances of retention and success.

West Philadelphia Skills Initiative
COVERAGE MAP

that cover most of West Philly. Some programs have additional work or education requirements, such as being able to pass a drug test or being a non-smoker, that are clearly stated in the marketing materials and the application itself. Since 2014, WPSI has cultivated a pathway to work for returning citizens as part of the annual landscaping cohorts that connect to UCD's landscaping company, Green City Works.

WPSI WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Engage the Employer to understand their unique needs

WPSI forms collaborative relationships with its employer partners to identify positions that have a high number of vacancies or high turnover rates and are customer-facing. Cohorts

We wanted to create a proactive, individualized program that matches people to good jobs for them, not responding to everyone who comes through the door with prescribed services.

Patrick Bayer, Manager of Continuous Improvement, WPSI

Participants Served by Year
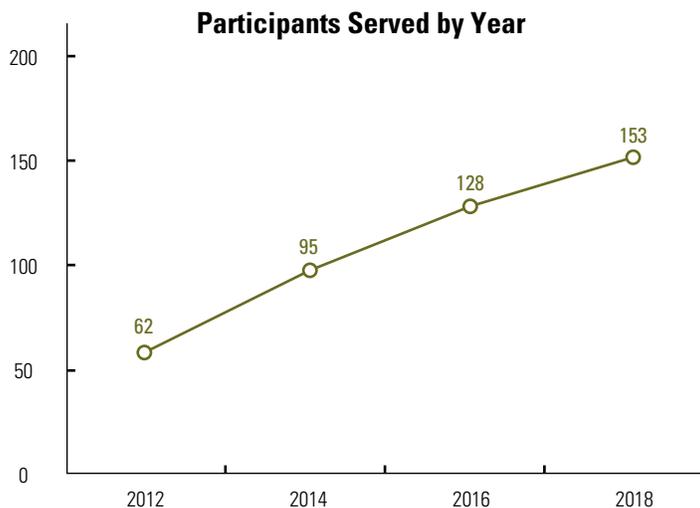
Ages of WPSI Partcipants	
18-24	12%
25-34	50%
35-44	22%
45-54	9%
55+	7%

are only established after the employer partner and WPSI have identified a position with a need for a new hiring pipeline that will help the employer's bottom line. This need will have manifested itself in different ways, such as high turnover in an entry-level position or a position that remains open because the cost of a mandatory certificate was too high for interested applicants.

Employers may attribute turnover to technical deficiency, but WPSI analyzes data in ways its partners do not, and interviews workers to uncover the true source of any problems. These may include application filters that disqualify suitable candidates early on, or the culture of a particular department. WPSI also focuses its programming on positions that have a career path with opportunities for promotion and higher wages. A professional pitch and compelling data demonstrate the value of collaborating on a targeted, selective talent pipeline for potential employer partners. The employer chooses the graduation date and size of the cohort, and WPSI works backwards to create a program that meets those criteria.

Design a bespoke program

Once a position is chosen, WPSI staff take time to design a bespoke curriculum with the employer. This process includes interviewing people currently in the position, their managers, hiring specialists, and any other important stakeholders. WPSI staff undertake site visits—such as riding along with EMTs or bus drivers—to understand the unique demands of the job and what skills participants would need to be an effective and successful employee.

Employer partners all noted that no other workforce entity had spent as much time and

effort conducting due diligence and providing support during onsite training. WPSI considers this information essential to understanding the needs of the position and the culture of the employer, which have a significant bearing on the participant selection process. The employer partners also identify if technical training will be led by in-house staff or a third-party provider. If the training leads to a certificate, WPSI staff will collaborate with the public system, Philadelphia Works, to determine if federal funding can reimburse the provider, easing the cost and regulatory burden for training partners.

Recruit and select participants that are a strong fit for the job profile

WPSI co-hosts an optional information session about the target position with the employer, which honestly portrays the program and

the job requirements. The employer's presence is important because it shows they take the program seriously and builds credibility with residents. All interested participants are then required to complete an online application that does not require a resume, but instead

> *Every cohort focuses first on what many call 'soft skills,' but at WPSI, we prefer to say 'foundational' because they are the basis of any career. Technical skills get you a job, and foundational skills allow you to keep it.*

Sarah Steltz, Vice President of Workforce Solutions, WPSI

The Three P's of Foundational Skills

1. Personal Power—recognizing the power of vulnerability and asking for help, understanding the relationship between one's choices and actions, and developing an internal "locus of control," or a feeling of control of the events in one's own life to increase self-confidence

2. Problem Solving—creating a growth mindset, or the belief that everyone is capable of learning new skills throughout their lives and that failure does not indicate deficit or inability, but is an opportunity to grow; cultivating critical thinking in decision-making; leveraging past successes; and building resilience in facing uncertainty

3. Perspective Shifting—understanding one's own perspective on the world and unpacking personal experiences to change any unhealthy learned behavior and build career goals

focuses on understanding the experiences and characteristics of the applicant. WPSI staff iterate on the application's questions and structure so that it guides participants to provide the correct information, as many participants are not familiar with the application process.

Residents reliably meet the demand—one cohort with 12-15 vacancies received 700 applications. If the applicant pool is too shallow, WPSI will determine why this happened (e.g., a position with lower wages than peers) and discuss the reasons with the employer. To fairly assess all applicants, WPSI staff personally evaluate each application, because they have found that automated hiring tools often filter out otherwise qualified candidates, based on irrelevant criteria. Selected applicants are then interviewed at WPSI headquarters.

Once they are accepted for the cohort, participants attend an orientation day that outlines the expectations of the program. Staff estimate that most participant dropouts occur after the orientation day, when applicants realize how demanding the process will be.

During this time, participants also begin completing any additional application needs that the employer may have (e.g., background check, drug test, copy of GED or diploma). Class sizes are determined by how many people the employer wants to hire and average from 15 to 20 participants. For the duration of the program, WPSI pays participants a stipend to reduce dropouts due to personal financial reasons. During technical on-the-job training, employers often pay participants a performance-based stipend that gradually increases in line with their skill level.

Deliver the Program

The first three weeks of all cohorts focus on the foundational skills essential to success in any job (e.g., workplace norms, self-regulation, critical thinking, self-confidence). This coursework is designed to help participants understand themselves and their career goals, and learn how to navigate the job market and succeed in the workplace. WPSI teaches the "3 Ps" of foundational skills: Personal Power, Problem Solving, and Perspective Shifting.

The more we have become involved in the training program, the greater success our employees, and the higher retention rate, we have seen. We used to only volunteer to lead mock interviews, but now we have Allied Universal staff teaching sections of the program.

Jim Carter, Account Manager, Allied Universal

All foundational classes are taught by facilitators with leadership development and personal coaching experience, as well as trauma-informed-care training. Many participants from underserved neighborhoods have experienced trauma, which must be respectfully addressed and overcome before they are able to fully dedicate time and energy to personal and professional development. A core philosophy of these facilitators is to treat participants as career professionals.

Example Program Structure

Phase	Weeks	Time in classroom training (hours per week)	Time in Clinical Practice (hours per week)	Training Stipend Rate
1	1-4	35	0	$9.50
2	5-8	16	24	$11.50
3	9-12	8	32	$13.75
4	13-20	2	38	$14.75
Post- Program	6 months	Post-placement coaching		$15.00

"Their assessment process was not one I've seen with any other private organization I've worked with and it showed they took the work seriously. They put in time and effort to understand the needs of the job."

Chief Crystal Yates, Assistant Deputy Commissioner of EMS,

Philadelphia Fire Department

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

WPSI consistently evaluates its performance by tracking key metrics internally:

- **Number of participants served**
- **Number of graduates**
- **Number of graduates placed in employment**
- **Length of participants' unemployment prior to WPSI**
- **Successful candidates' retention rate at 3, 6 and 12 months**
- **Pre-program wage**
- **Post-program wage**
- **Average wage increase post-program**
- **Total wages earned by all participants**
- **Cost per placement**
- **Number of partner institutions served**
- **Total number of cohorts per partner**
- **Number of partner institutions served**
- **Participants' Brief Resilience Scale scores pre- and post-program**
- **Participants' General Self-Efficacy Scale scores pre- and post-program**
- **Participants' Mindful Attention Awareness Scale scores pre- and post-program**

*"*Our funders have given us flexibility because funders want to support a success story. We can hire the best staff and instructors and deliver a quality service.*"*

Sarah Steltz,

Vice President of Workforce Solutions, WPSI

Participants also have weekly personal and group coaching sessions, which provide them with the tools they need to navigate personal and professional obstacles. The sessions also give WPSI staff a holistic view of the challenges participants face. The facilitators and WPSI staff conduct weekly evaluation and feedback sessions to track individual progress.

After the three to four weeks of foundational skills development, cohorts often begin technical training. This component varies greatly in length and content, depending on the position, and can last anywhere from one week to six months. As the program progresses, the employer partners usually become more involved so they can get to know the participants as prospective employees, and participants can learn more about the potential employer. This involvement ranges from presentations and mock interviews to running a six-month training course for a certificate. Deciding on the employer's level of involvement is a key negotiation when forming the program, and depends on the resources and capacity of the client. In the case where employers require a certificate but do not provide training, WPSI has partnered with third party training providers.

Connect participants to employment

All graduates are guaranteed an interview with the cohort's employer partner, which is generally conducted during the program. The last day of the program consists of a closing focus group, reflecting on the personal and professional progress all participants have made, and a debriefing on the program itself.

Employers extend offers to quality candidates– there is no contract or requirement that any graduates are hired, which makes participation a low risk for employers. Thus far, employers have hired from every cohort; at the same time, competitors are also able to, and often do, make offers to candidates. After every cohort, WPSI staff will have a formal debriefing with the employer to determine how the programming could be improved for the next cohort, further building trust and understanding of employer needs.

REPRESENTATIVE WPSI FUNDING MILESTONES

• 2009: WPSI takes over $64,000 in remaining grant funds from the West Philadelphia Partnership

• 2010: LISC awards $330,000 for the first program—training high schoolers for STEM -focused internships at Penn Medicine

• 2010: JOIN grants WPSI $150,000 over 2 years to hire a WPSI director

• 2014: Pew Charitable Trusts grants $180,000 to scale over 3 years

• 2017: Pew Charitable Trusts grants $600,000 to scale over 3 years

• 2017: UCD and WPSI receive Bank of America's Neighborhood Builders Award and $200,000 prize

• 2018: Grants from 13 organizations, average of $62,500, totaling $5,865,708 (including a one-off $5m grant from the Lenfest Foundation)

• 2019: Grants from 9 organizations, average of $91,200, totaling $1,102,926

• Ongoing: yearly grants from local sources, such as Citizens Bank Foundation and Lincoln Financial Foundation, range from $10-125,000

Provide post-program support

After graduation, WPSI helps new employees transition fully into their workplaces through a variety of optional services, such as financial advising and personal coaching. Those that did not get an offer receive additional help connecting to work. WPSI hosts two annual events for alumni to reconnect and expand their networks, and for staff to catch up with alumni. Alumni are always welcome to stop by WPSI headquarters to take advantage of personal coaching services or for informal check-ins.

THE FUNDING MODEL

Although it is affiliated with UCD, WPSI's operations are entirely self-supporting. Philanthropic grants and private donations, largely from local sources, cover the roughly $1 million program costs each year, which include staff salaries, coaching contracts, wage subsidies for participants, and alumni network programming.

WPSI Budget Breakdown[26]

Expense Category	2018	2019
Direct Staff	42%	44%
Program Expenses	20%	18%
WPSI Office	17%	14%
Program Support	0%	0%
Grantmaking	0%	11%
Operating Costs	21%	13%
Total Budget	$732,306	$1,192,866

IMPACT OF WPSI MODEL ON WEST PHILADELPHIANS

Has WPSI benefited long-term residents and created inclusive growth?

Many stakeholders interviewed for this study stated that the economic growth of University City, led by UCD, has regenerated the central business area as well as multiple retail corridors in West Philly. An important concern about the revitalization of urban neighborhoods is whether initiatives would displace low-income residents and residents of color by providing jobs and amenities only to new residents.

This section examines the transformation of West Philly between 2000 and 2018, in an early attempt to determine what effect WPSI had on participants entering employment and on employers' retention rates. It is clear that economic activity in University City has increased, and that the residential census tracts closest to the business center and universities have seen an increase in the percentage of new residents. Four census tracts in University City identified as likely to be gentrified gained 1,668 residents from 2010 to 2017, to 15,219 in total. The tracts gained 1,100 white residents, while the African American population decreased by 580.[27] Development has not caused large-scale displacement, but has resulted in a substantial decrease in affordable housing units.[28]

In 2018, the University City area achieved 80,000 jobs for the first time, having added 5,000 jobs in the previous 3 years, and over 20,000 jobs since 2002. Today, 70% of jobs in University City pay $40,000 or more, which includes the jobs WPSI candidates are pursuing. Importantly, even in an innovation hub focused on the health and education sectors, 55% of jobs do not require a bachelor's degree. [29]However, these positions generally require skills and professional behaviors not taught in high school. Without WPSI's pipeline of local talent into rapidly growing institutions, residents would still feel locked out of their neighborhood's economic growth.

Instead, WPSI has connected 530 West Philly residents with the resources and the opportunities to move from unemployment or low-wage jobs with no chance of career development into full-time positions with benefits. These workers have earned over $37 million in additional wages, which—research suggests—results in increased spending on food outside of the home (e.g., in restaurants).[30] Because many West Philly businesses are independent and locally owned, these additional wages have a multiplier effect in the community. One study has estimated that 48% of each purchase at a local independent business is recirculated locally, fueling more growth.[31]

One of WPSI's strongest hiring relationships is with UCD itself. In 2016, Brian English came to UCD to start up Green City Works (GCW), a landscaping company that sources all employees through WPSI. UCD founded GCW because WPSI had an established landscaping technician program, wanted to encourage more men to apply, and saw an opportunity to connect citizens returning from prison to jobs. English and his team "bring dignity to what is considered a labor position and treat it as a profession"[32] by offering wages 50% higher than competitors, stable hours, benefits, and additional skills training, such as horticultural certificates and managing finances, through WPSI during the slower winter months. The technicians enjoy the rapid growth and responsibility at GCW, and 5 have been promoted to management positions. Only 2 of 18 hires have left for other companies. GCW's clients are many of the same institutions that partner with WPSI and serve on UCD's board, further strengthening the local community.

However, West Philadelphia still faces challenges. Nearly 7% of the 245,709 residents are still unemployed. Of those working, over 1 in 3 live below the poverty level. Many live slightly above the poverty level, as 45% of residents earn less than $25,000 per year. These low earnings can be linked to the low education attainment of the neighborhood, where only 21% of residents have a bachelor's degree. While structural barriers such as cost continue to keep college and certificate programs out of reach, programs like WPSI are vital to helping residents develop the skills for higher-wage jobs.

WPSI has connected residents to better jobs and careers more successfully than the vast majority

REPRESENTATIVE POSITIONS FOR WPSI GRADUATES

- Patient Sitter
- Inpatient Clerk
- Bus Operator
- EMT
- Security Officer
- Grounds Maintenance Landscaper
- Dental Assistant
- Lab Technician
- Assistant Teacher
- Bike Patrol Officer
- Certified Medical Assistant

of peer workforce programs. Of WPSI graduates, 93% are connected to employment, with 82% retaining employment for 12 months or more. They enter jobs earning an average starting wage of $14.54, a 25% average increase over their pre-program wage, and a 20% higher wage than the median workforce development organization in the Northeast region of the U.S.

Partners experience clear financial and logistical benefits from working with WPSI. As a "talent consultancy," WPSI identifies a list of interviewees who have already met requirements, such as background checks or drug tests, and have already completed basic training requirements, reducing the burden on employers' recruitment and HR functions. For example, Penn used to spend one full week interviewing candidates for custodian positions. After

partnering with WPSI, they filled all available positions in one day.

WPSI's data-informed needs assessments focus employers' attention on the positions that bear the greatest turnover and operational costs. Turnover costs an estimated 33% of an employee's salary, so the turnover of a full-time worker at WPSI's average post-program wage of $14.51 per hour would have cost an employer $10,100.[33] As the CMA pipeline program saved Drexel $526,000 over 3 years for 36 hires, this number may be an underestimate. In other cases, chronic labor shortages due to a lack of high-quality, qualified candidates threatened employers' business operations. The WPSI model produces a predictable number of candidates on a set date, helping employers plan hiring.

With WPSI, UCD has modeled how to connect residents to the opportunities in their backyard, increasing their potential lifetime earnings and the bottom line of the institutions that hire them.

Demographics of WPSI participants and West Philadelphia		
Race / Ethnicity	WPSI Participants	West Philadelphia[34]
Black or African-American	93.2%	76.2%
White	2.4%	17.2%
Hispanic or Latino	1.3%	2.0%
Other	3.1%	4.7%

Metric	WPSI 2018	NE Benchmark 2016-Median[35]	NE Benchmark 75th Percentile
Completion	72%	82%	95%
Completer Placement	91%	70%	87%
Wage (2018$)	$14.54	$12.26	$12.73
6 month retention	88%	58%	68%
12 month retention	82%	43%	66%

" *This program has helped me find myself, build my confidence. Not only did we gain professional education, we also gained life skills, learning how to stay financially stable and also how to prioritize our lives.* **"**

Shanise Hicks, CHOP
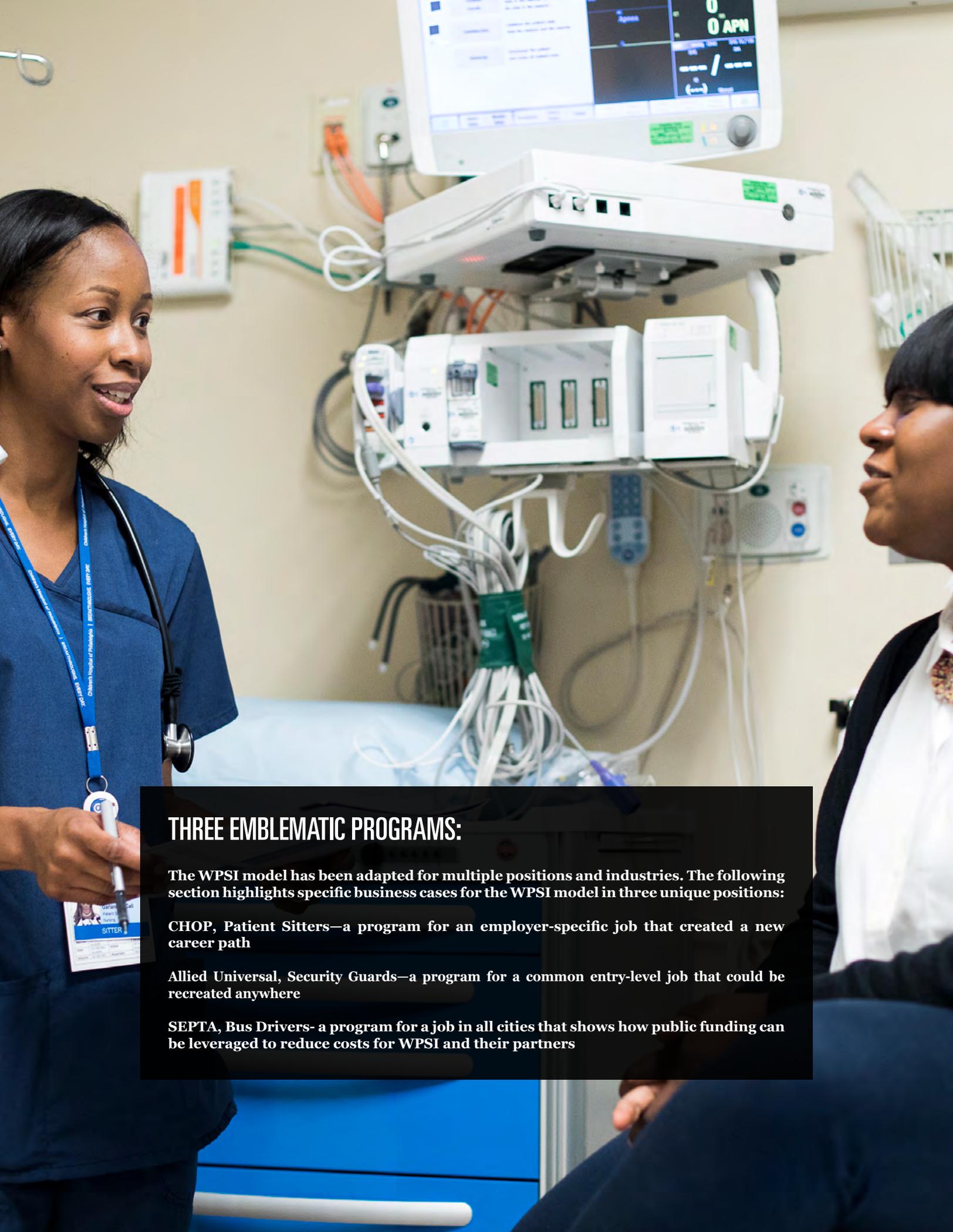
THREE EMBLEMATIC PROGRAMS:

The WPSI model has been adapted for multiple positions and industries. The following section highlights specific business cases for the WPSI model in three unique positions:

CHOP, Patient Sitters—a program for an employer-specific job that created a new career path

Allied Universal, Security Guards—a program for a common entry-level job that could be recreated anywhere

SEPTA, Bus Drivers- a program for a job in all cities that shows how public funding can be leveraged to reduce costs for WPSI and their partners

THE CHOP PATIENT SITTER PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) is a globally renowned hospital, Philadelphia's second largest private employer, and one of the founding board members of UCD. Since 2001, CHOP has been undergoing a $1.5 billion expansion that has doubled the main hospital's size, while also building more than one million square feet of new research and outpatient facilities on an eight-acre site south of the main hospital on Civic Center Boulevard.

BUSINESS CASE

Hospitals across the U.S. are facing talent shortages that are projected to worsen. Employment of nursing assistants is projected to grow by 9% from 2018 to 2028, much higher than the average rate.[36] At CHOP, Patient Sitters help clinical staff ensure patient safety by monitoring patients at their bedsides and reassuring families that their children are always with a competent, caring staff member.

Patient Sitters are not full-time positions, they are per-diem without benefits, so CHOP does not have a set number of staff it must employ, as long as all shifts are covered. However, CHOP experienced chronic vacancies in the position, especially for the overnight third shift. Recruiting for the Patient Sitter role historically relied on high school graduates and university students in medical or nursing fields, who often did not consider the role a long-term position.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Madeline Bell, CHOP's CEO, previously sat on UCD's board of directors, where she learned about WPSI and saw a potential solution for filling chronically vacant shifts in the hospital. In 2012, Bell reached out to Kim Delaney, Director of Enterprise Talent Acquisition within Human Resources, to see if partnering with WPSI made sense for CHOP. As part of her pitch to CHOP, Sheila Ireland linked information about the WPSI model's success—placing 80% of graduates in the first year alone—with the stories of the individuals behind the numbers. Delaney's experience creating successful pipelines with high schools and other

> *We have some really difficult-to-fill positions. And if we can look to our local community to fill those positions—to me it's an opportunity to get people back to work, to have people have pride in their community, to be part of something that's bigger in their community.*
>
> *Madeline Bell, CEO, CHOP*

workforce programs convinced her that WPSI's approach would prepare candidates properly for a demanding workplace environment.

However, Delaney was also concerned about bringing in people who had been out of the workforce into the fast-paced, rigorous environment of a children's hospital. WPSI and Delaney identified the Patient Sitter position as a testing ground to see if graduates would thrive in the culture of excellence at CHOP. As a per-diem position, CHOP would bear lower termination costs if the program graduates

did not meet Delaney's high bar. Successful Patient Sitters could be promoted to a full-time position with benefits.

In 2013, CHOP and WPSI graduated the first and second Patient Sitter cohorts. However, WPSI staff noticed that graduates sometimes failed to complete the weeklong onboarding process at CHOP, frustrated at the delay to working and earning money. Steltz proposed a simple, radical solution—bring CHOP onboarding to WPSI HQ, and let new hires complete paperwork on WPSI's computers so they could start working on their first day. Retention rates immediately increased.

CHOP's involvement continued to increase. Each year, two CHOP HR staff join the WPSI classroom to practice interview skills and phone etiquette, offer advice on how to dress and act in the workplace, and talk about the hospital's mission. Their goal is for candidates to feel supported by CHOP staff and know they have champions before they begin working there.

Together, WPSI and CHOP formed a pipeline for residents of West Philly to an entry-level position that serves as a starting point for full-time work with

" The WPSI staff know our culture, which helps us screen the candidates. They know only to put people into the program who arrive five minutes early. CHOP's culture is rigorous, and I wanted to make sure we weren't setting people up to fail. "

Kim Delaney, Director of Enterprise Talent Acquisition, CHOP

benefits. WPSI and CHOP have hosted at least one Patient Sitter cohort every year since 2013, placing 139 residents in jobs.

IMPACT

CHOP experiences two significant benefits from the partnership. In the short term, CHOP grew its local talent pool and reduced chronic shift vacancies. Delaney and her staff have noted that WPSI graduates tend to work more shifts than other hires, easing scheduling for CHOP staff, who had never seen Patient Sitters proactively asking for additional hours before. Overall, CHOP has created an internal talent pipeline from Patient Sitter to other essential roles in the nursing department.

Because few Patient Sitters before had treated the position as the starting-point of a career, CHOP did not have an established career path for the WPSI graduates who

were thriving in CHOP's culture of excellence and were eager to take on greater responsibility. This new talent pool enables CHOP to promote internally, reducing hiring costs and placing workers into positions where HR knows they will thrive. Over 100 WPSI graduates have been promoted into full-time positions, such as unit clerks (the "air traffic controllers" of a unit), office coordinators, secretarial roles, and senior nursing aides.

The initiative is now in its 7th year and 13th cohort. The long relationship has benefitted both groups—WPSI is able to better identify individuals who will be successful in the Patient Sitter position and in CHOP's culture, and CHOP is able to ease the transition of workers with the right skills who may not have worked in a similar place. CHOP has increased the size of its hiring cohorts from the original group of 10 to 29 in the most recent one.

The Patient Sitter program has successfully opened the door to CHOP for nearly 140 West Philadelphians, and provided CHOP with a reliable and predictable stream of qualified applicants to meet their staffing demand. CHOP hires an average of 87% of graduates from each cohort, with the 2019 cohort placing 97% of graduates.

After the 20-day program, WPSI participants hired as Patient Sitters earn an average hourly wage that is $2.25 greater than their pre-program wage. After 2 years at CHOP, the cohort of 2017 is earning an additional $3.67 per hour on average—$7,623 per year working full-time.

The greatest indicator of success is the new hires' retention rates. An average of 92% of each cohort are still employed 6 months later, and nearly 90% are still working there a year after graduation.

ALLIED UNIVERSAL SECURITY GUARDS

BACKGROUND

With over 200,000 employees and a 60-year history, Allied Universal (Allied) is North America's leading private security services provider. UCD's original mission was "Clean and Safe," which led them to contract with Allied for "safety ambassadors", or security guards, to patrol the neighborhood. This relationship led to Allied becoming an early employer partner of WPSI.

BUSINESS CASE

High turnover rates plague the security industry, with a national average of 62% turnover of security guards in 2019.[37] The average turnover cost of a security guard is around $2,500, which includes background checks, drug tests, training, and administrative work. Additionally, security guards are very visible to clients, so high turnover increases the risk that a shift will be left vacant and damage the client relationship. Security firms like Allied have a very strong business incentive to reduce turnover.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In 2012, Alan Garry moved from his position as an account manager with Allied to serve as the Vice President of Public Safety and Community Services at UCD. Garry saw a natural fit between the budding WPSI program and Allied, which was always searching for more qualified applicants.[38] The two organizations had formed a strong relationship through the Clean and Safe partnership, so Allied was eager to work with the WPSI team.

In 2013, the third and fourth cohorts placed 100% of graduates, a total of 23 security guards, with Allied. Many employees work in University City with Penn, Drexel or the University of Sciences, or as Safety Ambassadors in UCD's Clean and Safe program. Allied prides itself on hiring from within, allowing security guards to develop management experience.

Allied has since offered 2 cohorts of 15-18 participants per year. Over time, Allied has become more involved in the training process. Staff started off conducting mock interviews with participants near the end of the program, then began presenting information about the company and its culture in day-long workshops, and eventually moved into teaching full sections of the curriculum. Playing a more active role in the growth and development of participants has benefitted both parties: Allied felt more personally invested in the graduates and understood their personal strengths, while employee retention and overall success increased.

IMPACT

WPSI graduates have a turnover of 31% annually—half the rate of traditional hires. Managers who have not interacted with WPSI often ask when the next cohort of graduates is coming, because they associate the program with dedicated workers who demonstrate excellent soft skills.

Additionally, WPSI reduces the downtime typically experienced by new hires. The required background check and CPR certification are completed during WPSI's training program, another example of tailoring the curriculum to the employer's needs. Typically, off-the-street hires must wait two to three weeks after being hired to begin work, while their documents are processed.

Allied noted that WPSI grads stand out on day two of training, after all new hires complete a full-day orientation and spend a shift shadowing an on-duty officer, because they prove to be more dependable and comfortable on the job.

The 145 graduates placed into security guard positions across the 14 cohorts since 2013 enter a private union with healthcare and an average 22% wage increase. Nearly 70% of participants graduate from the cohort, and 97% enter employment with Allied. The company prides itself on hiring from within, so many of the WPSI graduates have been promoted to officer and supervisor positions.

Of the 60 officers of the Clean and Safe program, 9 are WPSI graduates, patrolling their own neighborhoods. Another 5 have started at Clean and Safe, but were promoted within Allied or left for higher pay at other institutions. They describe a deep sense of pride being able to give back to their communities in a professional capacity, and Allied is proud to have them representing the Allied Universal brand.
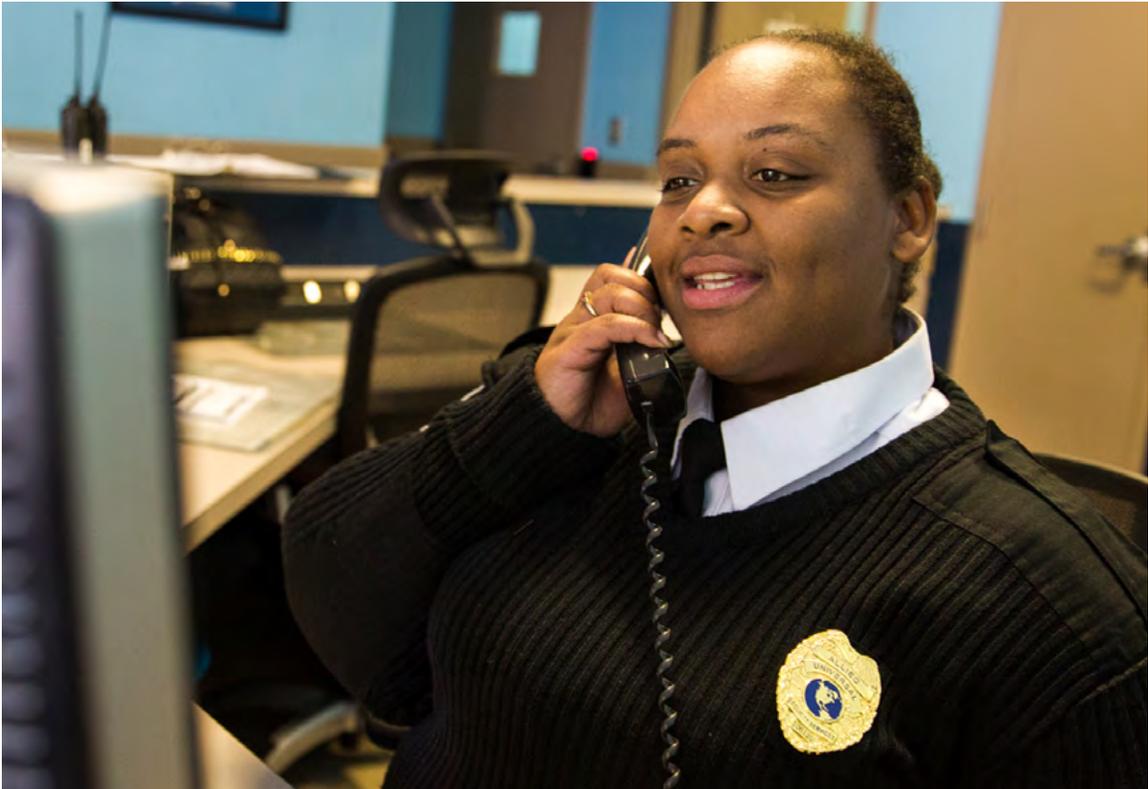
" *The opportunity to get to know the people throughout the cohort is so valuable to us. We knew one young man would excel on the bike patrol—he had the right level of energy and personality. But he didn't know how to ride a bike. We taught him, and two years later he's still patrolling his neighborhood.* **"**

Alan Garry, Public Safety and Community Services, UCD

" *Our WPSI grads move seamlessly into work. Security is just one thing that happens at Allied, and WPSI grads have more confidence and are comfortable doing the work on day one.* **"**

Jim Carter, Account Manager, Allied Universal

THREE EMBLEMATIC PROGRAMS:
SEPTA BUS OPERATORS

BACKGROUND

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) provides bus, commuter rail, rapid transit (subway trains), light rail, and trolley services for the city of Philadelphia and its surrounding counties. SEPTA is the sixth-largest transit system in the U.S., completing over 306 million trips each year. SEPTA and UCD developed a relationship while collaborating on the LUCY transit system, which offers free transportation for employees of Penn, University City Science Center, and CHOP-all WPSI partners.

BUSINESS CASE

Nearly 155 million trips—half of SEPTA's yearly total—are completed on buses. However, bus ridership has been declining since 2015, which is partly attributable to trip cancellations due to absentee drivers.[39] An increase in vacant positions, caused by high turnover and the retirement of older drivers, meant that SEPTA needed to hire 30 new drivers a month to maintain a full staff of 2,800 operators. However, finding 30 viable candidates who pass a drug test, a background check, and a driving record check often required interviewing over 300 applicants, straining both HR and the drivers in the field.

Once interviewed, candidates must earn a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) in order to operate a bus. In the Philadelphia market, CDL training and license testing cost at least $5,000, with varying quality across programs. Often, this cost is a barrier to entry for low-income workers, further reducing SEPTA's potential labor pool.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Dan Amspacher, SEPTA's Director of Strategic Initiatives for Human Resources, is constantly looking to develop creative ways to build a stable workforce, which has become more difficult in a tighter labor market. Philadelphia struggles with a paradox of a low unemployment rate and a high concentration of poverty. This leaves employers endeavoring to fill vacancies in entry-level positions. Well-educated candidates are navigating a tight upper-level labor market, while residents of poorer neighborhoods struggle to move into good jobs, due to lack of

> *A lot of firms think they have the answers, but WPSI talked to actual bus operators and learned what we need in a candidate. It's easy to wave a good, stable job in front of someone who is unemployed, but WPSI finds the people willing and able to get up at 5am and perform a customer-facing job every day.*
>
> *Jacob Aufschauer, Senior Director of Human Resources, SEPTA*

connections, cost barriers to skill development, and difficulty gaining relevant experience.

UCD approached SEPTA with a presentation when WPSI was still in its early stages, but did not feel that this was the right time to move forward. In 2018, UCD approached SEPTA again, which led to a series of meetings. SEPTA saw the opportunity for a win-win partnership with a group that had a reputation of successfully navigating a large, untapped labor pool to produce applicants who meet its employer partners' standards.

SEPTA became increasingly impressed with the amount of work—including multiple interviews and ride-alongs with current bus operators—carried out by WPSI staff to understand the type of applicants and skills SEPTA needed. After months of program development, SEPTA and WPSI hosted an information session that attracted 300 people to a ballroom in West Philly, where Amspacher took the mic and described the benefits and challenges of the position to the potential applicants. WPSI interviewed over 100 applicants and moved 15 into the cohort in the spring of 2019. After graduating WPSI, candidates began the official SEPTA training program, which lasts 8 to 10 weeks.

However, the cost barrier to CDL training and testing remained. WPSI's staff presented a creative solution—finding a third-party company with a strong track record of providing CDL license training and tapping funding from Philadelphia Works, the city's public workforce development board, to pay the partner. WPSI contracted with Goodwill Industries of Southern New Jersey and Philadelphia to provide a course specifically for the participants at no cost to them or to SEPTA. Philadelphia Works funded the class, which cost them $4,000 per participant—less than the market rate—because it would result in a standardized, valuable certification and was linked to an in-demand job within the municipal government. For its part, SEPTA was confident that the graduates would be entering training with the skills they needed to succeed.

IMPACT

WPSI only selects candidates who can meet SEPTA's requirements and only graduates participants that have a CDL and the resilience and dedication to needed to show up to work every day. Of the 71% of participants who graduated the first cohort, all were hired by SEPTA to begin bus operator training. Nearly 80% completed the rigorous 1-2 month training, the same rate as the average training group.

WPSI has removed the cost barrier to stable employment for low-income residents by using public workforce funds to pay for CDL license training. After completing training, bus operator wages start from $16.14 an hour to $17.28 an hour, depending on their assigned location. All starting wages increase annually by 10% for the first four years. After four years, the top hourly rate ranges from $26.90 an hour to $28.81 an hour, depending on service location. The average WPSI graduate earned a wage 20% greater than their pre-program earnings, with a clear path to higher earnings.

Additionally, WPSI's up-front analysis included an assessment of current hiring practices, showing that the partnership offers benefits beyond job placement. SEPTA included a behavioral assessment in the application process to address the massive increase in applications following the 2008 recession. The number of applications decreased as the economy recovered, but the assessment remained unchanged. After analyzing the relationship between WPSI's own interview process and future employee performance, the staff recommended further study of the tool to determine if SEPTA's assessment had filtered out suitable candidates, which could increase the hiring pool and help fill position vacancies.

ADAPTING THE WPSI MODEL

CAN THE PHILADELPHIA MODEL BE TRANSPORTED TO OTHER CITIES IN THE U.S. AND BEYOND?

As with any urban transformation, there are elements of the WPSI story that are unique to Philadelphia and the University City neighborhood at a specific moment of growth and appetite for innovation. Any attempt to adapt the model should be heavily informed by the nuances of the people, businesses, relationships, and socioeconomic conditions of that community.

However, we strongly believe that the enabling features of WPSI present valuable principles and approaches for any workforce development institution to adopt. In fact, UCD recently received a $1.5M grant from J.P. Morgan to expand the model to the neighborhood around Temple University in North Philly and the business campuses of the Navy Yard to the south.

Another example of a successful place-based and employer-centered training model is the Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (BACH), which informed the initial structure of the WPSI program. BACH was created in 2005 as an employer-centered training program that fills critical shortages in area hospitals by training entry-level workers for positions that require an associate's degree or less and are connected to a career

With WPSI, UCD has modeled how to connect residents to the opportunities in their backyard. These jobs have always existed. It took WPSI to open the door to a better quality of life and career ladders for West Philadelphians.

Jamie Gauthier, Councilperson-Elect, Philadelphia City Council, 3rd District

pathway in the high-demand healthcare field. Relationships with Johns Hopkins Medical System, Sinai Hospital, Mercy Hospital, and the University of Maryland Medical System are instrumental in understanding employer demand. WPSI looked to the BACH model when establishing itself in Philadelphia, and learned several lessons from BACH's experience.

Considering context: a model for dense urban areas

The WPSI model relies heavily on strong relationships that allow it to act as an effective intermediary, bringing together well-resourced institutions and low-income residents to

strategically and inclusively develop the neighborhood, in a way that no anchor or public institution could do on its own. For this reason, this model will be more successful in places that have certain characteristics. The WPSI model is particularly appropriate in a context of urban cores with a geographic concentration of:

1. **Strong anchor employers,** such as universities and hospitals experiencing chronic labor shortages or unsustainably high rates of turnover in entry-level professional jobs

2. **A large jobless or underemployed population** who are eager to connect to high quality organizations but face barriers to employment

3. **A central intermediary** like UCD to broker strategic relationships. While this could be a local Workforce Investment Board, Business or Neighborhood Improvement District, or Chamber of Commerce, what matters is that the intermediary is in a position to develop trusting relationships with and meet the needs of jobseekers and employers.

Selecting a targeted geography focuses all stakeholders on the nuanced challenges and opportunities in their environment, motivates employers and workers who feel pride in helping their neighborhood, and removes barriers to participation, such as poor transportation options from distant neighborhoods.

Local impact is also more visible, providing better feedback to inform any future changes to the approach. Most U.S. cities, such

as Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Dallas have a cluster of anchor institutions that could be better leveraged for the good of the community.

However, a central intermediary like UCD, which serves both business and community interests, is crucial to brokering strategic relationships. While this could be a local Workforce Investment Board, Business or Neighborhood Improvement District, or Chamber of Commerce, what matters is that the intermediary is in a position to develop trusting relationships with and meet the needs of jobseekers and employers.

HOW TO REPLICATE: TAILORING TASKS TO LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Focus training on available, high-demand jobs

Both BACH and WPSI work closely with employers and analyze data to identify and target local positions with growing demand or high turnover. This model is largely successful because it trains to place, rather than "train and pray." In most cities, there is a gap in public and private funding (e.g., EMS certifications) and lack of quality programming (e.g., expensive and ineffective CDL License programs) for entry-level professional jobs that require education beyond high school, or have stricter professional performance standards, that this program will fill. A given community and partnership must decide its goals and target demographics when establishing workforce pipelines, but must concentrate programs on high-demand jobs in the community.

Build credibility with residents

At first, this may mean figuring out which organizations have established trust with the community (e.g., trade schools, community organizations) and seeking partnerships. Both WPSI and BACH identified what certifications unemployed residents already had, or what certifications would allow them to move into a better job, and helped them build the work experience they needed to take the next step. Co-host meetings and information sessions with the employer partner to show they have a stake in the program and build credibility.

Find local experts to lead the initiative

While there may not be a set list of job titles or responsibilities needed to replicate WPSI, high-quality, innovative staff are essential to forming trusting relationships with employer partners and quickly solving problems.

Generate sufficient funding

This intermediary must also identify consistent sources of funding. The estimated cost of a new program launch is $1.5-1.7M over 2 years, based off of past WPSI financials. . In some instances, local employers and philanthropies could reliably donate to fund operations, but some cities or organizations may choose to adopt a fee-for-service, property assessment tax model, or a blend of funding sources.

Philanthropic funding was crucial for WPSI's pilot and growth stages, before the model was proven and as it scaled. However, successful fundraising has limited their ability to test alternative

financial models, as philanthropy has covered the cost of services for employer partners to date. As WPSI staff have learned, it is difficult to ask employers to pay for a service they have been receiving at no cost, so it is important to determine a sustainable funding model early on.

Set expectations to reduce risk of failure

UCD's board supported this entrepreneurial venture, but worried about creating false expectations for employers as well as jobseekers. They opted to start with a small pilot, evaluate progress early and often, and harness increasing momentum to fuel expansion. The team recognized early that there would be no shortcuts to success and only began marketing in earnest after the model had been proven in multiple contexts. If an organization chooses to raise energy and awareness early, it is important to set expectations, as trust with employers and residents is difficult to rebuild.

Understand the context of the local labor market

It is important to take stock of what already exists in the community. As Ireland noted, there were plenty of training programs in West Philly, but none that connected participants to employers. A community may already have workforce programs with the correct processes, but that lack connections to employers, or need to develop a stronger foundational skills curriculum. Due to wage differences or local talent, the labor market may have nuances, such as one company or industry neglecting to raise wages in line with their competitors, that need to be corrected for the program to be successful.

Collaborate with a strong network of partners

BACH assists hospitals and other healthcare providers in establishing their own external recruitment and internal training pipelines along the career pathways it has

established. Following WPSI's example, it is important to work with the local public workforce system to learn about municipal labor shortages (e.g., bus drivers, EMTs) and what training programs they could fund to reduce the cost burden. Whether programs are cross-industrial or focused on a niche market, forming strong relationships with key employers, funders, and workforce specialists who support the mission is indispensable. The WPSI model is perfectly suited to the U.S., given the history of private-, civic- and university-led initiatives that already exist and the cultural tendency to view the private sector as responsible for job creation. Still, we believe that any public, private, and nonprofit institutions and partnerships would benefit from an evidence-based, targeted approach to hiring and labor pipeline development that drives inclusive and equitable economic growth in our rapidly changing cities.

Creating a WPSI-Inspired Model: Estimate of 2 Year Start-Up Cost [40]

Category	Year 1	Year 2
Program Expenses (e.g., wage supports, coaches, training materials)	33%	37%
Direct Staff	30%	32%
Operating Costs	15%	11%
Indirect Costs* (Salaries for external support functions, e.g. accounting)	13%	10%
Office Expenses	9%	9%
Marketing	0.3%	0.5%
Estimated Total Budget	**$710,000**	**$1,000,000**

CONCLUSION

Today, access to good jobs is not equitable, but a city's economic growth depends on the ability of all its residents to access good jobs in their neighborhoods. Organizations and intermediaries like WPSI can provide communities with a framework for inclusive economic growth. They can foster collaboration across different stakeholders—such as businesses, philanthropists, universities, hospitals, governments, and residents—and create a common vision for the city.

Opportunity Zones can foster inclusive economic growth if paired with effective workforce development institutions like WPSI, which enable businesses to access talent from untapped labor pools in their own neighborhoods. The main constraint on inclusive growth is the lack of institutions to build bridges based on the common interests between businesses and the local neighborhood. As cities redevelop their cores, many institutions will be challenged to offer a high quality of life and opportunity to residents—both long-term and new.

The evolution of urban institutions will, in many respects, mirror the broader evolution of cities themselves. A few cities like Philadelphia will be first movers, creating innovative institutions that show measurable outcomes and are credible as viable models. These innovations will be captured and codified and then adapted by other cities, which will be fast followers. Ultimately, exceptional innovations will become the norm, adapted to numerous cities across the country.

An Urban Age could prompt a new wave of urban institutions capable of tackling the hard challenges and intriguing opportunities of our times. We hope these City Cases contribute to a field of study that accelerates and amplifies these practices and models.

APPENDIX A: TIMELINE

KEY DATES FOR WPSI MODEL AND THREE EMBLEMATIC PROJECTS:
CHOP PATIENT SITTERS, ALLIED UNIVERSAL SECURITY GUARDS, AND SEPTA BUS OPERATORS

1997
University City District (UCD) is founded as a 501(c)3, serving as a convener for anchor institutions, businesses, and the community with a mission of "Clean and Safe"

JULY 2009
Matt Bergheiser becomes Executive Director of UCD

SEPTEMBER 2009
Proposal to begin UCD Human Capital Initiative to take over employer-driven workforce development program previously run by the West Philadelphia Partnership (WPP) is presented to UCD board

OCTOBER 2012
First Allied Universal (Allied) Security Guard cohort graduates, placing all 12 graduates in jobs

MARCH 2013
First CHOP Patient Sitter cohort graduates, placing all 12 graduates in jobs

DECEMBER 2012
Second Allied Security Guard cohort graduates, placing 10 of 14 graduates in jobs

JUNE 2014
Pew Charitable Trusts grants $180,000 to scale program over 3 years

JULY 2016
Allied runs their largest cohort to date, hiring 16 WPSI graduates and Bergheiser is promoted to President of UCD

2016
WPSI opens new headquarters with larger training space

APRIL 2017
UCD and WPSI receive Bank of America's Neighborhood Builders Award and $200,000 prize

AUGUST 2016
Green City Works is founded, hiring graduates from WPSI's landscaping program

MARCH 2017
WPSI receives a $600,000 grant, provided over 3 years, from Pew Charitable Trusts

OCTOBER 2009

Board approves UCD Human Capital Initiative, kicking off a two-year training program pilot, leveraging $64,000 in WPP funding

2010

JOIN awards WPSI $150,000 over 2 years to hire a full-time Director

2010

WPSI receives $300,000 grant from LISC to run first program-training high schoolers for Penn Medicine internships

2011

WPSI runs high school internship program and internal training program for Penn Medicine

JUNE 2012

WPSI graduates first adult cohort, Drexel Medicine's Certified Medical Assistant pipeline

JUNE 2010

Sheila Ireland begins work as Director of WPSI

2017

Green City Works, staffed by 14 WPSI Landscaping Technician program graduates, serves 25 clients and earns nearly $1 million in revenue

FEBRUARY 2019

WPSI announces SEPTA Bus Operator training program, the first cohort open to all Philly residents

SEPTEMBER 2018

SEPTA and WPSI agree to run a Bus Operator program and begin planning training curriculum

MARCH 2019

Applications for first SEPTA cohort due

APRIL 2019

SEPTA Bus Operators cohort begins WPSI program

FEBRUARY 2018

The Lenfest Foundation grants $5 million to UCD, Drexel, and University Science Center to connect 600 unemployed residents to jobs in the tech sector

APRIL 2018

Sarah Steltz is hired as UCD's Vice President for Workforce Solutions, overseeing WPSI

MAY 2019

WPSI graduates its first Bus Operators cohort, bring all 10 graduates into SEPTA's training program

JUNE 2019

CHOP runs its largest Patient Sitter cohort to date, hiring 29 of 30 WPSI graduatesprogram

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