



WRTP/ BIG STEP • 3841 W. Wisconsin Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53208  
Office: (414) 342-9787 • Fax: (414) 342-3546 • Website: [www.wrtp.org](http://www.wrtp.org)

### **About Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP)/ Big Step and our Center of Excellence**

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP) and Big Step have received national attention for successfully developing workforce partnerships and training. Our Center of Excellence provides a clearinghouse for the assessment, preparation, and placement of job-ready candidates in the skilled trades and industries, including construction, manufacturing, telecommunications, and utilities. We excel in ensuring job retention and advancement through mentoring and other support mechanisms for new workers.

Through the Center of Excellence, we have provided career opportunities for thousands of low-income, unemployed, and young Milwaukeeans. The Center has an average annual budget of \$2 million and a yearly placement goal of five hundred. From 2005 to 2007, we placed 1,419 workers and graduated 105 training certificate students. Minority placements made up over 60% of those served and women comprised 14% of the total placed in employment.

Because of our organizational experience, and because of our community, industry, and labor partners, it would take us only about a month to develop a pool of hundreds of people that are trained and ready for family-supporting jobs in the residential weatherization field.

### **Keys to Our Successes**

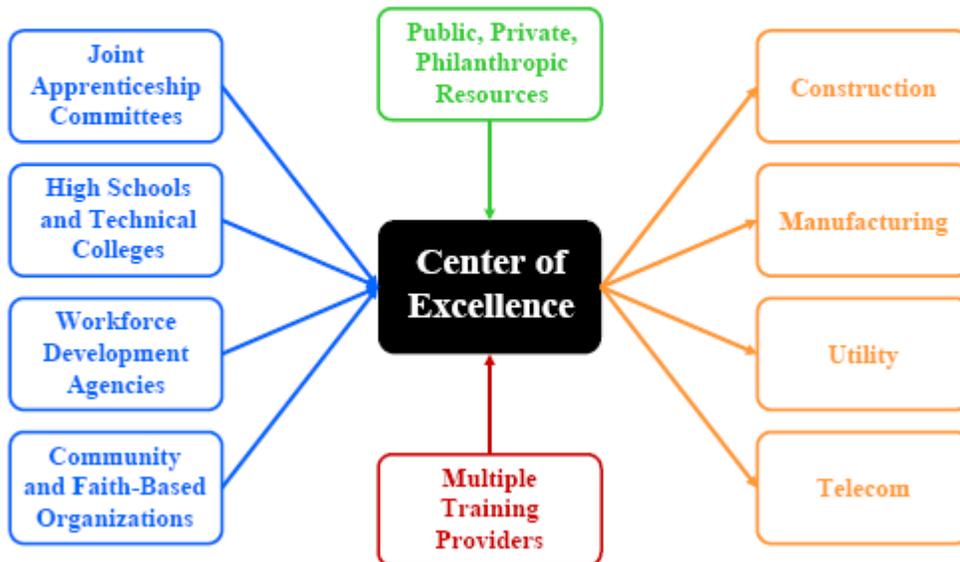
#### *Initial Assessment and Community Partners*

We are able to quickly assess the needs of the people that come through our door – whether they require essential, basic, or technical industry skills. We work with hundreds of local community organizations that refer those that are work-ready to us and provide support for workers we identify as needing help becoming job-ready.

### *Employer-Driven Training*

We partner with employers and training providers to provide appropriate curriculum for our students. Our experience in the residential construction sector includes preparing workers for lead abatement and asbestos removal and WHEDA building projects. By building on that history and coordinating with appropriate agencies and organizations, we plan to expand our industry-recognized Entry Level Construction Skills (ELCS) credential to include a weatherization component. The ELCS-Weatherization Certificate will assure contractors that our graduates have the skills they need to satisfy the high standards of the program.

## Clearinghouse



### *Leveraging Resources for Training*

We have experience navigating and leveraging money from a wide variety of sources. We are able to access state, federal, and industry funds to support our training. WRTP, for example, is an eligible provider for Workforce Investment Act programs; workers can use their Individual Training Account (ITA) vouchers for ELCS training. We also use state industry funds compliment public sector funds.

### *Employer Services*

Our previous programs indicate that within a pool of certified workers, contractors appreciate our ability to identify those most likely to succeed in the job and dispatch them to the contractors as needed. Our ability to dispatch workers relies on a sophisticated database that tracks all of our participants and graduates. Contractors are pleased to let us use our database to find workers with specific skills – for instance, to avoid language barriers when working with monolingual populations, contractors can request workers with specific language skills. Contractors can also request workers that live in or near the neighborhood in which they will be working. WRTP is qualified to certify workers' addresses as part of various residential preference programs (RPP for the City of Milwaukee, COIN for Milwaukee Public Schools, and requirements for MMSD and WHEDA projects). This will be critical if, as anticipated, states and administering agencies add local hire provisions to weatherization contracts.

In addition, WRTP/BIG STEP owns Triada Employment Services, LLC, a socially responsible staffing agency. Triada can provide employment services for contractors who might be overwhelmed by hiring new workers to meet the growing demand for residential weatherization. Triada can locate appropriate employees for a given project and be the employer-of-record, coordinating payroll and benefits for workers across several contractors.

### *Mentoring and Worker Support*

We have developed a model mentorship program to support workers entering the construction industry. It is well known that new workers do better on the job when they have the support of an experienced worker to guide and advise them, but few organizations run successful mentoring programs. We match every new worker with a mentor. Our mentors are senior workers whose primary relationship with their mentee is supportive – they are not a supervisor or a trainer who may have conflicted relationships with their mentee. Mentors can spot early signs of trouble and we can then work with all parties to find the appropriate resources to help the mentee succeed – relying on our community partners, union allies, or others, as appropriate.

Our commitment to helping workers enter into lasting careers has led us to develop a successful tutoring program for passing apprenticeship tests. We help workers gain the math, science, and other skills they need to enter the Building and Construction Trades. Hundreds of our graduates have been placed in apprenticeship programs thanks to our flexible tutoring schedule and individually tailored curriculum.

Earning an ELCS-Weatherization certificate can thus be the first step on a pathway from residential-sector construction to good jobs on the commercial side, particularly in green building and retrofitting.