

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT WORKS FOR DALLAS

THE TRANSFORMATION OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN DALLAS-FORT WORTH

As the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) region attracts new industries and tens of thousands of well-paying jobs in recent years, a large part of the workforce has stood still. The problem is especially acute in Dallas, where one in five live in poverty despite one of the lowest rates of unemployment anywhere in the nation – and impressive annual growth in jobs that pay \$20/hour or more.

This is the “skills gap.” Businesses won’t grow if they can’t find enough qualified workers; no region can continue to thrive when so many of residents can’t get ahead. Recognizing the skills gap challenge, JPMorgan Chase, one of the area’s largest employers, is working to address it, publishing a report calling for major new investments in workforce development (See: “Strengthening Dallas-Fort Worth: Building a Middle-Skill Pipeline to Sustain Economic Growth and Expand Opportunity,” JPMorgan Chase, 2015), and building partnerships to strengthen the region’s skilled workforce. This investment is already making an impact.

WHO’S INVOLVED

JPMORGAN CHASE & CO. **JPMorgan Chase & Co.** is a leading global financial services firm with assets of \$2.6 trillion and operations worldwide. JPMorgan Chase has recognized the need to address the skills gap challenge. As a result, they invested in workforce development and built partnerships with community organizations to strengthen the region’s skilled workforce.



CitySquare’s mission is to fight the causes and effects of poverty through service, advocacy and friendship. Founded in 1988 as a small food pantry, CitySquare has grown into a broad community development organization offering a comprehensive array of social services that address four key areas related to the persistence of poverty- hunger, health, housing, and hope.



Jewish Family Services’ mission is to provide professional, effective and affordable mental health and social services that promote lifelong self-sufficiency and well-being for anyone in need. When people turn to Jewish Family Service for help, they can rely on licensed professionals with the education, expertise, experience, and heart to make a positive difference in thousands of lives every year in an atmosphere of respect and confidentiality.



LIFT enhances lives and strengthen communities by teaching adults to read. Founded in 1961, LIFT has served the North Texas community for over 50 years. Today, they serve over 5,000 adult students every year.



NPower mobilizes the tech community and provides individuals, nonprofits and schools opportunities to build tech skills and achieve their potential. Headquartered in New York City, NPower has three locations in DFW, offering free hands-on training in computer hardware & software support, Cybersecurity and Information Technology Service Management (ITSM). North Texas NPower’s emphasis is building brighter futures for active military/veterans by providing technology and professional skills training, mentoring, internships and employment services.



Per Scholas aims to break the cycle of poverty by providing technology education, training and job placement services for women and men in underserved communities. By giving people the technical and business skills to gain meaningful employment and provide for themselves and their families, Per Scholas is building the foundation for stronger, financially stable communities.



Skill QUEST’s mission to clear a path for low to moderate income adults living in Collin, Dallas, and contiguous counties to jobs paying a family living wage with benefits and a career path, while providing local employers with a highly skilled workforce ready to work.

A NEW KIND OF PIPELINE

But what exactly is workforce development – and what can it accomplish for the Dallas-Fort Worth region? One expert, the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank, defines workforce development as the “wide range of activities, policies and programs employed by geographies to create, sustain and retain a viable workforce that can support current and future business and industry” (See Lynn Harelson, “What is Workforce Development?”, The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2010).

In other words, workforce development is about more than just job training. It’s a continuum of intentional economic development strategies, which, if appropriately provisioned, can help everyone get ahead – businesses and their employees alike. In Dallas, the good news is with leadership from the public sector and large regional employer stakeholders like JPMorgan Chase, it is already happening.

REAL AND GROWING RETURNS

The proof? Recently, six nonprofits in the region that help people build skills to get and keep good jobs – CitySquare, Jewish Family Services, Literacy Instruction for Texas (LIFT), NPower, Per Scholas and SkillQUEST – joined to compare their outcomes. While each agency is different and focuses on just a portion of an overall service continuum – from ensuring basic literacy to training workers to fill true “middle skill” jobs – they found that their collective impact was already very significant.

In the past three years:

- The six agencies alone trained and placed more than 2,700 people in jobs.
- Four of the agencies documented placement income, which ranged from \$23k-\$45k per year for nearly 700 individuals.
- The total of wages earned in this group alone during 2015 was more than \$13 million.
- At Per Scholas, the newest group in Dallas, graduates earned \$1 million in just the first year.
- At Jewish Family Services, one of the largest groups, more than 2,000 people were put to work through its programs.
- LIFT, which provides literacy services, has only just begun its own jobs program, but has served nearly 8,000 local residents since 2013.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

2013-2015

ORGANIZATION	JOBS FILLED 2013-2015	AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE	TOTAL WAGES IN 2015
CitySquare	287	\$23k	\$351k
Jewish Family Services	2,000+	NA (not counted)	NA (not counted)
LIFT	17*	\$24.5k	NA (not counted)
NPower	148	\$40k	\$5.92m
Per Scholas	33*	\$29k	\$958k
Skill QUEST	90	\$45k	\$5.72m
TOTAL	2,575	\$32.3k	\$13m

* LIFT’s job placement efforts are new and do not cover one full year. Per Scholas began operating in the region in 2015, and also has less than one year of job placement outcomes.

STRATEGIES AND NEXT STEPS

The activities of all six groups participating in the joint outcomes analysis support the recommendations of JPMorgan Chase’s comprehensive report, including:

- Expanding investments in “first rung” services like literacy and basic work readiness training.
- Helping low-income people connect with further education and skills development to obtain middle wage jobs.
- Encouraging greater coordination and collaboration between all the important workforce development stakeholders in the region, and better alignment between relevant services and the needs of particular communities.
- Clarifying the specific kinds of education and training people need to access middle wage jobs, so that fewer people waste time and money on activities that don’t lead to these jobs.
- Promoting and developing the leadership and commitments of all the important stakeholders in the region’s workforce development system, including public agencies, private nonprofits and employers.

JOB TRAINING THAT WORKS

“I am proud to say that LIFT truly helped me develop many new skills in completing my education. The environment is always positive, and the teachers are caring. I’ve learned to reconstruct my resume and built useful tools to job search.”
Renee Barnett, graduate

“NPower is more than a tech school because of the invaluable soft skills I learned and the networking opportunities that were made available – absolutely invaluable.” Courtney Bell, Graduate

“I’m proud to be a graduate of Per Scholas and excited to make Per Scholas a household name in Dallas. They are going to make our community, its businesses and those who live in it, a lot better.”
Alex Rodriguez, graduate

“City Square provides employees who are eager to learn and prepared to work in a new environment. The value added approach compliments employers who don’t have the time to screen candidates but have the work available for on the job training.”
CitySquare, Employer

“I just want to take a moment to express my thanks for the extra effort [Jewish Family Services] gave to me during my job search. [They] kept me going when I just wanted to give up. [They] cared about me.”
JFS, Graduate

“With Skill QUEST, Inc.’s help, I now make \$45,000 a year as a paralegal.”
Khadijah Karriem, Graduate

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