



# SHEBUILD



## *Empowering Women in the Workforce*

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The idea for the WSB SheBuild program came from Rebuild—a national non-profit that focuses on repairing the homes of families, seniors, people with disabilities and victims of disasters. SheBuild employs a similar concept, but instead focuses on female clients and organizations that help women, especially elderly women. WSB helped with the training components of this project. The program participants included elderly and/or women in a low-income bracket, as well as single moms. The program focuses on training women with specific handy/construction skills to allow them to help other women that may need assistance.

### **About the Program**

For this pilot program, WSB will be sponsoring work-based learning for the various women to train them in basic skills related to the maintenance industry and connect them to mentoring opportunities as they work on the TLC Center for the YWCA. The program emphasizes the need to empower women that can further empower other women, specifically by providing them with the tools and skills needed to redevelop the site at the women's shelter.

Through this program, WSB established a Memorandum of Understanding with different agencies to coordinate the various ways that each organization can contribute to this project. These agencies include:

- City of El Paso
- YWCA El Paso Del Norte Region
- Rebuild Together El Paso
- David L. Carrasco Job Corps
- Workforce Solutions Borderplex

WSB is also working with Job Corps through their maintenance program to identify female participants focused on training and certification programs related to this industry. Those women will ultimately participate in a pilot project related to kitchen redevelopment at the TLC Center, a women's shelter at the YWCA.

### **Program Goals and Funding Sources**

This program aims to assist participants and further enroll them in maintenance training, to provide them with the technical skills that will empower them to achieve independence. By learning certain maintenance skills, the program aids women by positioning them for future employment opportunities and providing them with the ability to fix their own facility and/or homes. The program ultimately aims to identify women that can learn these skills and apply them to a facility that they utilize, furthering self-sufficiency.

The vision and long-term goal for this program includes positioning these women to eventually find employment in the construction industry. However, WSB understands that this must happen very organically by training the participants and making them aware of future career possibilities related to these skills. Identifying employment opportunities is not necessarily an immediate goal because WSB wants to first focus on connecting the participants with useful, technical skills that they can apply in their day-to-day lives. After learning these skills, we hope program participants can eventually connect to employment opportunities, once they are ready to pursue them.

Some of the funding for this program includes non-formula and formula funds. Bank of America has contributed approximately \$55,000, along with some WIOA funds through Dynamic Workforce Solutions. The MOU previously discussed also establishes partnerships across organizations but does not designate specific funds towards the collaborative efforts.

### **Program Challenges**

Due to COVID-19, there has been tremendous impact on the start date for this pilot program. For this program to be successful, the safety of participants must be prioritized and considered, due to the general collaboration related to the contractor/maintenance work—especially in a kitchen space near the living quarters. Additionally, our collaboration with Job Corps also dictates specific safety measures that must be put into place prior to the start of the program. Ultimately, we must reimagine what this program will look like in a post-COVID-19 world, which has resulted in a delay to the future start date.

The impact of COVID-19 can pose further challenges to our current collaborations with partners and potential participants. If the program is pushed further and further, some of the talent we are looking to bring in as participants or mentors through organizations such as Job Corps or Rebuild may no longer be available. The change in start date can also continue to pose additional challenges related to the alignment of resources and timelines across multiple collaborators. We have been fortunate to work with partners that are all aligned on the vision and goals for the program. However, resources can often be delayed or pushed back due to other priorities that may come up for various organizations and COVID-19 may further exasperate this issue. Because of this, it is imperative to continue conversations with our partners and identify a reimaged program with a solid start date in the future.

### **Outcomes and Successes**

Once the pilot project has been completed, we can better evaluate outcomes and how to improve the program moving forward. Right now, the main outcomes and lessons we have learned is the need to push projects forward faster in the future in a way that best manages the timelines and priorities of all partners involved. This is especially important as we understand the needs of an ever-

evolving economy and global society that can change at any moment due to unexpected circumstances, such as those related to the impact of COVID-19.

### **About Workforce Solutions Borderplex**

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) is the public workforce system in the six-county Borderplex region that assists employers in finding quality employees, and training individuals with the skills necessary to thrive in the workplace. We administer a broad range of programs and services to effectively address local workforce issues. Workforce Solutions also establishes partnerships with various stakeholders within the region to improve education, employment, and economic development. Our organization aims to provide skilled workers for employers by advancing education, employment, entrepreneurship, and economic development opportunities in support of global competitiveness and regional prosperity. Ultimately, we are interested in empowering the most dynamic workforce to achieve global competitiveness and regional prosperity.