



CITY COMPTIA CERTIFICATION PROGRAM



Upskilling Transitioning Soldiers for Careers in Information Technology

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Funded by all or in part of, the Department of Labor/ETA WIOA Formula Grants and Wagner-Peyser; the Department of Health and Human Services TANF and Child Care Development Fund; and the Food and Nutrition Service SNAP Employment & Training.

Impetus

The City of El Paso learned about our past projects designed for transitioning soldiers and indicated their interest in funding the next round of participants. Through this initiative and partnership with the City, WSB was able to provide training for transitioning soldiers to complete a CompTIA certification, a globally recognized Information Technology (IT) certificate.

About the Program

Through this initiative, WSB coordinated support for three total cohorts. Each cohort maintained a minimum of 15 individuals. The program lasted 13 weeks and allowed participants to gain up to five certifications related to IT. These participants did not necessarily need to be Veterans. However, WSB and the City had a special interest in assisting target populations such as transitioning soldiers and/or individuals with military backgrounds. This program allowed individuals that qualified with previous IT-related experience to upskill and gain access to better employment opportunities.

Program Goals & Funding Sources

This program aimed to assist individuals with an interest in continuing their careers in IT at a higher level by obtaining certifications. The program was funded through the support of TWC through Texas Hireability. The program also co-enrolled participants with WIOA programs, if eligible and if support services were needed. The City of El Paso provided \$150,000.00 total in funding, \$50,000.00 per cohort.

Program Challenges

Strategic recruitment and retention were essential components of this program and posed a set of challenges to ensure we had the most qualified candidates. For these three cohorts, WSB needed to maintain a minimum of 15 participants and used a screening tool to ensure their success. The screening tool allowed WSB to ensure that the standards for admission into the program were high enough to retain participants that had the experience needed to succeed in IT-related certification trainings.

Through the screening tool, we also identified potential alternate candidates that could participate in the event of retention issues. Ultimately, we had very few individuals drop the program. If a participant needed to leave the program—it was usually only for reasons that were excused. (For example, some candidates were offered employment opportunities because of their involvement with the program, or some had family emergencies).

Instructors of this program also helped overcome any challenges throughout the course of the program. We were able to modify the curriculum, tweak it, and better communicate between

instructors and participants. All partners worked together to ensure that participants would succeed. We even established connections with students and checked in with them frequently to ensure that they had all the resources needed to complete the program and obtain their certifications.

Outcomes and Successes

The program yielded a 90 percent completion and pass rate. Finally, certification enhanced employment outcomes for those who completed the requirements of the grant. The first cohort was also the most successful with an approximately 86 percent employment rate and an average wage of approximately \$25 per hour with some individuals earning up to \$48 per hour. Later cohorts were still successful with many participants earning above the hourly living wage.

Individual Success

One of our participants had joined the program with several certificates and experience. This individual was able to successfully upskill and earn additional certifications. Prior to completing the entirety of the program, this participant left the program because he was offered a job opportunity, thanks to the new certificate that he had gained through the City CompTIA initiative. This participant then moved to Germany to work in cyber and mission-readiness for the U.S. Army with his new IT credentials.

Economic Development Success

At the time of this initiative, Teleperformance, a company that was relocating to El Paso, was ramping up their IT department recruitment efforts. Teleperformance ended up hiring several individuals from this program's second and third cohort with wages of about \$18 per hour or more. Thanks to this program, WSB was able to align resources and services with a new company moving to El Paso as part of the City's own economic development strategies and incentive policy. Thus, WSB was able to pursue our mission of providing skilled workers to a company looking for local talent.

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.