



CENTERSTATE  
CORPORATION FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

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## **‘Work Train’ Creates Job Opportunities, Career Pathways for Low-Income Syracuse Residents**

### ***Local Foundations, CenterState CEO Launch \$1 Million Workforce Initiative Syracuse Established as a National Fund for Workforce Solutions ‘Partner Community’***

SYRACUSE, NY - Over the next three years, local foundations will invest nearly \$1 million to seed a unique workforce development initiative to create job opportunities and career pathways for low-income residents in the greater Syracuse community. The initiative, known as “Work Train,” is dedicated to helping employers in target industries address their employment needs, and enables them to actively develop workforce solutions that align with community partners’ resources. Work Train will also engage local training and education partners and other community services to mobilize and fill employment gaps. Work Train’s “dual client” model will foster positive outcomes for both low-income workers and employers.

In launching Work Train, local foundations and other partners have established Syracuse as a [National Fund for Workforce Solutions](#) “Partner Community.” The National Fund brings together a network of national and local funders to support employer-driven workforce initiatives that help low-wage jobseekers obtain career opportunities. This partnership allows Work Train to access resources and technical assistance from National Fund expert staff; share best practices and network with other partner sites; and be eligible for philanthropic and federal funds that come to the National Fund.

"The National Fund for Workforce Solutions is excited to welcome Syracuse as a partner community," said Fred Dedrick, executive director of the National Fund. "Work Train promises to effectively scale up employer-driven workforce initiatives already underway in Syracuse in a way that will provide significant opportunity for both workers and employees, and that can be replicated on a larger scale. By partnering with the National Fund, our partners in Syracuse will now have access to some of the highest performing workforce initiatives in the country, a higher national profile, and an opportunity to raise more resources for its local efforts."

Work Train builds off of the success of the Green Train and Health Train programs operated by the Northside Urban Partnership, an affiliate of CenterState CEO. Through strong relationships with employers, both programs boast a strong record of graduation and job placement rates. Work Train plans to build similar industry partnerships between employers, education and training providers, and community organizations to connect community members to jobs that show persistent and robust demand for workers, as well as opportunities for career advancement. The first industry partnership will focus on health care. Work Train is currently launching a partnership with Loretto to recruit and hire



nearly 100 Certified Nursing Aides by September 2014. In 2015, the platform will spread to other industries and areas of the region.

"Work Train presents a new value proposition for employers," said Kim Townsend, president & CEO of Loretto. "By working hand in hand with workforce development and training and education partners, we're finding new solutions to meet our employment needs, with prospects for increased retention and greater outcomes. We look forward to creating paths to prosperity for our Work Train recruits, while also filling a critical need for Certified Nursing Aides at Loretto."

Work Train is staffed by CenterState CEO and guided by a collaborative consisting of leaders from business, philanthropy, economic and workforce development, training and education, local government, and community-based organizations. Funding has been provided by the United Way of CNY, Allyn Foundation, Gifford Foundation, CNY Community Foundation, Reisman Foundation, St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation and New York State.

"This initiative would not be possible without the support and commitment of this community's local foundations," said Meg O'Connell, chair of the Work Train Collaborative and executive director of The Allyn Foundation. "Each has provided not only financial support, but leadership in establishing a new vision for workforce development that is truly collaborative and transformative. We are proud to be part of the network of partners who are strategically aligning workforce investments to create new opportunities for residents of our community, and its employers."

The local investment builds upon a \$100,000 Opportunity Agenda grant from New York State. In 2013, at Governor Cuomo's direction, the CNY Regional Economic Development Council developed its Opportunity Agenda to connect those living in poverty with skilled employment and help distressed communities overcome barriers to economic success.

"This new Work Train initiative, leveraged by an Opportunity Agenda grant from New York State, will extend specialized workforce training to low-income communities, giving them a competitive edge to meet the growing workforce demand," said Lieutenant Governor Robert J. Duffy. "Thanks to Governor Cuomo and his leadership through Empire State Development in securing the initial grant, this new initiative will engage with the public on a local level, and work closely with key industries to expand Central New York's economy. I applaud all of the parties involved and look forward to the future success of the Work Train."

"Work Train is a prime example of Governor Cuomo's regional Opportunity Agenda in action, a new model for inclusive economic development to ensure that that no one is left behind in our State's revitalization," said New York Secretary of State Cesar A. Perales. "By better leveraging the more than \$700 million in the State's annual economic development funding, communities will have the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty. We are pleased to see the commitment from local foundations, the business community and service providers towards creating ladders of opportunities into the middle class."



***About the National Fund for Workforce Solutions***

The National Fund is an unprecedented initiative of national and local funders whose goal is the career advancement of low-wage workers using a model of substantial employer engagement to increase the potential for successful outcomes. The unique value of the National Fund rests on its support for local communities to organize and sustain regional funding collaboratives that invest in worker skills and their key regional industries. The collaboratives are catalysts for generating additional investments in creating sectoral workforce partnerships, training workers, and improving workforce practices. The National Fund is advancing careers, addressing employer needs, changing policies. [www.nfwsolutions.org](http://www.nfwsolutions.org)

***About CenterState CEO***

CenterState CEO is a regional business leadership organization, chamber of commerce, and economic development strategist, based in Syracuse, New York. We represent 2,000 members of all sizes and serve as the primary business resource and catalyst for development in a twelve-county area. We advocate for smart business, facilitate regional growth and promote community prosperity through results-driven partnerships, planning and problem solving. [www.centerstateceo.com](http://www.centerstateceo.com)

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