



EMBARGOED: May 7, 11:00 AM

FOUNDATION SUPPORT GROWS TO BUILD WORKFORCE SKILLS AND PROSPERITY FOR LOW-WAGE EARNERS

National Fund for Workforce Solutions welcomes new support adding \$3 million in new funding for local programs nationwide

WHAT: National Fund for Workforce Solutions discusses corporate participation in workforce development at Council on Foundation's 2008 Philanthropy Summit

WHEN: Wednesday, May 7, 2008, 11:00 – 11:30 a.m.

WHERE: Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center/National Harbor, MD
Room: Maryland C

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Council on Foundations' 2008 Philanthropy Summit today highlighted programs of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions (NFWS) as emblematic of successful approaches to workforce development. The recognition came as new support was announced to broaden the impact of NFWS programs in urban and rural communities nationwide.

At a press conference, Microsoft Corporation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation announced support for NFWS, a \$50 million 5-year effort to strengthen and expand effective workforce initiatives around the country. Microsoft will donate \$2 million and software valued at up to \$8 million. Knight Foundation's contribution totaling \$1.35 million will support peer learning meetings and exchanges among local partnerships, e-learning, and grants for special projects.

During a summit session entitled "Pathways to Shared Prosperity – Corporate Needs, Corporate Deeds: Corporate Philanthropy's Leadership Roles," growing low-wage earner prosperity was emphasized. NFWS presents public/private collaborations the opportunity to invest in a portfolio of effective, innovative partnerships across many communities

NFWS supports local workforce initiatives that provide low-skilled adults with career opportunities in growing occupations in their communities and connects employers to this talent pipeline. NFWS has set a goal to expand resources and improve the efficiency of workforce development systems in more than 30 regions across the country.

Akhtar Badshah, senior director of community affairs for Microsoft, said, "There is no better way to improve the economic health of our nation than to provide our citizens with training

and technology skills. It is essential that America's workers have the skills they need to succeed in the technology- and information-driven economy of today and tomorrow."

Microsoft will target \$1 million of its \$2 million investment to Boston, Seattle, Silicon Valley, Washington, DC, and other metropolitan areas. An additional software donation includes providing Microsoft's Unlimited Potential and Digital Literacy curricula to NFWS sites.

The funds from Knight Foundation's \$1.35 million will be distributed among several projects. The contribution will support special assistance to organize funding collaborative in the communities in which Knight Foundation is already established, including Akron, OH; Bradenton, FL; Detroit, MI; Philadelphia, PA; St. Paul, MN; Tallahassee, FL; and Wichita, KS. Funding will also be used to support a number of community activities and special projects.

"Knight Foundation is excited to participate in a transformational effort that we believe can reinvent workforce development by creating programs that not only train prospective employees but also engage potential employers," said Paula Ellis, vice president of strategic initiatives for Knight Foundation.

Steve Gunderson, president of the Council on Foundations and an active partner in NFWS, said, "Creating opportunities for improving the skills of the low-wage workforce is of growing importance for the world of philanthropy. We are grateful for the commitment of Knight Foundation and Microsoft, both members of the Council on Foundations, for their support of the critical mission of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. Where philanthropy partners with private and the public sector, strengthened economies and personal wealth help the working poor move up."

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions seeks to advance two key goals: create new opportunities for lower-wage workers to move into better-paying jobs and careers, and meet employers' critical needs for skilled employees. The Fund supports local workforce initiatives through grants, technical assistance, research, evaluations, and other services. NFWS is supported by the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Hitachi, and Harry and Jeanette Weinberg foundations and the U.S. Department of Labor. NFWS is managed by Jobs for the Future, a national nonprofit focused on implementing cutting-edge strategies, policies, and on-the-ground work to improve educational and economic opportunities that promote a more competitive America.

For more information about the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, visit www.nfwsolutions.org.

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