



Backgrounder

Basic Skills and Self-Sufficiency Pilot Program

About the Program

The mission of the Basic Skills and Self-Sufficiency Pilot Program, which kicks-off officially in a press conference at the Greater Omaha Chamber, May 18 at 2:30 p.m., is to assist individuals in their efforts to:

- Build and maintain strong, healthy families.
- Decrease dependence on social services.
- Increase personal support systems.
- Attain the basic skills and life skills needed for stable employment.

The program is funded by grants awarded to the YWCA totalling \$150,000 for two years.

Program Purpose

Ten area service providers will team together to provide comprehensive services based on a framework of a succession of education, training and career related services. In addition, there will be an array of support services available based on severity of need, as each client progresses from economic and social vulnerability to self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency is defined as *the individual's ability to provide for their own and their family's needs*.

Program Goals and Measurement

One key goal for each of the Pilot participants will be to move directly into sustainable employment or to attain acceptance into an Omaha Chamber Workforce Training Collaborative program to become employment eligible. All service providers will have the goal of providing better coordinated, efficient services to participants than what is traditionally delivered through a piece-meal, uncoordinated service delivery model. These goals will be tracked by Program independent evaluators.

Program Partners

The YWCA will serve as the lead agency and provide case management for clients. Case Manager and Coach, A. R. Tulani Grundy, will work with the following service providers: Workforce Development, Arbor Education and Training, Literacy Center of the Midlands, Nebraska Health and Human Services, Together Inc., One World community Health Center, Charles Drew Health Center, Policy Studies, Inc. (PSI) and Metropolitan Community College.



Program Participants

Up to thirty candidates will be selected for the program each year based on their application and interview with the selection committee. Candidates for the program are those who demonstrate a sincere commitment to change their current situation. With the assistance of the other community partner organizations, the YWCA will work with the participants on the following:

- Assess the individual's strengths and barriers to self-sufficiency.
- Setting individual goals and action plans.
- Weekly individual coaching.
- Eight-week economic stability planning workshop.
- Completion of the individual plan and goal attainment.

Program Case Management

Case Manager and Counselor, A. R. Tulani Grundy, will meet individually with each client to conduct an assessment of their strengths and barriers to self-sufficiency using questions that are based on a self-sufficiency continuum matrix. Each client will then be assisted in developing a series of short- and long-term goals to identify their assets, maximize their well-being and identify and reduce their barriers. The case manager and client work closely with partnering agencies that can assist them in their attainment of goals through regular staffing meetings to ensure progress of each client along the critical dimensions identified in their individualized plan. The case manager will also conduct group classes of participants in 15 sessions over seven and a half weeks. Workshops will focus on building resources, both personal and economic.

About the Grant

The Basic Skills and Self-Sufficiency Pilot Program Grant request was written with the intention of submitting it to any interested potential funders. The YWCA submitted the grant initially to the Women's Fund which awarded \$10,000 to the YWCA in the fall of 2009. The Greater Omaha Chamber was instrumental in helping to bring together the agencies to be a part of the partnership and connected the YWCA with the Gary and Mary West Foundation of Carlsbad, California as a potential funder. In February 2010, the Gary and Mary West Foundation was sent the Pilot grant request and subsequently awarded a 2-year \$140,000 grant.



Original Needs Assessment

The Greater Omaha Chamber Workforce Collaborative launched a series of programs in January 2009 that attempted to break the cycle of poverty by matching individuals to unfilled jobs. It is an initiative that uses a dual customer approach to move low-income, low-skilled workers into family sustaining employment while helping employers fill critical workforce shortages. Employer partners have included Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska and Mutual of Omaha.

As expected, there was great community interest: More than 240 community residents applied for these two training programs. However, after initial basic educational screenings were conducted, only approximately 40 applicants were qualified to apply for the training programs.

In addition, those that were selected for the training programs were consistently challenged by chronic barriers such as lack of transportation, childcare, unstable housing, etc. that reduce their employability. These findings highlighted the fact that for many residents striving to attain economic self-sufficiency, there are multiple barriers that must be addressed in order to bring the desired changes to our community.

Contact:

Melodae Morris, M.A., APR, SPHR
Marketing and Public Relations Director
YWCA
345-6555
mmorris@ywcaomaha.org