

## II. Year 2 Report

The Training Futures program provides a clear pathway to professional and economic development for low-income immigrants from Northern Virginia, who could be turned away from training opportunities due to limited language skills. It enables them to transform their families' lives through new skills, new health care administrative jobs, Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) credits and continued career advancement. With this innovative partnership with NVCC, Training Futures has established a path that begins with ESOL classes and continues to the Training Futures program, which supplies job readiness training, awards college credits, and culminates in job search and placement.

In 2004, with seed funding from the Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants initiative, Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS) and NVCC launched a new phase of their partnership to combine the health care training capabilities of NVCC with NVFS Training Futures' ability to recruit and train low-income adults. In this health care "*Steps to Success*" partnership initiative, the two organizations have created a new pathway to connect immigrants and other low-income adults in Northern Virginia with high-demand health care careers. **Beginning in October of 2006, NVFS has expanded its partnership with NVCC and enhanced the curriculum; TF trainees will now be earning 17 college credits during the 24 week cycle. Training Futures is the first job training program in the country to offer a full semester of college credits.**

### NVFS/NVCC STEPS TO SUCCESS PARTNERSHIP

Step 6	<b>THE AMERICAN DREAM</b>
Step 5	<b>NVCC Degrees &amp; Career Advancement</b>
Step 4	<b>New Career-Track Jobs</b>
Step 3	<b>NVFS Comprehensive Support &amp; Training</b>
Step 2	<b>NVCC and NVFS ESOL Classes</b>
Step 1	<b>NVFS Outreach into Low-Income &amp; Immigrant Communities</b>

Over the past 3 years, Training Futures has successfully expanded its program to provide trainees with the option of seeking employment in health care administrative positions. The training program includes all of the above *Steps to Success* features, plus additional NVCC medical training such as Medical Terminology, delivered during the TF program. In addition, the two organizations have piloted a new evening Health Care ESOL course at TF's site for limited-English-speaking adults, to prepare these trainees for health care training at TF or NVCC, or direct health care employment. Together, these new health care initiatives have the capacity to train and link 100 limited English-speaking adults and other low-income breadwinners annually with health care employment opportunities, creating a new pipeline of motivated and skilled entry-level health care staff to help address the region's worsening shortage of health care.

## Modifications to Original Plan

1. **TF Curriculum:** Originally, TF and NVCC proposed 4 NVCC health care training modules to be interwoven into the TF curriculum. However, interviews with health care employers demonstrated a need for only two of these (Medical Terminology and HIPPA Confidentiality), and uncovered a need for new material on health care billing processes and an introduction to coding. Employer interviews also identified a need for accent reduction for foreign-born trainees. TF recruited a TF volunteer who is a certified Speech Pathologist to conduct a voluntary 1-hour Accent Reduction and Language Expansion workshop each week, with an average of 17-20 foreign-born TF trainees participating.
2. **Health Care ESOL Materials:** Following a more in-depth review of the originally-proposed text for the Health Care ESOL text and alternatives, NVCC and TF staff decided to use a different base text, which is being extensively supplemented with additional material and activities developed by NVCC.

## Current Progress Status on Achieving Goals and Outcomes

Goals	Results to Date
<b>Graduation:</b> Of the 65 enrolled trainees in 2 Springfield health care administrative training cycles, 85-90% (at least 59) will graduate from TF with 6-8 college credits	34 new trainees started in TF's new health care administrative training cycle on August 29, 2005. On February 23, 2006, 33 of those trainees (97%) graduated. Nearly all earned 7 NVCC credits. On April 3, 2006, 31 new trainees began a new 6-month Training Futures cycle. 28 of those trainees just graduated and are currently seeking health care and administrative positions.
<b>Employment:</b> 85-90% (at least 50) TF graduates from the Springfield site will secure new administrative employment within 3-6 months of graduation, with the majority working in health care jobs.	29 of the 33 graduates in February (87%) have accepted new jobs. Because of TF's success in developing new health care employer relationships, 20 new jobs (69%) are with health care sector employers. The new TF/NVCC health care training program has been endorsed and promoted by the Arlington Medical Society, the Medical Society of Northern Virginia, and the No. Va. Physicians Management Association to over 1,000 medical employers.
<b>Wage Gains:</b> Employed graduates will earn 25% more income than their most recent previous jobs.	Newly employed graduates reported starting wages averaging \$13.71/hour, an average gain of 37% over previous earnings. TF had a record \$30 per hour in this latest group of graduates!
<b>Health Care ESOL Enrollment:</b> 30 TF applicants will enroll in 2 pilot cycles of Health Care ESOL courses to qualify them for further health care training or immediate employment.	TF recruited 52 ESOL enrollees in 2 course sections of the health care ESOL class. Each ESOL course was taught by NVCC at TF's Springfield site during the evening. 40 of these participants graduated from the ESOL course.
<b>Comprehensive TF Training:</b> Re-design Training Futures successful office skills training curriculum in Springfield to include four NVCC health care training modules and pilot test this new curriculum, attended by 34 foreign born or disadvantaged	The TF team conducted 15 health care employer interviews, and gathered hiring and job description material from large health care employers' websites. The curriculum will feature at least 3 NVCC modules: medical terminology, HIPPA confidentiality, and medical office procedures/billing. A total of 34 trainees were accepted into the first TF health care cycle, and 31 started on April 3rd. About 67% are foreign-born, representing 15

native born trainees	nationalities.
<b>New Health Care Jobs:</b> Recruit health care employers to sponsor 15-20 two-week internships during the 1st training cycle & assist 10-15 grads in securing new HC admin. jobs following this cycle	Interviews with health care employers suggest strong interest in sponsoring internships. In the cycle ending February 2006, all 29 trainees were given internships and 22 of these were in the health care field. In the most recent cycle, 21 of the 28 internships were in health care. Staff will continue to strengthen and expand health care employer relationships and conduct ongoing job development activities.

## **Profile of Participants**

<b>Program Offering</b>	<b># Enrolled</b>	<b># Completing</b>	<b>Participant Profile</b>
<b>Health Care ESOL</b> (June 2006 cycle) (April 2006 cycle)	27 25	40 completed mid-term and final exams and graduated.	47 females and 5 males enrolled. All foreign-born, from the following regions of origin: 18-Central/S. America; 11-Africa; 16-Middle East; 7-Asia
<b>Training Futures Health Care Admin. Training</b> (Apr. 2006 cycle)	31	28 completed mid-term and final exams and graduated.	22 females & 9 males enrolled. 20 are foreign-born, from the following regions of origin: 6-Africa; 2-Central/S. America; 4-Asia; 8-Middle East; 11-N.A.
<b>Training Futures Administrative Training</b> (June 2006 cycle)	28	28 (still enrolled; Nov. 06 graduation date)	22 females and 6 males enrolled. 22 are foreign born, from the following regions of origin: 4-Africa, 4-Central/S. America, 9-Middle East, 5-Asia, 6-N.A.

## **ESOL Program**

After extensive interviews with health care employers, TF and NVCC designed a program curriculum using ESOL texts and workbooks, with focus on 4 health care training modules: Medical Terminology, HIPPA Confidentiality, Billing Processes and an Introduction to Coding.

The ESOL portion of the class utilized initial TABE tests (Tests of Adult Basic Education) for analysis, and mid-term and final TABE tests to measure performance. The curriculum focused on vocabulary, listening, reading and writing, and workbook exercises. The average increase in TABE test results was a full 30% at the completion of the class.

The health care portion was tailored to the four areas noted above, and focused on entry-level knowledge, vocabulary and written terms. The class was very successful in placing trainees in health care positions. In the cycle ending February 2006, all 33 trainees were given internships and 22 of these were in the health care field. 29 of these graduates have accepted new jobs, and 20 of those are in the health care field.

## **Overview and challenges**

The greatest strengths of the Training Futures program are its outstanding outcomes, the innovative partnership formed with NVCC, and the path to economic success it has placed its participants on. The new challenge this year of increasing the NVCC college credits awarded from 7 to 17 per training cycle, and helping applicants apply for Pell grant money, will require TF to be more systematized than ever. The challenge continues to be one of resources. Although TF has the most dedicated and committed staff imaginable, they are very busy. Training Futures continues to have an extraordinarily strong volunteer base, and is looking to solicit more resources from NVCC and the community.

## **III. Year 3 Proposal**

The seed funding in 2004 from the Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants initiative allowed Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS) and Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) to launch a new phase of their partnership, combining the health care training capabilities of NVCC with NVFS' Training Futures' ability to recruit and train low-income adults.

**This year brings exciting new changes to Training Futures.** The first is that graduates will now be awarded 17 college credits through Northern Virginia Community College when they have completed the TF program; these 17 credits are one quarter of the way to an Associates Degree! This is a first in job training programs. The curriculum was approved by NVCC, and TF staff has been approved as adjunct professors. Additionally, participants will be assisted in applying for Pell grants, which not only provides this training at no cost to them, but also puts them on the tuition assistance track for further college studies. While this will be a large administrative undertaking, it will help graduates immensely and ultimately contributes to the bottom line of the program.

Another challenge faced this year was the huge increase in rent for the Springfield office. Training Futures has been operating from two sites, the Springfield office and the Tysons Corner office, which is in donated space. TF was informed the rent would be increased from \$1,200 annually to \$62,000 in the Springfield office. This obviously was a huge financial burden on the program, so the decision was made to consolidate the Springfield office into the Tysons Corner office, at least for the interim. Although space is a little tight, the ability to be together as one group will have great benefits as the policies and procedures are fine-tuned to implement the new college credits and Pell grant applications.

This also requires a change in the number of participants taught during a training cycle. Currently, 4 cycles of approximately 28 trainees each are operated from the two sites. With the consolidation of office space the program will now run 2 cycles per year, of approximately 50 trainees each. All 100 of these trainees will now receive health care training, an increase of over 40% from the current curriculum. This allows them greater

access to an expanded range of jobs; the health care training opens up new opportunities in a wider variety of fields, while still emphasizing administrative and office skills.

Additionally, the Accent Reduction program has been expanded. TF will now have 2 professional Speech Pathologists teaching Accent Reduction 3 mornings a week. Both are volunteers, which is obviously a tremendous cost saving. This program provides 2 hours of interactive instruction in Auditory Training and American English sound usage. An additional hour per week will combine vowel/consonant sound usage practice with the development of receptive and expressive language and American cultural communication skills. Students with individual needs are given one on one instruction during the group sessions by an instructor/therapist

Training Futures is a unique job training program. It operates in a simulated office environment, including weekly goal setting, strict dress codes, and formal evaluations, preparing graduates for the real business world. It also includes a tremendous community of native English speaking volunteers who emphasize Standard English and constantly train on usage, definitions, and proper grammar and spelling. ESOL is incorporated into the program daily. So while the ESOL classes prepare participants for entry into the TF program, the curriculum enhances and solidifies the ESOL principles every day.

This grant from the Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants will allow this extraordinary program to continue to achieve the outstanding outcomes that affect so many people. These results are achieved not only because of the excellence of the curriculum, but because the program truly follows each participant through the job search process. This is often a daunting task for foreign born students, but with the confidence and skills they gain throughout the training cycle, and the continued support of staff and volunteers through the job search process, they are successful.

One of the most recent graduates in Springfield may have said it best. When asked what advice she would give to others starting the program she replied, **“When you think life has counted you out, Training Futures will let you see that you are a bright and shining star.”**

#### **IV. Emergency Assistance**

Common issues for our trainees include self esteem issues, marital conflict, depression and stress management. Sometimes they are struggling with serious health or housing problems. It has been commented that a large percentage of our trainees experience "post traumatic stress syndrome." This has resulted from living in war-torn countries like Afghanistan, Congo, Sudan, Rwanda, Liberia, Iraq, Cambodia, Vietnam and El Salvador. Many have been forced to leave families behind, and therefore come to the U.S. with an inadequate support system. Additionally, limited command of the English language further contributes to participants' anxiety levels and feelings of isolation.

To address these issues, NVFS utilizes its own highly regarded counseling staff to work with TF students. "Counseling services" are defined as an initial intake assessment and subsequent counseling sessions. A Master's level therapist completes the initial assessment to determine service needs and makes appropriate referrals to outside mental health providers for more intensive and/or longer-term intervention if indicated. Counselors, and sometimes TF staff, coordinate directly with NVFS peers who administer other supportive services programs, such as housing and transportation.

The NVFS Social Worker comes on site once per week at Training Futures. She introduces herself to the trainees through holding a "Stress Management" workshop. Then the trainer/supervisors refer trainees to her for more in-depth conversation. Some of our trainees, particularly the foreign-born ones, are not comfortable with seeking "counseling". On site meetings with our friendly social worker is a great opportunity for them to experience the benefits of professional counseling services.

Training Futures is a place to discover how their difficult experiences may be shared by others in the United States. It is also a place where coping strategies can be learned. Between 5 and 10 trainees out of 30 ask to meet with the social worker during the 24 week cycle. Sometimes small support groups are formed. By accessing supportive services, participants greatly improved their chances of successfully completing the program and entering the workforce.

## **V. Attachments**

### **A. English Curriculum/ESOL and Health Care Training**

After extensive interviews with health care employers, TF and NVCC designed a program curriculum using ESOL texts and workbooks, with focus on 4 health care training modules: Medical Terminology, HIPPA Confidentiality, Billing Processes and an Introduction to Coding. The health care portion was tailored to these four areas and focused on entry-level knowledge, vocabulary and written terms.

The ESOL portion of the class utilized initial TABE tests (Tests of Adult Basic Education) for analysis, and mid-term and final TABE tests to measure performance. The curriculum focused on vocabulary, listening, reading and writing, and workbook exercises. The average increase in TABE test results was a full 30% at the completion of the class.

### **B. Evaluation**

NVFS and NVCC use a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies in many phases of this initiative, with examples below for client and employer data.

**Client data:** Participant demographics and outcome information are entered into TF's client database, using MS Access software. This database gives staff a powerful tool to track trainee progress, analyze results, identify patterns, and develop responses to continually improve processes and outcomes. For example, using this tool, we can measure any gains in ESOL participants' TABE (Adult Basic Education) English reading scores from the time of their original application to the mid-class test in early August. These results will be used to offer immediate TF enrollment in the August cycle to interested ESOL candidates that demonstrate language improvements needed to succeed at TF. The TF client database for the cycle starting in August also includes outcome measures such as graduation, employment, and wage gains.

**Employer data:** The 15 health care employer interviews to date have resulted in a large amount of qualitative information about job tasks, desired worker skills and attitudes, and work culture expectations. TF's site coordinator and the NVCC instructor are using this information to adapt the TF curriculum to the health care environment. Ultimately, 50 employer contacts representing 20 institutions were entered into an Excel database, to communicate with health care employers, and increase health care employer involvement in TF via internships, special presentations, and volunteering.

## **Sustainability**

As reflected in the list of funders, TF has strong, long-lasting relationships with a diverse group of funders. Training Futures will continue to foster these relationships and feels confident this funding will be sustained and continue to grow over the coming years.