

Connecting people
and community



In April 2008 we began our twelfth year of providing employment and academic programs that transform lives. At risk youth become successful college students; immigrants with professional backgrounds find meaningful employment in their chosen fields; adults who were considered “working poor” learn new skills and move into living wage employment; and ex-prisoners returning to our neighborhoods find housing, personal support and job search assistance required for a successful transition home. By creating a strong and stable workforce, these programs also have a substantial impact on local employers and our economy. This is especially critical in current times.

As we look ahead, we will continue to build the foundation required to change lives. As always, we take the time to hear people’s stories and work with them to cultivate goals and dreams for their futures. We help them achieve skill upgrades that will bring economic independence. And, we provide support, encouragement and problem-solving along the way. This is the successful formula we have used over these past many years.

This strong foundation prepared us to embrace an expanded role in providing workforce services this year. Throughout Oregon organizations like SE Works, which are supported with Workforce Investment Act funding, are beginning to align services and programs with those of the Oregon Employment Department. This initiative, led by Governor Kulongowski, is designed to maximize declining federal funds, increase focus on skill development and training, and achieve the goal of garnering greater wages and advancement for all.

At SE Works the change has resulted in a wealth of new job search and training supports available to customers. Here are few highlights:

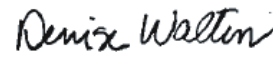
- ◆ The Oregon Employment Department (OED) is now on-site at SE Works.
- ◆ Customers have access the OED **i-Match job-matching** system. This system, a key resource for employers who list job openings with the state, significantly increases the number of job referrals available to our customers.
- ◆ We conduct an immediate **up-front skills review** of reading and math. This allows us to make referrals for basic skills upgrades.
- ◆ We are able to provide services to a greater number of people. Customers experience a quicker turn-around time in moving through their job search, and services are more tailored to individuals’ needs.

We’re thrilled to bring this new resource to the southeast Portland community. This new collaboration comes at a time when our neighborhoods are most in need of all the employment resource we can muster. Thanks to our many partners, committed board members, dedicated staff, and generous funders and donors. It is your energy, enthusiasm, and inspiration that prepares us to move into the new year.

Best Wishes,



Heidi Soderberg
Executive Director



Denise Walton
Board Chair



Our Mission:

To strengthen the economic health and well being of our diverse southeast Portland community by facilitating successful connections between job seekers and employers.

Youth Programs

For many of the youth who come to SE Works, the goals of completing high school, attending college, and finding rewarding, living-wage employment may seem remote. Yet at SE Works, many at-risk youth achieve success! They attend daily GED classes that include rigorous academic instruction, community service, and life skills classes. Students explore their career interests, participate in internships, and take field trips to expand their horizons. Thanks to a team of volunteer tutors, students also receive individual tutoring before they enter the GED class, while in the class, and after they transition to college. Along the way, they are supported by case managers who assist them to address challenges, identify future goals, and transition to post-secondary education or employment. Additionally, a grant from Bureau of Housing and Community Development allows us to continue provide personalized support and guidance for three years for a small number of youth who transition to college.

The model works for these young people. **Of the 89 youth who participated last year, 91% earned GEDs.** Of those graduates, 75% continued on to post-secondary education (many are first-generation college students) and 46 found employment.

Supported by Worksystems, Inc., Portland Public Schools, the City of Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development, Multnomah County, the Hoover Family Foundation, the Juan Young Trust, and the Oregon State Service Corps.

“At SE Works I got more one on one attention. The staff are really there to help you. I feel good at SE Works—it’s a safe and comfortable place.” - Ashley

Ashley came to SE Works in January 2006; she was 14 years old. She took her practice GED tests and scored very low—a fifth grade reading and sixth grade math levels. We tried to persuade her to return to her comprehensive high school, but she refused to do this.

She started attending the evening tutoring lab. She was dropped several times from the lab for lack of attendance; then later she would return. As a result, her academic progress was slow. As her 16th birthday grew closer, she became more engaged and started to work harder. Slowly, after much hard work, she finally entered the class. She had perfect attendance, worked hard and passed all of her tests.

But her average score wasn't high enough to graduate. She began one-on-one tutoring to increase her scores on all of the tests. At the same time, she started taking pre-college classes at PCC. In April 2008, she passed the math test and earned her GED. Now, at age 17, Ashley is enrolled at Portland Community College and working part-time. Ashley says that SE Works made it possible for her to achieve her goals. She explained, “At SE Works I got more one on one attention. The staff are really there to help you. I feel good at SE Works—it’s a safe and comfortable place.”



A team of dedicated staff from the Community Learning Center are charged with providing all of the academic services to youth and adult job seekers. In addition to the GED class (see “Youth Programs”), this also includes English as a Second language classes for adult job seekers. These students meet individually with volunteer tutors who provide English instruction that is tailored to the students’ level, learning style, interests, and career aspirations. **Last year, 60 volunteers provided 1,546 hours of tutoring to 70 students!**

Supported by the City of Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development, Worksystems, Inc., the Oregon State Service Corps, the Clara Barton VISTA Corps and AmeriCorps LINKS.

“I love the challenge of coming up with different ways to teach things and connect them with my students’ lives.” - Linea Bruno

Partnerships with the Oregon State Service Corps, Clara Barton VISTA Corps, and AmeriCorps LINKS are crucial to the success of this program.

Thanks to these organizations, three AmeriCorps members are placed at SE Works to provide service to the community—they recruit and train volunteers, tutor students, and create educational materials. These individuals truly demonstrate the difference one person can make in a community!

Linea Bruno (pictured left) is currently serving her second year as the Instructional Aide for the ESL program through AmeriCorps LINKS. Eight hours every week,

Linea provides one-on-one and small group tutoring to adults learning English. She is studying Spanish and linguistics at Portland State University and is pursuing a certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language. Linea says, “*Being a LINKS member has been an amazing opportunity to see what ESL tutoring is really like. I love the challenge of coming up with different ways to teach things and connect them with my students’ lives.*”

Linea’s natural instructional abilities and

her resolve to empower students have been instrumental to student success. Linea takes teaching beyond the textbook by utilizing numerous strategies to enhance learning. Language comes to life through fables, riddles, current events, and movie clips; students from various cultures and language backgrounds connect with one another as English pen-pals; and students come to understand how cars can be lemons and people can walk “on cloud nine”.

In the future, Linea would like to teach English in a community-based setting, largely because of her experiences with SE Works and AmeriCorps. “*I have worked with a LOT of volunteer and non-profit organizations, and I think the ESL program here is the most well-run and efficient in helping its students. A lot of organizations match you up with someone to help but then you’re essentially on your own. SE Works’ ESL program maintains that freedom of how you’re helping, while providing a really great support system. SE Works provides tutor gatherings, a computer lab, a library of ESL resources, an AmeriCorps ESL resource developer, and a great program coordinator with experience in the field. My faith in humanity is reaffirmed daily by the people I work with, the students I teach, and by the fact that organizations like AmeriCorps and SE Works even exist.*”



Immigrant Credentialing Program

The neighborhoods surrounding SE Works are home to immigrants and refugees from across the globe who were doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other highly educated professionals in their home countries. This program assists these individuals to find living-wage employment in their chosen professions. We provide them with language instruction, occupational skills training, translation and certification of foreign diplomas, and coaching about American workplace skills. **Of those who completed the three-year program, 81% increased their income by at least 25%.** They found jobs, such as Physician Assistants, paralegals, plumbers, and teachers, earning as much as \$21 per hour.

Supported by the City of Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development, Worksystems, Inc, and Clara Barton Vista Corps.

“When I came to SE Works, I felt like they really want to help me to succeed and live a better life.” - Victor

“A new chapter in my life opened in 2004 when I moved to USA. At first like most of the immigrants I felt hopeless and disappointed—no language, no work that I would enjoy. I thought it will always be that way. I worked in couple of warehouses to make ends meet and was studying English at home and volunteering at Providence emergency room to practice my English skills. One of my good friends recommended that I go to SE Works, he told me that they can help me to get an education and good work. When I came to SE Works, I felt like they really want to help me to succeed and live a better life. In Ukraine I have a Masters Degree in Medicine and was through my first year of residency, so I wanted to work in a medical field. Galina helped me with college, I attended ENL classes and she also found a tutor for me so I was able to learn English faster.

After my English improved I was able to find a job in a resident home as a care giver; it was very valuable experience for me and I enjoyed helping people. One day I found out about CNA classes at Cascade Medical School. I really wanted to get into those classes so I have some certification in USA, but I couldn't afford it. That is when SE Works came to the rescue again. I called Galina and she was willing to help me to get into this school so I can get a better job.

I passed my CNA certification, and after a couple of months I applied to Kaiser Hospital for the position of emergency room technician and was hired. I have been working there for about a year now and I enjoy it very much. I got a lot of additional trainings through Kaiser that allow me to perform many different tests and assist nurses and doctors in their work. I get up every day and thank God for the good people at SE Works that help me to get where I'm now. I know it's not the end I have a lot to go, but for now I have a good job that I can be proud of and I can support my family and not worry about how we going to pay our bills.

In a near future I'm planning to get back into college so I can recertify my diploma from Ukraine and work toward my career of becoming a doctor. I know it's not going to be easy and I'm going to stumble through some hardships, but I'm willing to work for it and hopefully be successful. No matter what lies ahead I have learned to persevere and work hard so I can look back on my life and say that I have done everything that I can to be successful and I'm proud of what I have become.”



The Economic Opportunities Initiative, funded by the City of Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development (BHCD), is designed to increase the income and assets of low-income residents by 25% within three years. In 2008, the first cohort of participants reached the three-year mark. **Across the city, 83% of the participants in 34 diverse projects met this goal.** SE Works' five EOI programs assist individuals to increase their skills, reach short- and long-term career goals, and become financially stable. They include:

- The **Community Partners Re-Entry program**, a collaboration with Volunteers of America, Metropolitan Family Services, Cascadia Behavioral Health, and Multnomah County Department of Community Justice (DCJ), connects young males who were formerly incarcerated with a continuum of re-entry support. Last year SE Works provided workforce services to 44 program participants.
- The **Manufacturing Training Program** engaged 40 people in industry training programs and assisted them to find employment.
- The **Workforce-Housing Alliance (WHA)** provided comprehensive workforce services to 23 residents of affordable housing communities with REACH and Portland Impact last program year.

The remaining EOI projects are highlighted in the youth and immigrant programs.



Funded through BCHD. WHA is also supported by the United Way Tools For Living Program

“I can’t thank SE Works enough for their non-judgmental, compassionate and skilled assistance.

- Debra

“My life was looking pretty dark when I came to SE Works. I had left a violent 7 year relationship and was lost to myself. The violence was serious; I could have died on a number of occasions. I was in constant fear. I was no longer the strong, intelligent, assertive, competent nurse I had been previously. I had become an unemployed, frightened, broken middle aged woman alone. To avoid the violence I moved into my sister’s basement. I was uncomfortable with all aspects of my life. Mere survival was not enough. I needed to get me back, and a safe place of my own to live. I had to get back to work. Period. No matter how sad or bad I was feeling I had to get back up on my feet.

That is where SE Works comes in. I was told

about them by a person who works in domestic violence. I called, made an appointment, then went in. I was scared every step of the way. But I was not alone because every step of the way I received encouragement, assistance, information, and compassion by a group of very caring people—very patient people—who go to every length possible to help. This includes the classes that helped me get back to work. The three that stand out were the computer skills class, resume building, and interviewing. These classes helped build my confidence back to a level that I became able to have faith in my abilities and in myself. I went on a few mock interviews. I ended up working for a nursing agency, from there I got a full-time/benefitted job.

Getting the job was only part of this deal. The most important thing that helped was their skilled ability to see where I needed help and then provide a resource to assist with that need. They were also able to help me at times financially, with an overdue utility for example. This helped so much to reduce the stressors while I learned to get back on my feet.

Now I am working a full time job, I have my own safe place to live, two dogs and a cat, new friends, and a new me. I was able to get help with housing through a referral by SE Works. I hope to return to school to get my masters. I can’t thank SE Works enough for their non-judgmental, compassionate and skilled assistance. I truly don’t know where I would be without them.”

WIA Adult Program

Last year, 2,173 individuals searched for employment at SE Works. The majority were low-income residents who were unemployed or under-employed. At SE Works, they attended workshops on resume writing, interviewing, conducting an internet-based job search, and identifying transferable skills.

Of those, 238 enrolled in our intensive program which included one-on-one employment coaching and guidance, tuition assistance for skills upgrades and certifications to high growth occupations, and support services to assist them to stabilize themselves financially. **Seventy-seven percent of the individuals who completed the program are employed at average hourly wage of \$12.85.** Of the individuals who enrolled in training programs, 98% successfully completed the programs.



By assisting individuals to increase skills and find living wage jobs, the program benefits job seekers, their families, employers and the community-at-large.

Funded through Worksystems Inc., Multnomah County, and the Housing Authority of Portland.

“Now I’m glad I still live in southeast because if push comes to shove, there is help.” - Ronald

Ronald was referred to SE Works by Vocational Rehabilitation in March of 2008. At the time, he was homeless and living in his car. When his car was towed away, he moved in with friends and was looking for work. We assisted with some of the essentials for conducting a job search—phone service and clothing. In the interim, he reconnected with his former partner and their two children. They worked with Portland Impact to find affordable housing which was managed by Catholic Charities. Now the family is living in a two-bedroom apartment.

At first, Ronald reports that he was skeptical of the services offered by SE Works. He wondered, “Will there finally be someone to help me become a productive tax-paying member of society again, help me in ways I know I need, and maybe fill the gaps for the rest of my employment picture? First I needed an ego boost...and someone who looked at me not as a ‘case’ but looked at the life that makes up this ‘case’

and how it got into that bleak position.”

Ronald had a tough time finding work at first. But he persevered, met regularly with staff members, and revised his resume. Eventually, he connected with Portland Habilitation Center’s janitorial training program. After he successfully completed the program, Ronald was hired on by Portland Habilitation Center. Currently, he’s placed at OHSU, working full-time.

“Now I’m glad I still live in southeast because if push comes to shove, there is help. If you want to help yourself, improve yourself, and become whole again, you have a friend on Foster Rd. Not a case worker...a human with a heart and a pretty smart brain too when it comes to careers and work. Thank you, thank you, thank you. One person can and does make a difference.”



Portland Partners Re-Entry Initiative

The Portland Partners Re-Entry Initiative (PPRI) is a collaboration with Volunteers of America, Central City Concern, and YWCA. Working in partnership with county, state, and federal community justice agencies, the program has worked with nearly 500 adults, providing them with the employment, training, and support services they need to find employment and build new lives after incarceration. **Of the 30 PRI programs operating across the nation, we rank 5th for our performance!**

Supported through the U.S. Department of Labor, the Bureau of Housing and Community Development, the State of Oregon Department of Corrections, Housing Authority of Portland, Multnomah County and the Oregon State Service Corps.

"The first time I came to SE Works was in October 2006 as a participant of the Portland Partners Re-Entry Initiative (PPRI) program. I had been released from prison after serving a 10 month sentence. I participated in PPRI activities, such as mentoring and education support. I was a full time student at Portland State University. I had 160 hours of community service to perform and I got permission from the Judge to serve my community service hours at SE Works – PPRI. Over the course of the Summer 2007, I attended PSU part-time and worked the front desk at SE Works – PPRI.

The most significant change that happened to



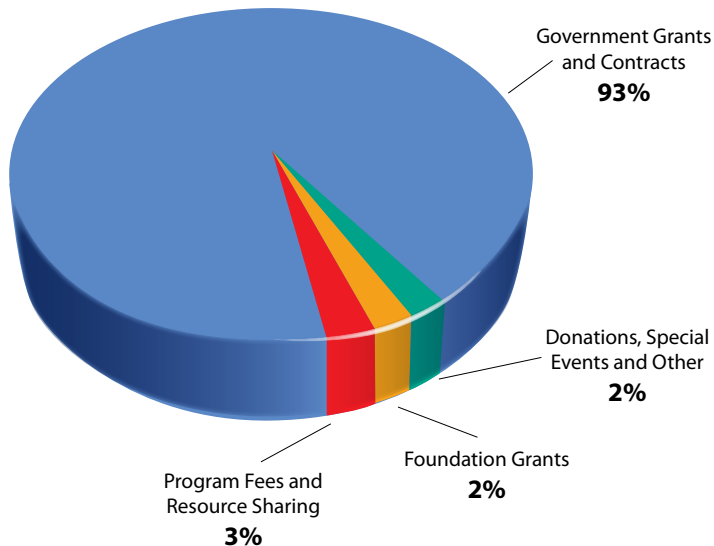
my life after getting involved with SE Works was realizing that there is an amazing group of people, who you come to as a complete stranger, who believe in your potential and do so without judgment. This supportive environment was something I didn't expect to find and it really helped me make peace with the shame and stigma I felt about my crime and prison time. It also made me want to work with people in similar circumstances.

I graduated from Portland State University in June with a BS in Social Sciences. I then applied for a job working for Volunteers of America with the PPRI program as an Eligibility Specialist. I was hired and started working with the program in August. SE Works is my worksite and I am very happy to be here and working with a team of amazing people. Someday I would like to continue my education and would like to get a Masters Degree in Social Work."

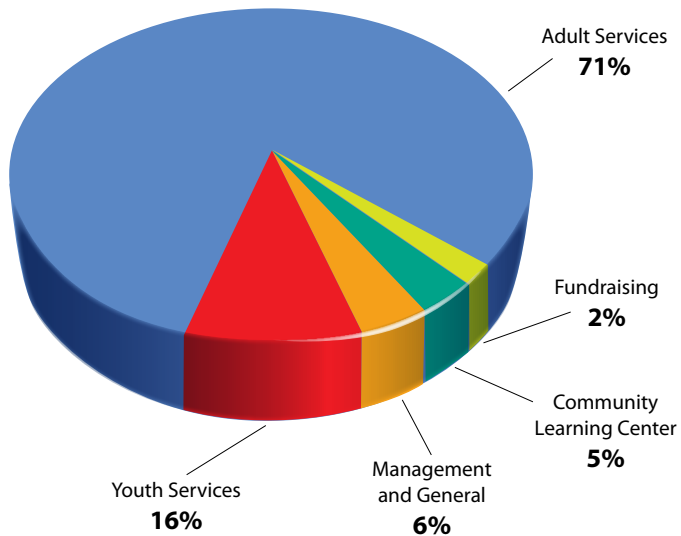
"This supportive environment was something I didn't expect to find and it really helped me make peace with the shame and stigma I felt about my crime and prison time."

- Stephanie

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