

For Immediate Release

July 8, 2022



Heartland Workforce Solutions receives \$600K grant to provide pandemic relief to South Omaha residents, businesses

ARPA funds will be used to connect career seekers to in-demand employers and support talent recruiting, career path education, job search, résumé assistance and interviewing skills

Contact:

Erin Porterfield

Executive director, Heartland Workforce Solutions

eporterfield@hws-ne.org

402-332-8948

OMAHA, Neb. — Heartland Workforce Solutions has received \$600,000 from the Omaha American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Community Grant Program to provide a program in South Omaha aimed at helping residents and businesses that have been economically harmed by the pandemic.

Heartland Workforce Solutions (HWS), a non-profit dedicated to strengthening Nebraska’s workforce, will use the funding to secure permanent building space and establish workforce program partnerships that are accessible and responsive to South Omaha residents. These programs will help remediate the lasting economic effects of the pandemic on career seekers and business. The HWS space in South Omaha will include a resource center offering support for job searching, résumé assistance, interviewing skills, occupation and career path awareness, referral to workforce partner programs, employer education and recruiting events.

The location is expected to open in March 2023.

HWS was one of 50 Omaha non-profit agencies to receive ARPA funds through a grant program created by the City of Omaha, which partnered with United Way of the Midlands and the Omaha Community Foundation to administer the federal pandemic dollars.

“We are grateful and excited to increase access to these services to people on site in South Omaha, an affiliate American Job Center,” said Erin Porterfield, executive director of Heartland Workforce Solutions. “HWS will act as a hub for career seekers and talent recruiters to meet local in-demand occupations. Part of our goal is to remove barriers through bilingual programs in order to develop skills and connection to careers.”

“The City of Omaha has a strong partner in Heartland Workforce Solutions,” Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert said. “The

worker shortage spans all job fields in the city, and HWS can help build that job-ready workforce and then connect workers to the many business partnerships that will help lead our economic recovery.”

The Latino community in Omaha has been heavily affected by the pandemic, according to a University of Nebraska Medical Center study. The data show that in South Omaha ZIP codes, fewer than 45% of residents have graduated from high school graduates or work a full-time job. The study noted that the opportunity for talent development and access to workforce development programs are necessary to strengthen the South Omaha community through employment.

Program Summary

The Heartland Workforce Solutions (HWS) American Job Center (AJC) South reflects the one-stop public workforce system service delivery to South Omaha residents in the QCT. Results connect people to careers in in-demand industry occupations. To achieve this, customers include career seekers and businesses needing talent. Services on location will include: a drop-in resource room for unemployment services; reemployment services; connection to public workforce development programs that provide training funds, skills assessment, career coaching, mentoring, employment planning, job search, résumé assistance and mock interviews; adult education; visual and language accessibility; business engagement; job fairs; in-person and virtual meeting space; entrepreneurial assistance; community referral connections; career path awareness; labor market information; information and connection to pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and more.

The program also will provide services to people who face barriers to employment, such as people who were justice involved, people experiencing a disability, veterans, people without homes, youth who are unemployed and not in school and people who face language barriers in the workplace.

This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRP0230 awarded to the City of Omaha by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The program is also supported by the Omaha Community Foundation.

Here are statements from other notable partners and supporters of Heartland Workforce Solutions and the South Omaha community:

“The expansion of Heartland Workforce Solutions will serve our community well, and I am thrilled to see the organization’s growth in South Omaha,” **said Nebraska State Senator Tony Vargas**. “South Omaha residents who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic will see a benefit from HWS’ outreach, resources and services to find stable employment and good-paying jobs.”

“South Omaha residents have struggled through this pandemic, but they are a strong community of people who want to contribute to Omaha’s success,” **said Armando Salgado, an HWS board member and community leader**. “The ARPA Community Grant provides a critical pathway to help connect residents and businesses to career opportunities, which in turn will reignite the South Omaha economy.”

“I am very pleased to hear about the forthcoming Heartland Workforce Solutions award for an affiliate American Job Center in South Omaha,” **said Douglas County Commissioner Roger Garcia**. “We all know that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many job transitions, job losses and overall economic hardships. This center will be a

tremendous addition to our South Omaha community when it comes to helping individuals gain new skills, receive job coaching and be able to transition to their next big career move that will set them on a pathway to improved financial stability and career growth. I am thankful to all who are investing in this center and for Heartland Workforce Solutions as they take the lead to make this new service a reality in our community."

####

About Heartland Workforce Solutions

Heartland Workforce Solutions is a centralized employment resource that connects people who are seeking a sustainable career with regional employers in Douglas, Sarpy and Washington counties in Nebraska. Anticipating the future and focusing on success across the community, Heartland Workforce Solutions partners with organizations and employers to identify, train, educate and prepare a pipeline of workforce talent that is ready to maximize and expand opportunities.