

## CASE STUDY

# Upskill NWA

### Upskilling the health sector in Arkansas

In 2022, Upskill NWA provided comprehensive and individualized support to all its participants. The Career Navigators spend significant time with each of their paired participants and assist with obstacles that may keep them from completing their program. This includes childcare needs, family responsibilities, transportation challenges, program requirements like uniforms and textbooks, work obligations, and financial issues. Whether Upskill NWA provides direct resources or directs them to a partner organization, the problem is addressed as quickly as possible, so participants have uninterrupted education. With over 1,000 open positions for healthcare positions in Northwest Arkansas, Upskill NWA can work closely with their participants to find the best fit for them.

The Northwest Arkansas Council convened 17 public, philanthropic, and community leaders, including the Excelerate Foundation, the Walton Family Foundation, leaders from local academic institutions, chief executives of five major hospital systems, county judges, and city mayors to connect the region's untapped workforce to skilled positions in high demand careers in the healthcare sector. As a result, the two foundations committed \$3 million to the three-year roll-out phase of Upskill NWA. Upskill NWA is based on the proven model of success, Project QUEST, that has served people across the country for nearly 30 years, which spawned other organizations, such as Capital IDEA, and VIDA.

## Rural Works

Rural Works is a national network of workforce development practitioners collectively pursuing local systems change and employer engagement strategies to equitably sustain and scale their impact within their respective communities. The common theme includes building strong employer partnerships, finding best practices in workforce development and sharing them broadly, and tracking the overall impact of these programs on individuals and communities. The goal is to support each community served by the network to offer best practice-level workforce development programs at individual, community, and systems levels.

**Rural LISC backbones this network** by providing technical assistance with regional and national subject matter experts, supplying data alignment strategies to demonstrate scale for rural economies, and compiling data to demonstrate to stakeholders the impact of their programming and resource development.

**One of the network members to join in the second year of implementation is Upskill NWA, based in Rogers, Arkansas.** In the northwest part of the state, Upskill NWA is closely situated to Missouri and Oklahoma. With **funding from the Arconic Foundation and Ascendium Education Group**, they have partnered with Rural LISC primarily on workforce development efforts.

RURAL LISC



### How Upskill NWA works

Each participant meets weekly with their Career Navigator to ensure they complete requirements and get steady employment. Workshops support the development of life skills including financial literacy, time management, and leadership.

Focused primarily on healthcare professions, Upskill NWA works closely with area colleges and universities to meet participant and sector needs. Credential and certificate programs include:

- RN
- LPN
- Surgical technologist
- Respiratory therapist
- Radiologic imaging
- LPN to BSN Bridge Program

### Services

- Resume and Interview Prep
- Maternity/Childcare stipends
- Transportation stipends
- Housing, Utility, Food Emergency Assistance
- Tuition Assistance
- Books & Required Supplies Assistance
- Exam Fees
- Career Pathway Navigation
- Financial Literacy

## Upskill NWA Members

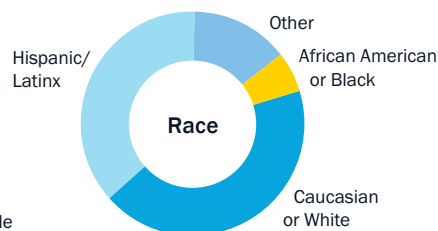
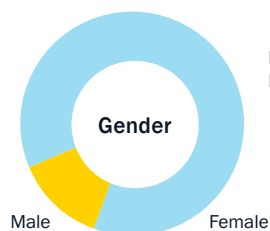
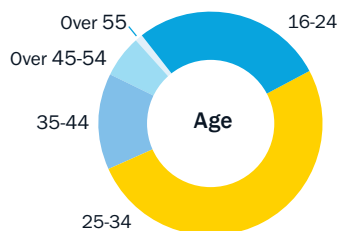
- HARK NWA
- Dress for Success NWA
- Single Parent Scholarship Fund
- Credit Counselors of Arkansas
- Benton County Extension Office
- Madison County Health Coalition
- Career Pathways Initiative (CPI)
- Canopy
- Circles NWA
- E for All
- ACOM
- MEI
- NWA Council
- Bentonville Rotary Club
- Benton County Veteran's Services
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)



## 2022 by the numbers

- 20 clients served
- 18 clients participated in a training or certificate program
- 4 post-secondary partners engaged
- 6 municipalities engaged
- 5 employers engaged

## CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS



## Results

The results of the in-depth and personalized support are obvious, with **almost all participants completing their programs and getting new jobs in healthcare.**

For example, one participant entered the program **earning \$14,000 a year** and left the program with a job paying **over \$55,000 a year**. She had multiple job offers, giving her a boost of self-confidence in her abilities and skills. She was able to choose which hospital she worked at, instead of just taking the first job offer she was given.

## Current challenges

- High interest in program, with limited organizational capacity

“Many [of our clients] have not had educational opportunities because of financial constraints. They are underemployed, living paycheck to paycheck, and are often supporting their families.”

—Carol Moralez, president and CEO of Upskill NWA



Carol Moralez, president and CEO of Upskill NWA, will be speaking at the Rural LISC Rural Talks Seminar in December 2023 on Upskill NWA's success, program design, collaborations, and how they use data to serve underrepresented populations in Northwest Arkansas.