

# West Philadelphia Skills Initiative

IMPACT REPORT 2017



# Opportunities



**80,000**

jobs in University City,  
a thriving economic engine



APPROXIMATELY  
**\$4 billion**

in construction activity  
in University City  
since 2015, with billions  
of dollars on the horizon



**\$1 billion**

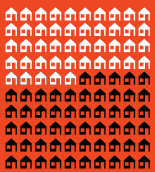
invested in annual research  
and development by  
University City institutions

# Challenges



**Over 1 in 3**

West Philadelphians  
lives below  
the poverty level



**45%**

of households  
have incomes  
below \$25,000 a year



**Only 21%**

of the population  
aged 25 or older  
has a bachelor's degree



## About the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative

Since 2011, the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative (WPSI) has been connecting West Philadelphia's employers seeking talent to West Philadelphians seeking opportunity. The Skills Initiative - operated by University City District, an economic development organization in West Philadelphia - is an employer-driven job training program that has redefined how effective workforce development programming can transform people's lives.

University City has become the city and region's economic powerhouse, providing employment opportunities for nearly 80,000 individuals, with more growth on the horizon. Yet in adjacent communities, too many residents face the complex challenges that result from longterm unemployment and poverty.

The West Philadelphia Skills Initiative was created to bridge that gulf between poverty and opportunity. By harnessing the might of the institutions driving University City's economic boom, the Skills Initiative provides local residents with the hard and soft skills necessary to not only find employment, but build pathways to career success.

### Since Inception in 2011...

**785**

adults and youth touched  
through WPSI job training,  
internships and workshops

**\$15.4  
MILLION**

in wages generated for  
previously unemployed  
West Philadelphians

**62**

average number of  
weeks unemployed  
prior to WPSI

### Last Year...

**93%**

of our graduates  
connected to  
employment

**132**

West Philadelphia  
residents served

**\$13.57**

average  
starting wage

**29%**

average increase  
over pre-program  
hourly wage



# Recent Highlights

The Skills Initiative had a banner year, including a visit from Mayor Jim Kenney, WPSI's largest grant to-date from the Pew Charitable Trusts, and our first cohort in the building trades. We look forward to continued growth, which will allow us to support increasing numbers of employers and jobseekers.



In March 2017, Mayor Jim Kenney met WPSI participants, graduates and staff and shared his own experiences with work and education.



At our 2017 WPSI Graduation, employer partners, alumni, UCD staff and participants' families gathered to celebrate graduates' accomplishments.



UCD was honored to be selected as the 2016 Philadelphia market recipient of Bank of America's Neighborhood Builders® Award for high-performing nonprofits, based on its job training efforts.



UCD offered its first cohort in the building trades, helping a homeowner rebuild her dilapidated porch while providing valuable carpentry skills to local residents.

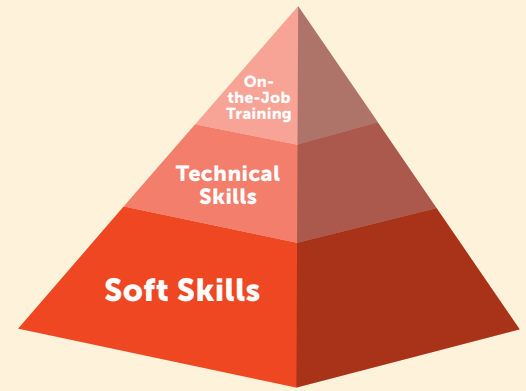


In its second year of operation, Green City Works – UCD's landscaping social venture – flourished, with 25 clients, 14 full-time staff and nearly \$1 million in revenue.



In June 2017, UCD leadership presented at the opening plenary for the National Fund for Workforce Solutions' 2017 Leadership Convening.

# Our Approach



The Skills Initiative offers a flexible program model, ranging from 4 to 26 weeks, designed in partnership with each employer. Every cohort receives WPSI's best-in-class approach to soft skills development, with technical skills and on-the-job training layered in based on the employers' needs. The cutting-edge curriculum provides participants with the tools they need to explore their career aspirations and thrive in the workplace.

## Soft Skills

Soft skills are the foundation of every cohort's experience. The curriculum is designed to help participants better understand themselves, their career goals, and how to navigate today's job market and succeed in the workplace.

## Technical Skills

Many cohorts receive technical training, designed to help participants adapt their previous hard skill training to the needs of a specific employer or to teach an employer's proprietary technical systems.

## On-the-Job Training

Longer programs include on-the-job training, which allows participants to learn onsite with the employer while earning a wage.



Photographs by: Ryan Collard (front cover), Ben Tran (inside spread), Lora Reehling (back cover)



“I don’t know where I would be today if it wasn’t for the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative. WPSI gave me CHOP, and for that I am truly thankful. I still think back to all of the life lessons the classes taught us, and it is mind blowing how I completely changed as a person. I now have confidence – I now walk into CHOP everyday with my head held high and ready to work.”

**- Brittany Coleman, CHOP 2016**



“During my time here at the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative, I learned so much, not only about myself but how the world works around us. I just really appreciate the individual attention and guidance from the staff and guest speakers. Now completing WPSI, I have the confidence and tools to continue my success.”

**- Kyree Reed, Green City Works 2017**

## Thank you to our FY17 Funders

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