

CAREER START

Washington County



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Career Start helps Washington County residents increase their income, secure employment, and achieve long-term housing stability. Funding comes from the Department of Housing Services Homeless Services Division, which unlocks additional leveraged funding from Worksystems.

Using our proven model, participants referred by Supportive Housing Service case managers receive individualized coaching, support, and employment connections that help them overcome barriers, build sustainable careers, increase income, and reduce reliance on public aid.

Services include:

- Career coaching
- Career mapping and resource planning
- Support services for job search activities and training
- Facilitated access to resources and scholarships through WorkSource Portland Metro

Employment is one of the most effective tools for maintaining housing stability.

Career Start is a relatively small investment compared to the ongoing cost of housing assistance. It helps participants contribute more toward rent, reducing demand on housing supports. As participants gain financial independence, supportive housing programs can reinvest resources to serve more households in need.

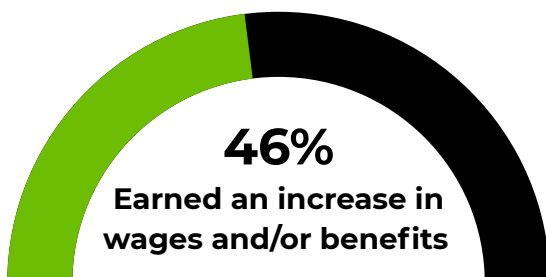
SERVICE PROVIDER

Worksystems puts resources directly back into the community, leveraging the expertise of partners who meet people where they are. Career Start supports three career coaches at the Immigrant Refugee Community Organization.



RESULTS: July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2026

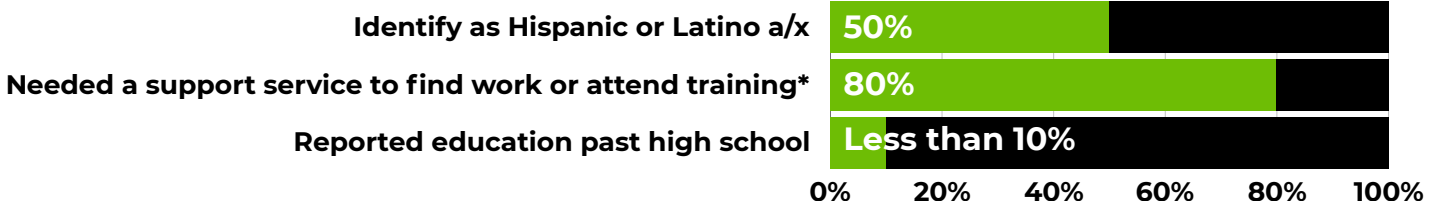
132 Participants Served



Avg. wage at program exit

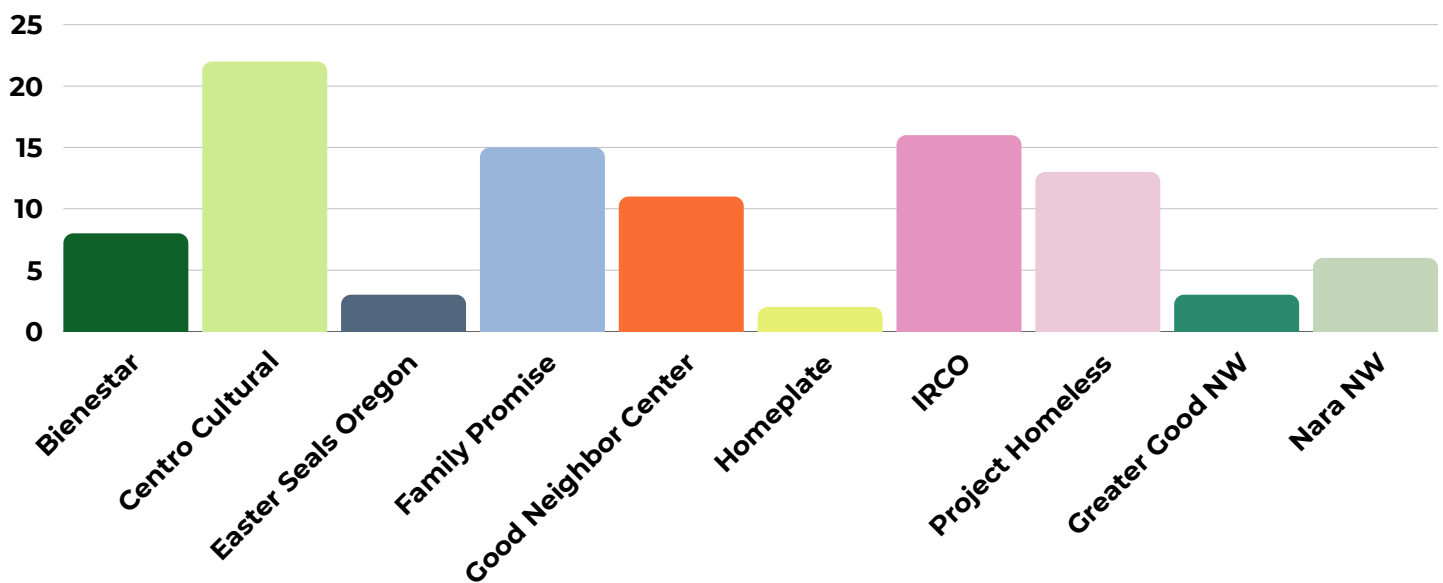
\$19.46

\$0 \$5 \$10 \$15 \$20



**Support services include paying for transportation, work tools and clothes, and licensing fees.*

REFERRALS BY SUPPपोर्टIVE HOUSING PROGRAM



SUCCESS STORY: Empowering Long-Term Self-Sufficiency

Sam enrolled in Career Start in March 2025 after securing housing through Rapid Rehousing. He had an associate's degree and prior experience in maintenance, contracting, home repair, and remodeling—and was motivated to begin working. Sam prioritized long-term career growth, networking and connections within the trades and apprenticeship pathways, and a supportive work environment. His Career Coach helped him develop a resume that highlighted his skills and aligned with his career goals.

Through his Career Coach, Sam connected with the owner of the local business Powell's Doors and Windows, and was hired at \$22 per hour to support residential renovations. He quickly demonstrated strong skills, reliability, and dedication. This led to additional work at Strata Home Enhancement, a partner business. These positions provided Sam with a consistent schedule and close collaboration with the business owner, who has been especially supportive of Sam's professional development and vocational growth.

To further support his success, his Career Coach purchased the tools he needed for the job. This allowed Sam to take on more responsibility and increase his earnings. His hourly wage has since risen to \$25, with additional pay for specific tasks.

To support Sam's long-term goals, his Career Coach also focused on identifying apprenticeship opportunities, particularly in the electrician field. The coach gathered information at the PCC Trades Fair, shared relevant options with Sam, and connected with the Urban League of Portland, which offers a pre-apprenticeship program with specialized support.

Sam continues to work with his Career Coach to pursue apprenticeship pathways while advancing in his current role. He values the mentor-mentee relationship he has built and the importance of professional networks within the trades, noting that the industry is "all about who you know."

Read the Career Start feature in *Street Roots* for another inspiring story!



For more information, contact Deanna DSouza, Community Programs Manager at ddsouza@worksystems.org or 503-478-7359.

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