ABSTRACT

Applicant’s Name: AROOSTOOK COUNTY ACTION PROGRAM, INC. (ACAP) and WASHINGTON HANCOCK COMMUNITY AGENCY (WHCA)

Project Title: “WOMEN AT WORK”: OFFERING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CONNECT WOMEN TO HIGH-WAGE CAREERS IN RURAL MAINE

Description of Geographical Area: This proposal targets women and employers in the northern one-third of Maine. Together, Aroostook, Washington and Hancock Counties make up the northern and easternmost edges of the state. The ruralness of the region, coupled with a lack of adequate transportation and infrastructure, present barriers to the many low-wage women in the region, which is primarily a resource-based economy offering skilled jobs in production, healthcare, construction, and hospitality. Maine’s workforce is the nation’s oldest, and high-skill openings are difficult to fill. At the same time, Maine women’s median annual income ranks 35th nationally, and 58 percent of female-headed households with small children are in poverty.

Number of Participants to be Served: 100 women; 20 RA sponsors will be developed

Total Cost Per Participant: $3,000.00. Travel and training costs are necessarily higher in rural areas, where populations are dispersed and many businesses are small. Maine’s economy is has one of the highest percentage of small businesses in the nation, which tend to be underserved under the current Registered Apprenticeship model; serving small businesses lend to higher costs, but they represent a key part of the state economy. The proposed project will leverage WIOA and RA funds, as well as state-level training funds, to support women’s training and support costs.

Funding Level Requested: $304,291

Summary, Including Scope of Project and Proposed Outcomes:
In the face of a well-documented shortage of skilled labor in Maine, women still dominate traditionally female, lower-paid occupations. State data demonstrates that apprenticeship has been slow to catch on in the targeted region, likely in part because of capacity challenges in the face of the geographically sprawling area. There are currently only 3 RA sponsors in the entire region, the largest of which, Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems, is a partner to this proposal. Teamsters Local 304, ACME Monaco (a manufacturing firm employing many women in NTOs) and Witham Family Hotels are also employer partners.

The proposed Women at Work program will seek to remove barriers that deter women from entering NTOs and apprenticeship programs, while providing technical assistance support for our employers in the form of recruitment, screening, a cohort peer-support-based model, mentorships, training, and ongoing guidance and follow-up, to at least 100 women, and at least 20 employers and unions including our core four sponsoring employers and unions.

The program will support three WANTO-funded career counselors to oversee cohort-based trainings leveraging state and federal workforce funds. We project that at least 80 women recruits will complete a pre-apprenticeship and 70% of these recruits will be accepted into the RA phase. We anticipate that at least 70% of our pre-apprenticeship recruits will receive a credential by the end of their pre-apprenticeship cohort and that at least 70% of women accepted into RAs will complete a credential. The average wage for WANTO placements will be at least 150% of the Maine state minimum wage ($13.50) with benefits.

WANTO would be transformational for Maine: if just our four core employer partners establish RAs by the end of the grant year, this alone will more than double the number of RA sites in the region. This expansion of RA capacity, plus a field of female recruits, would mark a profound and measurable systems level-impact for our workforce infrastructure in rural Maine.