

Collaborative Partnerships: Miami Dade College

Among the numerous partners with whom we have collaborated to help our participants are the Miami-Dade Transit Transportation Disadvantaged Program, Florida International University's Hospitality Program, MDC's Hospitality Institute, and Unidad of Miami Beach. These four partners have been the most influential to MDC's Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 program success.

Miami-Dade Transit enabled us to assist disadvantaged participants with transportation needs. A great number of participants do not have means of transportation, which hinders their ability to come to the computer lab to train, create a resume, search for jobs online, and so on. Based on responses to questionnaires administered by MDC about participant issues with training, job search, personal problems, we learned that transportation was by far participants' most pressing need. Bus passes were provided by Miami-Dade Transit, which allows us to fostering the development of a close relationship with clients and to obtain information needed for reporting.

The Florida International University Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management's Learning for Life Hospitality and Customer Service Skills Training, Certification, and Internship Program offers job readiness training designed to provide educational and vocational opportunities and life skills for underserved students and war veterans. This training and certification enhances the ability to gain employment and meet the need of local customer service, hospitality, and tourism industry partners. We took advantage of this partnership to refer most of our participants in need of training and jobs in an expeditious manner. This program enables us to monitor our participants' progress and job placements. After completing the eight-week training program and the additional two-week paid internship (\$500) with a local industry employer, it is expected that graduating participants will have gained enough self-confidence and practical experience and expertise to be retained as a permanent employee at one of the participating internship employers. As of March 31, 2015, 56 percent of participants in this program obtained gainful employment

Miami Dade College's Hospitality Institute provides us with Hospitality Employment Training and Certification for some of our low-income, low-skills participants without a high school education. The program accepts participants with no skills whatsoever and those with legal and background issues that otherwise would not be eligible for most jobs. Participants receive intensive hands-on training and classroom instruction to develop skills to work in restaurants and hotels. Their training influenced many clients to continue and pursue a GED or to enter college for an AA in Culinary Art. Sixty-four percent of participants who graduated from this program reported employment within a few weeks of completion.

Unidad of Miami Beach's Senior Employment Program is another community partner that contributes greatly to our success by providing us with two to three participants for long periods of time. The participants are aged 55 and older and in need of updated skills in areas such as computers, customer service, and office training to rejoin the workforce. They are placed in job training positions in our front office and computer lab, for which they are paid. Often, these participants are the ones calling and assisting clients at the front desk. They help us at no cost for us while and we provide them with experience and expertise in office jobs.