

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ##

## **NEW BOOST™ for Hidden Talent seeks to produce ready-to-hire individuals**

*New North initiative is designed to connect with region's underrepresented populations*

NEW NORTH, August 16, 2022 – Implementation of the NEW BOOST™ for Hidden Talent initiative with African Heritage Inc. and New North Inc., the regional economic development corporation for the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin, continues to ramp up with the impactful assistance of multiple community partnerships. Through this innovative program, Hidden Talent recruits gain foundational digital literacy skills and can complete other workforce-readiness training modules to help them secure employment in the region.

The NEW BOOST™ (Building Opportunities for Overlooked Sustainable Talent) Hidden Talent project is designed to connect underrepresented racial and ethnic populations, justice-involved individuals and long-term unemployed persons with programs and services that assist them with reentry into the workforce or improvement of their current employment situation. The chronically unemployed or marginally unemployed populations historically are disconnected from many of these services.

“Workforce development today requires that we be proactive in our efforts, rather than the old way of waiting for people to come to us,” says Rebecca Deschane, New North vice president of talent development. “Meeting people where they are and expanding recruitment efforts can play a significant role in the success and implementation of talent initiatives involving traditionally underserved populations.”

The 15-month program, which launched July 1, is expected to run through Sept. 30, 2023. The focus is on recruiting BIPOC individuals, specifically from the African-American and Hispanic communities, but also members of the tribal and immigrant/refugee populations, as well as other individuals who want to build their digital skills. It is anticipated that at least 100 individuals will be served through the initiative.

“We at African Heritage Inc. are honored to be a pivotal partner in driving this initiative to expand access to vital digital literacy skills for our marginalized, hidden and underserved community members,” says Dr. Sabrina W. Robins, a board member with African Heritage Inc. “Together with the crucial collaborative agencies and partners, we will be able to prepare people for employment with livable wages and provide pathways to upskilling opportunities that will prepare our region for the needs of the current and future workforce.”

The Bay Area Workforce Development Board (BAWDB) is a funding partner of New North on the initiative. BAWDB is leveraging Worker Advancement Initiative (WAI) funding to provide innovative workforce development services across the 11 counties it serves, and the NEW BOOST™ for Hidden Talent initiative is one of its three awards. This program is made available by a grant from the American Rescue Plan Act Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. A Microsoft Digital Literacy Grant is providing a portion of the match.

Two primary pillars of the initiative now are underway. A Workforce Engagement and Development System is being designed and built out by Abaxent and Economic Impact Catalyst (EIC); anticipated completion of this digital hub is Oct. 1. It will produce custom reporting, dashboard metrics, access to mentorship and cohort management features, integration of external websites and other platforms, and a library of technology and onboarding support videos.

On a parallel track, African Heritage Inc. is managing the outreach and awareness campaign, with the goal of identifying Hidden Talent recruits in non-traditional environments; it also will support partners with their outreach and engagement efforts, along with providing translation services.

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A pair of Hidden Talent events have taken place over the past two months. On July 28, Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) toured the J.J. Keller Transportation Center at Fox Valley Technical College, where six Afghan and Somali refugees are in the process of receiving training for a Class A commercial driver's license. The training was facilitated through a BAWDB partnership with COMSA, a community-focused organization providing critical resettlement and integration support to Somali and other immigrant and refugee communities in Northeast Wisconsin.

On June 7, a Hidden Talent media event was held in Green Bay. It brought together many of the participating organizations, including Microsoft, the Bay Area Workforce Development Board, Abaxent, African Heritage Inc., Literacy Green Bay, Fox Valley Literacy, Back to the Basics Tutoring, We All Rise, and Casa ALBA Hispanic resource center.

"This initiative would not be possible without the difference-making support of New North's partners," says Barb LaMue, president and CEO of New North Inc. "We can't thank Microsoft enough for its support of digital literacy skills and the Bay Area Workforce Development Board for its leadership. By partnering with a cross-section of community-based organizations, we can extend the impact of the NEW BOOST™ program into diverse communities and connect the 'hidden talent' within the New North region with new opportunities."

Organizations interested in partnering for hiring opportunities or to provide digital literacy training sites through the NEW BOOST™ initiative can contact Deschane at [Rebecca.Deschane@thenewnorth.com](mailto:Rebecca.Deschane@thenewnorth.com).

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New North, Inc., is a 501(c)3 non-profit, regional economic development corporation fostering collaboration among private and public sector leaders throughout the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin, known as the New North region. The New North brand unites the region both internally and externally around talent development, brand promotion and business development, signifying the collective economic power behind the 18 counties. The counties include Outagamie, Winnebago, Calumet, Waupaca, Brown, Shawano, Oconto, Marinette, Door, Kewaunee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Florence, Menominee and Waushara. [www.thenewnorth.com](http://www.thenewnorth.com)

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