

NEW BOOST™ : Initiative website offers access to basic computer skills

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NEW NORTH, July 25, 2023 – A new website – www.newboost.org – has been launched as part of the NEW BOOST™ for Hidden Talent project, and now is available for quick access to free computer skills information and training for anyone interested in learning or enhancing their digital abilities. The initiative and its new website are being implemented through a partnership between African Heritage Inc. and New North Inc., the regional economic development corporation for the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin.

The NEW BOOST™ website provides a centralized location for anyone to find information about digital literacy and an easy pathway to digital-skilling resources, as well as ready connections to tutors and in-person training, along with virtual training options.

The NEW BOOST™ (Building Opportunities for Overlooked Sustainable Talent) for Hidden Talent initiative is designed to connect individuals from across Northeast Wisconsin with resources that allow them to build their basic computer skills. Initially piloted to assist people disconnected from traditional workforce development services, the new website expands access to anyone looking to enhance their digital competency, connect with community-resource partners and explore new employment opportunities.

“Technology is all around us in today’s society,” says Barb LaMue, president and CEO of New North Inc. “It is crucial to have functional digital skills to be successful in the workplace, within the educational environment and at home. The NEW BOOST™ digital learning community is set up as an open resource for anyone interested in boosting their computer skills, in addition to our grant objective of matching enrolled participants with one-on-one training resources. I thank Rebecca

Deschane, our vice president of talent development, who saw the need and coordinated with the local partners who are providing the training services.”

The Bay Area Workforce Development Board (BAWDB) is a funding partner of New North Inc. on the initiative. BAWDB is leveraging Worker Advancement Initiative (WAI) funding to provide workforce-development services across the 11 counties it serves. The program was made available by a grant from the American Rescue Plan Act Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. A Microsoft Digital Literacy Grant provided a portion of the match.

“We see the NEW BOOST™ initiative as a community partnership which will position BAWDB to help more individuals with work-related training,” says Vickie Patterson, executive director of the Bay Area Workforce Development Board. “It meets people where they’re at and increases access for those needing support in the digital-skilling area, positioning them to be successful by securing meaningful, fulfilling employment.”

The NEW BOOST™ initiative is set up to be utilized by community-based and non-profit organizations which serve individuals who would benefit from digital-skills training. It also can be employed by businesses that are either seeking new talent with computer skills or would like to provide upskilling options for current employees.

“The NEW BOOST™ for Hidden Talent initiative is not only about teaching technical skills, but about enabling individuals to thrive in the digital age, unlocking endless opportunities for growth, education and empowerment,” says Dr. Sabrina Robins, a board member with African Heritage Inc.

The new website’s **Skills Training** page provides links to a half-dozen free digital skills platforms, ranging from the most basic level to more intensive, specialized training – offering a learning opportunity for anyone who wants to improve his or her digital skills. An individual’s digital literacy can be boosted through learning modules, available in English and Spanish, from well-known resources including DigitalLearn.org and GCFGlobal.org, among others.

The **Support Services** page helps to connect NEW BOOST™ participants with locally-based workforce-preparation services, mentoring and training, both group and one-on-one. Beyond computer skills, resume development, practice job interviews and workplace-readiness skills are available, along with support from

cultural mentors.

Those enrolled in the WAI program also are eligible for a host of additional services available through the Bay Area Workforce Development Board, including assistance with transportation, child care, pre-paid internet hot spot cards and housing/utility supports.

The **Get Started** page offers an easy, direct connection into the NEW BOOST™ community for additional information and enrollment.

A wide-range of organizations are training- and community-based partners in the NEW BOOST™ initiative, 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, Casa Hispana, and the College of Menominee Nation.

The NEW BOOST™ grant period is scheduled to run through Sept. 30, 2023, though the availability of the free resources is slated to continue indefinitely.