

# Port Jobs

## Supporting Young Adults through an Airport Industry Partnership

### I. Report Purpose

SkillUp Washington, a workforce funder collaborative at the Seattle Foundation, is supporting local efforts which connect young adults to good jobs and career pathways in King County.

SkillUp regularly convenes Generation Work partners to share what they are learning and brainstorm ways to align, coordinate and leverage resources. These activities are partially funded through the Annie E. Casey Foundation's multi-year Generation Work initiative, which is dedicated to increasing access to good jobs and careers for young adults and connecting employers to talent pipelines.

As part of Generation Work, SkillUp engaged Business Government Community Connections (BGCC) to interview young adults served by Generation Work partners. The interviews garner young adult feedback about their experiences prior, during and after receiving services into Generation Work learning community meetings and planning. Results are shared to ensure young adult voice informs the work of all partners.

This report provides a brief overview of the Port Jobs Airport Industry Partnership as seen through the eyes of eleven (11) young adults, ages 18-29. To set the context, a short description of the Port Jobs Airport Industry Partnership model is presented below. The information is intended to provide an understanding of how young adults are served through the Airport Industry Partnership, and the likely results that emerge.

This report also includes a brief description of Airport Jobs and Airport University course offerings and opportunities to earn certificates and credentials. Port Jobs next step plans for the future are introduced.

Port Jobs is always building new referral pipelines to the program, including offering tours for youth serving organizations, and orientations to Young Adult Peer Connectors working with the King County Reconnect to Opportunity program. High School faculty and students regularly visit the program, as do local programs serving refugees and immigrants. Organizations and individuals who want to learn more about Port Jobs are encouraged to contact Heather Worthley at [Worthley.h@portseattle.org](mailto:Worthley.h@portseattle.org).

## 2. Overview of Port Jobs Airport Industry Partnership Model

The Airport Industry Partnership is a cost-effective model for meeting the airport-related needs of airport employers at Sea-Tac Airport. The cultivation and continual management of relationships (with job seekers, incumbent workers and employers) is essential for this model to be robust, transparent, and continually progressive.

By looking at the “points of value” for the above groups, Port Jobs identifies and provides services in areas where resources are scarce.

The Airport Jobs program:

- Is located in a dynamic environment where low income job seekers and incumbent workers at all career lattices are able to access specialized guidance and career advancement support to enter and advance in jobs in the airport economy;
- Works with over 100 employers to post jobs, set up interviews and increase employer access to a qualified talent pool;
- Partners with community based organizations to provide referral and needed on site college access, through Seattle Education Access (SEA) and social services;

### Key Features of Port Jobs Airport Industry Partnership

This partnership is designed to:

- ✓ Develop a deep understanding of the human capital needs and challenges of airport-related industry clusters, cultivated through ongoing interactions of Airport Jobs staff, Sea-Tac Airport employers, labor partners, and trades associations.
- ✓ Identify the recruitment, hiring and advancement training needs of airport businesses, including skill gaps critical to their competitiveness and innovation.
- ✓ Review company data in tandem and respond to aggregate needs through Airport University courses to achieve economies of scale.
- ✓ Partner with educational and training institutions to align curriculum and programs to build lattices to higher skill occupations where industry is seeking talent.
- ✓ Offer credentials and courses that provide job seekers and incumbent workers with the skills needed to advance within and across industry partnership companies.
- ✓ Establish communication networks between Airport Jobs, companies, human resource staff, job seekers and incumbent workers to market job listings and Airport University courses.
- ✓ Coordinate job fairs, and employer hiring events.
- ✓ Collect and centralize success stories and data so that industry partners can anticipate and see the Return on Investment.

- Coordinates industry-driven certificates, High School 21+ and credit bearing college courses through the Sea-Tac based Airport University, in partnership with employers and local colleges;
- Partners with Alaska Airlines to implement the Alaska Airlines – Airport University Scholarship Program; and
- Acts as a conduit to subsidies and other forms of assistance available through the onsite Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET) program, Washington Connections Benefit Portal, and Within Reach partnership for health care benefits.

Port Jobs devotes specialized staff to strategically manage the above work. All are industry needs experts, who work as members of a team in a high-intensity, high-performance workplace designed to support the airport economy workforce development needs. The staff represents diverse ethnicities and cultures and speaks many different languages. All are adept at working with culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse clients, and have an extensive knowledge of community resources.

### **3. Who We Serve**

Airport Jobs serves three main audiences: job seekers, incumbent workers and employers. This report focuses on the largest age segment of the population served by Airport Jobs: young adults. The program, however, serves job seekers of all ages. Many are refugees and immigrants, and most are low income.

### **4. Industry Partnership Approach to Working with Young Adults**

Young adults who visit the Airport Jobs office soon see they are in a unique environment where everyone is vested in their future and success. They also know that the resources are there to help them take bold steps towards achieving their goals. And they soon realize that this is a journey they don't have to take alone. As part of this effort, young adults have ongoing opportunities to work with Port Jobs team of industry experts to:

- Identify their strengths and skill-building needs ;
- Understand the resources available at Airport Jobs, and how they can fully benefit from them;
- Agree on what type of commitment both they and Port Jobs staff need to make to help them successfully access and utilize resources;

- Develop a forward-thinking career plan, including meaningful metrics (such as access to certificates, job placements, and wage increases) to track their progress; and
- Support their ongoing need for workforce competency-building resources.

Because Airport Jobs and Airport University are workplace-based, incumbent workers continually have access to next step career guidance, scholarship opportunities and additional courses. Employers are ever-present in the office. The work underway responds to the just-in-time needs and demands of both groups.

### Airport University Certificates and Credentials

- ✓ SIDA – Security Identification Display Area badge (required to work post-security at the airport)
- ✓ AOA – Airfield Operations Area badge (required for employees working on the airfield)
- ✓ 1<sup>st</sup> Aid/CPR card
- ✓ OSHA 10 – Occupational Safety Health Administration<sup>1</sup> card
- ✓ Hazard Communications credential
- ✓ Intro to Homeland Security short-term certificate
- ✓ Hospitality & Tourism Specialist short-term certificate
- ✓ Introduction to Business Technology short-term certificate
- ✓ Workplace Safety short-term certificate
- ✓ Customer Service short-term certificate

Airport University course offerings change each semester. For example in the fall of 2017 Airport Jobs will be offering Airport University credit bearing fall semester courses in the areas of Hospitality and Tourism, Business Technology and Emergency Management. Course descriptions showcase the sector diversity of the airport. Incumbent workers also have the opportunity to earn many different credentials and certificates.

## 5. In-depth Interviews with 11 Young Adults Served by Port Jobs

The eleven young adults interviewed for this report represent a diverse population that is similar to the overall young adult population served by Port Jobs. Each received services customized to meet their assessed needs. Four (who were individually Samoan, Latino, Caucasian, and Vietnamese/Native American) were at the beginning of their job search, and eight (who were Ethiopian [2], African [1], Caucasian [2], Samoan [1] and Latino [2]) were incumbent workers.

### Job Seekers

The four job seekers ranged in age from 18 to 23 years old. All were high school graduates. Three were working outside the airport at the time they came into the office, but in low wage, part-time jobs (pizza delivery, retail, and call center). One had heard about Airport University from a relative who worked at the airport. The other three heard about the programs from other sources, including the White Center Library, Rainier WorkSource, and Mercy Housing.

All had very sporadic employment backgrounds, and histories of frequent moves. One had a car and three took the bus. The bus riders said the transit access to the airport was a factor in their considering work at Sea-Tac Airport. All were residents of South King County (Burien, Tukwila, SeaTac and White Center). Two had briefly enrolled in college, but got discouraged because they were taking developmental

math classes, and, and as one lamented, “Am spending all my money on getting caught up on what I did not learn in school.” All seemed excited about being in the airport environment. One said, “This is different. You know, not like every other entry level job. When I was walking to the Airport Jobs office I thought maybe about what it would be like to be a mechanic or somebody that built planes. I know I would need special training for that.”

#### **When young adult job seekers show up at the Airport Jobs office they:**

- ✓ Check in at the front desk.
- ✓ Fill out an Airport Jobs registration form (if they are a new client).
- ✓ Receive a customized hotlist, which provides a summary of all current open airport positions (based on whether the client is over/under 18 years old; has/does not have a driver’s license; does/does not have a HS diploma or GED).
- ✓ Review the hotlist and then pull detailed job descriptions for positions he or she is interested in from rotating racks in the office.
- ✓ Fill out a 10-year job history workbook, if he/she is interested in positions that require a 10- year-job/unemployment/student history. This workbook is for the job seeker to keep and reference for future applications.
- ✓ Complete job application(s) based on employer specifications. Some companies provide hard copy applications which are available at the Airport Jobs office, while others use online applications. Five computers are available for clients to use.
- ✓ Receive help, as needed, with their 10- year history and online applications, and get additional information about employment opportunities from Airport Jobs “Floating” staff.
- ✓ Receive help, as needed, from the Career/Education Navigator to develop a resume and practice their interviewing skills.
- ✓ Access information about other opportunities, including the High School Completion Program, Seattle Education Access, BFET, and Airport University.

One young adult, who was 19 years of age, was especially relieved that Airport Jobs staff was there to help him complete the ten-year job and education history that many jobs require. “My cousin, who works here, said, just get help, and do it. Then you can start working on a career.” He noted that his cousin had made two or three job changes that resulted in better jobs each time in the past two years and was also taking classes through Airport University. “She is going to work soon for TSA. I could do that too someday and maybe use that as a way to become a police officer.”

While all noted that the Airport Jobs office was small, and very busy, they also found it, as one said, “Easy to figure out.” A young woman, age 22, added, “The best part is that the computers and job applications are here. I am going to keep working on applications until I get a job. I don’t feel lonely here – like I do when I usually look for jobs, and usually just give up. And I don’t feel like my application will get ignored as much since they are helping me.”

One of the young adults, age 21, was worried that they were fired from their prior job at a grocery store. “I am going to talk to Airport Jobs staff about this. It burns, because that was basically my only real job. My attendance was bad. I have grown up.”

The potential that you could get a job at the airport and have opportunities to earn college credits drew praise. Upon hearing this, one young adult exclaimed “For free-really!” adding that this was a “serious selling point” for working at the airport. Also, she liked the fact that Airport Jobs offered opportunities to apply for college scholarships, something she said, “I never thought I would do, but now see that might be possible.”

### **Incumbent Workers**

Incumbent workers have access to the same services as job seekers, and additional services offered just for incumbent workers. Some don’t learn

#### **Young adults engaged in Airport University classes:**

- ✓ Are recruited through a variety of sources, including emails, and through in-person interactions with Airport Jobs staff who routinely walk around the airport, talk to workers, and employers.
- ✓ Complete Airport University registration-related paperwork, including intake and student agreement forms.
- ✓ Take a CASAS job readiness assessment if they are a first-time student.
- ✓ Talk to Airport University staff about class choices and certificate options
- ✓ Are registered at Highline College/South Seattle College with help from Airport University staff.
- ✓ Receive ongoing assistance by Airport University staff.
- ✓ Use Airport University laptops to do assignments and come in during lab time to catch up on homework.
- ✓ Connect with other resources such as the Career/Education Navigator, Alaska Airlines – Airport University Scholarships and SEA.

about the Airport Jobs office until after they enter jobs. Some also pursue Airport University classes and apply for scholarships. Yet others drop in to the Airport Jobs office to find next jobs. In the process, some access evidence-based career navigation services.

Six of the eight young adult incumbent workers had taken at least one Airport University course. Two said they had used the Excel skills they learned in class at their jobs. Two others reported that their employers were supportive and willing to let them do homework during slow times and make shift changes that enabled them to attend class. All had heard about these opportunities and the Alaska Airlines – Airport University scholarships at their worksite as well as from Airport Jobs staff.

Four of the eight young adults were Alaska Airlines scholarship recipients. Their educational pursuits included working on AA degrees in Business and Accounting degrees at Highline College, and one young adult was pursuing an AAS Airframe and Powerplant Certificate at South Seattle College. All had received multiple (3-4) scholarship awards, attributing these grant awards as helping them to finish college faster. One said, “Without this help I would not have made it through school so fast.” Though each of the separate scholarships was modest, averaging \$800, one young adult said, “This made all the difference. I would have had to wait a year to afford the class, because it is only offered once a year and I had not saved enough money.” Current jobs held by these young adults included work as a wheelchair agent, tech helper, dispatcher, security agent, ramp agent (2) and customer service clerk (2). All liked working at the airport, and three were hopeful that their newly honed accounting, business and air mechanic skills could be later applied at next step jobs at Sea-Tac or for the Port of Seattle. One young adult said she was grateful that Alaska Airlines supported her career goals. She said she had referred a friend to Airport Jobs and told them, “Use this program to make a difference in your life. Like it has in mine.”

All credited Airport Jobs for providing valuable career guidance and support, including advice on next steps jobs. One had progressed from a ramp agent to a Tech Helper. Three of the eight scholarship recipients added that education and scholarship resources ought to be provided to all entry level workers. One said, “Low wage workers are forgotten. We fill a need for others. But don’t always make enough for our families. It is so hard to do it all at once but you have to seize every chance you get. And I am so grateful that my company now pays \$15.00 per hour.” Many attributed their education and new skills to increased work performance. One young adult, who spoke many different languages and was “Getting better all the time at English” said, “Because one of my classes was focused on communication, I did much better at work. I speak up more, ask more questions, and know that my overall skills and time to complete work tasks is improved.”

## 6. Next Steps

Airport Jobs will continue to engage daily with employers and incumbent workers to stay abreast of the daily issues that influence their employment. Staff will administer post program surveys to Airport University students and [scholarship](#) recipients and conduct structured interviews with airport [employers](#), young adults and postsecondary training partners to garner information about:

- (1) worker career advancement successes and challenges
- (2) career lattice opportunities within and across airport industries
- (3) new or emerging training needs; and
- (4) the need to develop additional points of alignment with the broader educational community to support the ongoing advancement of airport workers who want to pursue advanced degrees in areas such as environmental and mechanical engineering that benefit the airport economy.

By design, the Airport Industry Partnership is ever-evolving. New programs are added all the time to reflect the need of Sea-Tac's growing workforce. As part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation-funded Generation Work initiative one of the many changes underway is the addition of a High School Completion program, in partnership with the Highline College and Highline School District. Staff will be marketing and tracking the success of this program, which will feature classes offered online to fit the busy schedules of incumbent workers, optional in-person lab times with an instructor; and opportunities to work at their own pace and earn credit for prior learning, drawing upon resources such as high school transcripts and work experience. Also, Airport Jobs is launching a new re-engagement Open Doors program for young people 16 to 20 years old, in partnership with the Highline Public Schools. Both efforts will increase the talent pool of young adults entering and advancing into higher level jobs in the airport economy, and the overall competitiveness of the airport economy. Finally, Port Jobs will continue to garner young adult voices and recommendations to guide program improvements, towards young adults engaging in options exploration and having full control over their career paths.