



2021 State Innovation Award Network2Work

Network2Work, a program that connects qualified job seekers to open positions, has been named State Innovator of the Year.

The program was founded in 2016 by Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) Dean of Community Self-Sufficiency Programs Ridge Schuyler. It uses a simple, web-based job ticket that employers complete when they have an appropriate opening. Jobs must pay at least \$25,000 (\$12.50/hour) or more and not require a college degree. Ticket information includes skills and experience needed to perform the job, salary and benefits information, expected hours, and other details.

Once the employers' needs are known, Network2Work mobilizes its network of community "Connectors" to identify individuals who are a fit for the job. These Connectors are the people who are at the center of social networks in neighborhoods, schools, places of worship, and immigrant communities. Most importantly, they are trusted individuals to whom people turn for information and advice.

When a good match is identified, Network2Work creates a pathway that will provide that individual with the resources he or she needs to secure the job. This may include literacy, work or technical skills, childcare, transportation, stable shelter, or assistance with physical and mental health.

Upon completion of the pathway charted for them, the job seeker completes an "exit interview" by a third party as a quality assurance measure to make sure the individual has the skills and resources they need in order to excel at the job.

To date, 85% of jobseekers completing Network2Work have found jobs and 59% of those jobs pay more than \$25,000 annually. Single moms represent 40% of participants.

Network2work relies on local expertise to make sure that the program is customized to meet the needs of job seekers and employers in each unique area. While the program started in Charlottesville, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam committed \$1.7 million statewide to this initiative over the next two years.