

The Partnership for New Communities

Civic Leadership for Chicago's Neighborhoods

NEWS RELEASE

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Chicago Initiative Wins Competitive Stimulus Dollars for 'Green Jobs'

Pathways Out of Poverty grants to help least-skilled workers tap opportunities in green economy

(CHICAGO, January 21, 2010) – Nearly \$700,000 soon will arrive in Chicago to help public-housing residents train for and find “green jobs.” The grant to workforce development initiative Opportunity Chicago comes from Jobs for the Future (JFF), which received \$8 million in federal stimulus money from the U.S. Department of Labor as part of \$150 million dedicated to the department’s “Pathways Out of Poverty” grants announced recently by U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis.

This highly competitive national grant from JFF – in partnership with the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute and Wider Opportunities for Women – will allow Opportunity Chicago to recruit, train and place public-housing residents in residential weatherization and deconstruction jobs. The work primarily will support residents of several communities on the city’s south side.

JFF is the implementation partner for the National Fund for Workforce Solutions (NFWS), a \$30 million effort to expand high-impact workforce partnership initiatives across the country; NFWS also funds Opportunity Chicago, which was developed by funder collaborative The Partnership for New Communities, the Chicago Housing Authority and the City of Chicago.

The grant, along with four others to Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee and Philadelphia, is part of NFWS’ new Green Pathway Initiative, through which recipient cities will receive money to revitalize their economies and help disadvantaged workers access green jobs that offer room to advance. Chicago’s will be the only project to focus exclusively on public-housing residents.

“The work of the Initiative is groundbreaking,” said Marlene B. Seltzer, president and CEO of Jobs for the Future. “It will build new sustainable partnerships in green jobs and connect very-hard-to-serve targeted populations to career advancement opportunities where few such pathways existed before.”

Opportunity Chicago aims to help 5,000 public-housing residents prepare for and find employment over five years (2006-2010). With numerous partners, a highly collaborative approach and cutting-edge employment programs, Opportunity Chicago has found success helping low-skilled, low-income workers.

“Conditions are right in Chicago for a new green workforce partnership,” said Maria Hibbs, Executive

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Director of The Partnership for New Communities. “Opportunity Chicago has developed the knowledge, the strategies and the collective commitment to help hard-to-employ residents find quality work that supports the City’s plan to address climate change.”

Approximately 150 individuals will participate in the program, with around 100 expected to find unsubsidized work in the industry as a result. Participants will have access to supportive services as well as education, training and the opportunity to earn a degree or certification.

This is the second national grant Opportunity Chicago has received to catalyze green jobs for low-income workers; last year national philanthropic collaborative Living Cities gave \$250,000 to support a similar program, currently in development.

The Partnership for New Communities is a funder collaborative that brings together business, civic and philanthropic leaders to invest in strategic economic development and employment initiatives that promote large-scale improvements in the neighborhoods most affected by public-housing transformation in Chicago. www.thepartnershipfornewcommunities.org

Opportunity Chicago is a city-wide workforce development initiative that aims to help 5,000 public-housing residents prepare for and find lasting employment over five years (2006-2010). Developed by The Partnership for New Communities, Chicago Housing Authority and the Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development (now the Chicago Departments of Community Development and Family and Support Services), it is becoming a national model due to its success in identifying, and helping low-skilled workers overcome, barriers to employment. www.opportunitychicago.org

Jobs for the Future identifies, develops and promotes new education and workforce strategies that help communities, states and the nation compete in a global economy. In over 200 communities in 41 states, JFF improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers. www.jff.org

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions is a five-year, \$30 million national effort with \$100 million in funding from over 200 local partners to strengthen and expand high-impact workforce intermediary initiatives around the country. The National Fund is a catalyst for lower-skilled workers to advance in their careers and for employers to meet their skill needs. Its dollars, provided by regional and national funders, support employers, workforce partnerships, and education institutions in 22 regions around the country. www.nfwsolutions.org

For more information on the Chicago Housing Authority’s resident services, visit www.thecha.org.

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