

The Partnership for New Communities

Civic Leadership for Chicago's Neighborhoods

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The Partnership for New Communities Awards More Than \$400,000 for Employment Programs

Programs Will Advance Cutting-Edge Workforce Development Initiative

CHICAGO (June 8, 2009) – The Partnership for New Communities awarded \$412,000 in new grants to three Chicago nonprofit organizations in May. This brings a total of nearly \$7 million invested by The Partnership since 2006 in new programs and services for public-housing residents through Opportunity Chicago, a workforce development collaborative with the City of Chicago, Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago Jobs Council and other partners.

Two organizations – Instituto del Progreso Latino (\$220,000) and Capacity Developers, Inc. (\$150,000) – will deliver intensive employment training to low-skilled workers that will prepare them for jobs in industries with growth and career potential. As operators of Chicago's One Stop Sector Centers for Manufacturing and Hospitality, respectively, both grantees bring industry expertise and strong employer connections to the Opportunity Chicago initiative.

These grants will give more than 100 public-housing residents access to industry-specific job training and will bring good information about careers in hospitality and manufacturing to hundreds more. The grant to Instituto also includes support for a pilot program that will introduce participants to concepts in manufacturing while helping them to improve reading, writing, math and computer skills – an approach known as “contextualized literacy” that is considered a best practice in the field of workforce development.

“Opportunity Chicago identifies the training and education needs of low-skilled job seekers and the labor needs of some of the area’s biggest employers,” said Maria Hibbs, Executive Director at The Partnership for New Communities. “It also aligns the resources of the various entities that help public-housing residents find employment. All of these pieces need to fit together.”

The initiative aims to place 5,000 public-housing residents in employment over five years (2006-2010) and to make lasting improvements to Chicago's workforce development system. More than 3,300 residents already have been placed in jobs. With metropolitan Chicago's unemployment rate at 9.9 percent – the highest in 25 years – and a 10.6 percent rate for the city alone, Opportunity Chicago also is helping to position low-skilled, low-income workers for when the economy recovers.

Opportunity Chicago is attracting national attention for its success in helping such workers connect with training programs and jobs that offer the chance to move up a career ladder. The initiative received funding from the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, which is supporting the career advancement and employer engagement components of the current grants to Instituto del Progreso Latino and Capacity Developers, Inc. It was recently awarded a grant from the national philanthropic collaborative Living Cities to catalyze job opportunities in residential weatherization for low-income workers.

A third Partnership grant, to the Taproot Foundation (\$42,000), will leverage thousands of dollars worth of strategic planning, branding, and other capacity building support for seven additional nonprofit workforce development organizations. Taproot's competitive service grants connect high-quality, professional pro bono consulting services with specific nonprofit projects to maximize the impact of their work.

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

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