



Grants Available for Workforce Partnerships Focused on Green Skills

January 4, 2010

The Dan River Region Collaborative (“DRR Collaborative”) announced today that it is now accepting proposals that seek to improve employment, training, and labor market outcomes in the area of green skills.

The DRR Collaborative seeks to improve both the quality of jobs and the capacity of workers by promoting change at three levels: individual, institution, and system. The result: better jobs, better workers, and a better workforce development system.

The Dan River Region Collaborative, which was formed in the summer of 2008, serves approximately 150,000 people in Pittsylvania, Halifax, Henry, and Patrick counties and the cities of Danville and Martinsville. As a new regional funding entity, the Collaborative’s key funding partners, to date, include The Community Foundation of the Dan River Region, The Danville Regional Foundation, The Harvest Foundation, J.T.-Minnie Maude Charitable Trust, and the Virginia Tobacco Commission. These investors, along with the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, will capitalize this effort with \$1.5 million. A principle strategy of the DRR collaborative is to increase the number of local and regional workforce partnerships.

The key functions of workforce partnerships include:

- Pursuing a “dual customer approach,” serving businesses looking for qualified workers and job seekers and workers looking to advance their careers;
- Organizing multiple institutions and funding streams around common goals;
- Providing or brokering services—training and supports—that help workers gain access to the initial rungs on the ladder to economic opportunity and advancement;
- Serving a variety of workers but recognizing and addressing the special needs of lower-skilled, lower-wage workers and job seekers;
- Reducing turnover and increasing the economic mobility of workers;
- Testing and adapting innovative approaches to workforce problems; and
- Catalyzing improvements in public systems and business employment practices.

The Collaborative has been meeting over the past year to determine strategies and direction for this new regional initiative. “Green skill” enhancement was selected as the first area of focus to increase the level of green skills in the region. This past summer the Collaborative awarded its first round of grant funding in the area of “green skill”

enhancement to a RESNET Partnership that consisted of multiple partners throughout the region who focused on residential energy auditor training.

Workforce skills matter in an increasingly global and competitive economic environment, yet over a third of the American workforce lacks the skills needed to succeed in this environment. America's prosperity will continue to depend on the strength of its workforce. Some sectors and communities already face skill shortages, unfilled jobs, low productivity, threats to regional competitiveness, and increasing disparities between those with and without education and skills.

Green skills provide a pathway to better jobs and promote growth industries in our region. Green skills are critical for developing the following sectors:

Energy Efficiency is the use of technology as well as operation and maintenance that requires less energy to perform the same function – getting more use out of the energy we already create. HVAC engineers, building control technicians, electricians, energy auditors, and insulation workers are only a few of the occupations defining this sector.

SmartGrid/Smart Energy can be defined as the improvement of power delivery systems to be more efficient, reliable and safe. Occupations typically associated with this sector include power engineers and computer technicians to design, manufacture, and provide maintenance for these new systems.

Renewable Energy is produced through resources such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides and geothermal heat which may be naturally replenished. Increases in the use of these technologies for energy production will require jobs in manufacturing (solar panels, wind turbines), as well as operators and maintenance technicians to keep these systems running properly and efficiently.

Biofuels/Biomass refers to the creation and use of fuel sources from chemical or biological materials other than fossil fuels for the generation of power. This industry requires the cultivation of resources such as corn crops to produce ethanol, and therefore employs a host of different occupations – from farmers to process technicians in biodiesel companies.

Green Building is the practice of increasing the efficiency with which buildings use resources — energy, water, and materials — while reducing building impacts on human health and the environment through better siting, design, construction, and removal. The green building sector employs architects versed in green design to plant operators creating green materials to laborers at green construction sites.

Alternative Transportation encourages the creation of modes of transportation (electric cars, mass transit, bicycles) that are powered by sources other than depleting fuel sources. Occupations range from technology designers to hybrid automotive maintenance workers.

Recycling & Waste Management is the collection, transport, processing, recycling or disposal of waste materials to reduce their effect on human health and the environment, and/or to recover resources from them. Waste treatment operators, technicians, and all types of handling positions are required to meet the functions of this sector.

Sustainable Agriculture & Horticulture encourages practices in plant and animal production that are efficient and sustainable. This sector employs a variety of occupations – from organic farmers to urban agriculture land use planners to green roof designers.

(Source: A Growing Green Economy: Opportunities of Tomorrow. Seattle Jobs Initiative and the National Network of Sector Partners, March 2009.)

In 2010 the DRR Collaborative intends to fund workforce partnerships, utilizing The Community Foundation as a fiscal agent. Grants in the range of \$150,000 will be awarded by The Community Foundation for partnerships that increase green skills in our region. Additional funding in future years is possible depending upon program implementation and performance.

The Community Foundation will manage the Request for Proposals and grant disbursement process. For more information about the Dan River Region Collaborative or a copy of the Request for Proposal, please visit the website at www.danriverrc.org. Proposals must be submitted electronically as a single PDF file by 5:00 pm EDT, Wednesday, February 10, 2010 to Debra L. Dodson at The Community Foundation at debra@cfdrr.org.

A Question and Answer Session for potential applicants will be held on Wednesday, January 20, 2010 at 11 a.m. at the Regional Center for Advanced Technology and Training, located at 121 Slayton Avenue in Danville.

While the Advisory Board of the Dan River Region Collaborative continues to grow and evolve as the initiative develops, the Collaborative's Advisory Board includes local schools, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, higher education institutions, and the workforce investment board.

The mission of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions (NFWS) is to improve employment, training, and labor market outcomes for low-income individuals. The Fund's vision is that its support will improve both the quality of jobs and the capacity of workers. It will promote change at three levels—individual, institution, and system—leading to better jobs, better workers, and a better workforce development system.

The Fund's key strategy is the creation of a new national funding intermediary. Its investors will capitalize this effort with \$30 million to \$50 million in grant funds. The Fund will use this money to increase the number of successful local and regional workforce partnerships, and expand the scale of existing partnerships.

National Funders for NFWS include The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, The Hitachi Foundation, The U.S. Department of Labor, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Microsoft, and The Prudential Foundation. Additionally, national partnerships have been established with Jobs for the Future and the Council on Foundations.

NFWS has historically worked with collaboratives in large, metropolitan areas throughout the United States. Realizing that workforce challenges impact rural communities differently than urban settings, they sought to develop rural collaborative models to support. The Dan River Region Collaborative (DRRC) was initiated in the summer of 2008 and received its initial acceptance into the National Fund in the fall of 2008.

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