

WORKFORCE COLLABORATIVE AWARDS \$97,000 TO TRAIN RESIDENTIAL ENERGY AUDITORS ACROSS REGION

DANVILLE September 14, 2009 - The Dan River Region Collaborative announced today its first grant of \$97,000 to provide local green jobs training. Eight regional organizations have formed the RESNET Training Partnership to provide residential energy auditor training for 45 incumbent and unemployed workers. Partner organizations include: the City of Danville, the City of Martinsville, Danville Community College, the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR), Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative, Patrick Henry Community College, Pittsylvania County Community Action, Inc. and the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board.

Training will be offered at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (lead partner agency) in Danville and will begin in October with a second session scheduled for February 2010. The class is a 6-day training program, meeting the national standard for training and certification for energy raters as adopted by RESNET. The Residential Energy Services Network's (RESNET®) standards are recognized by the federal government for verification of building energy performance for such programs as federal tax incentives, the Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR program and the U.S. Department of Energy's Building America Program. Ratings are also used by the U.S. mortgage industry for capitalizing a building's energy performance in the mortgage loan and certification of "White Tags" or energy saving certificates, for private financial investors.

The training will prepare individuals to become certified HERS (Home Energy Rating Standard) Raters. Class instruction includes how to evaluate the energy performance and comfort of a house through whole-house diagnostic procedures. Based on audit findings, homes are assigned a rating which represents relative energy use. The higher the number, the more net purchased energy required. A certified rater can then make recommendations for cost-effective improvements that will increase the home's energy efficiency.

As a RESNET Training Partnership member, the City of Danville plans to send 10 of its employees through the energy auditor training. According to Joe King, Deputy City Manager, "The RESNET training will give us the ability to help our customers cut their utility costs through smart energy efficiency investments. We're a publicly-owned municipal utility concerned about our impact on customer's household budget. The less they have to pay for utilities, the happier we are!"

"Our residents and employers who have been stung by the recession will have more access to education and opportunities due to this unique partnership. We are preparing our community for the jobs of the future," stressed Kim Adkins, Executive Director of the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board.

Dr. Liam Leightley, IALR Executive Director, states "It is exciting that the IALR will receive this grant on behalf of the partnership since it illustrates the Institute's vision of enabling economic and community transformation in Southern Virginia. Our efforts have brought eight organizations together to offer training that will enable skill development in the Green Economy which is emerging in Southern Virginia".

“The Dan River Region Collaborative was thrilled with the response we received to our first request for proposals in the area of green skills,” commented Laurie S. Moran, CCE, President of the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce which is the lead organization for the Collaborative. “Through the funding of innovative workforce partnerships, such as the RESNET Training Partnership, we believe our region will become a hub for talent development that drives a vibrant, 21st century economy.”

The DRR Collaborative is a new regional funding entity that is supported by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. The National Fund was created 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. The Fund’s key strategy is the creation of a new national funding intermediary to increase the number of successful local and regional workforce partnerships, and expand the scale of existing partnerships. The DRR Collaborative is one of only 21 regional sites throughout the country.

Key funding partners of the DRR Collaborative include Community Foundation of the Dan River Region, Danville Regional Foundation, Harvest Foundation, the Virginia Tobacco Commission, and West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board. These investors, along with the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, seek to improve employment, training, and labor market outcomes for the region from Henry County to Halifax County, including the cities of Danville and Martinsville. Steering and advisory committee members include representatives from education, Chambers of Commerce, economic development, workforce development and industry throughout the region.

The Collaborative selected Green Skills job training as a first focus area for grantmaking. A Request for Proposals was announced in July with special attention given to regional partnerships that sought to increase the level of green skills in the region. The Collaborative anticipates a second round of green skills funding in the next year, as well as funding for other strategic areas of workforce training.

For more information about the Collaborative, contact the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce at (434) 836-6990 or at www.dpchamber.org. If you are interested in RESNET training, please contact Dr. Julie Brown at (434)766-6711 or Julie.Brown@ialr.org.

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