



ETA Recognition of Excellence



U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration



Congratulations to all honorees in the first annual ETA Recognition of Excellence! These honorees embody the innovative, resourceful, demand-driven spirit that President George W. Bush has sought to promote through his workforce investment policies.

The ETA Recognition of Excellence is an important opportunity to honor programs of the nation's public workforce investment system that have demonstrated admirable performance. Our honorees displayed innovation, collaboration, performance, linkages to business, industry and community needs, and replicability in the categories of:

- (1) Educating America's 21st Century Workforce;
- (2) Building an Industry/Business Driven Workforce Investment System;
- (3) e³ Partnerships;
- (4) Recognizing the Demographics of the Workforce; and
- (5) Serving Out-of-School Youth.

This year's applicants and honorees represent the strength and diversity of our nation's workforce investment system. I was pleased with the quality of many of this year's applicants. Programs from across the United States, providing a variety of services, representing diverse industries and serving diverse populations participated in this recognition process.

You can learn more about the outstanding efforts of our honorees in this brochure. You may also visit our honorees in the Workforce Innovations 2004 Solutions Gallery as you explore the exhibit hall. I hope that each of you in the workforce investment arena will participate in this exciting new recognition process next year.

Emily Staver DePocco



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ETA Recognition of Excellence

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) is pleased to sponsor the first annual Recognition of Excellence on behalf of the nation's workforce investment system. ETA recognizes that achieving commendable outcomes requires much more than statutory or regulatory compliance. Therefore, high levels of success should be recognized, and it is ETA's hope that this recognition process will facilitate the exponential replication of promising practices throughout the workforce investment system, and therefore promote the Department of Labor's goals of ensuring:

1. A Prepared Workforce: Enhancing opportunities for America's workforce
2. A Secure Workforce: Promoting the economic security of workers and families
3. A Competitive Workforce: Addressing demand for new, replacement and skilled workers.

On April 6th, 2004 ETA issued a Training and Employment Notice (TEN) which requested applications for the first ever ETA Recognition of Excellence. Applicants were asked to demonstrate that the project, program or initiative being submitted: (1) is innovative, (2) is collaborative, (3) resulted in positive performance outcomes, (4) linked services to occupations that are in demand, economic development and community benefit, and (5) is replicable. Eligible applicants were any state or local program, project or initiative, including national program grantees, which were operational at some point within the last two program years and funded through ETA activities; or programs, projects or initiatives in which an ETA funded activity is an integral component.

ETA was overwhelmed by the response of the nation's workforce investment system. Panels of federal and stakeholder reviewers rated each application based on the five criteria outlined above. Each panel looked at applications for one of the following categories:

- Educating America's 21st Century Workforce
- Building an Industry/Business Driven Workforce Investment System
- e³ Partnerships
- Recognizing the Demographics of the Workforce
- Serving Out-of-School Youth

CATEGORY 1: *Educating America's 21st Century Workforce*

Globalization, technological advances and America's shifting demographics are rapidly changing the 21st century workforce into one that is vastly different from a few years ago. A fundamental transformation for all industries is occurring and requirements for higher skills and education are increasing. Eighty percent of the fastest growing jobs in the U.S. require higher education and many require increased math and science skills. Post-secondary institutions, especially community colleges and apprenticeship programs, will be increasingly critical providers of skills training for workers needing to retool, refine, and broaden their skills. These changes require workforce investment organizations to employ new strategies to educate and train America's workforce, ensuring that individuals are adequately prepared for their career of choice and that the United States remains competitive in the global economy. This category's honorees have developed innovative and effective strategies in training and development that will prepare our workforce for the changes and challenges that lie ahead.

CATEGORY 2: *Building an Industry/Business Driven Workforce Investment System*

Our nation's ability to be competitive in a global economy depends on the quality of our workforce. To succeed, we must maintain and expand upon our market driven focus, simultaneously responding to the existing needs of businesses, while preparing a skilled workforce to fulfill further job growth and evolution. Honorees recognized in this category have built the capability to respond effectively to the needs of all customers: businesses, employers, workers and job seekers.

CATEGORY 3: *e³ Partnerships*

Addressing the critical challenges that both job seekers and employers face requires the considerable leveraging of resources from multiple systems that impact the labor market, including employment, education and economic development. ETA refers to such linkages as the "Power of e³." The honorees of this category are projects that demonstrate sustained partnerships between these three entities, and show how they are working together to prepare jobseekers and incumbent workers for jobs with upward career mobility, thereby meeting the needs of employers.

CATEGORY 4: *Recognizing the Demographics of the Workforce*

With the shifting demographics of the U.S. workforce, it is becoming ever more critical that the workforce investment system find ways to integrate every available worker into the labor force to enable the continued competitiveness of U.S. businesses. The honorees recognized in this category provide effective services to special populations with unique characteristics and barriers to employment. Examples of special populations include, but are not limited to, individuals with disabilities, those with limited English proficiency (LEP), homeless individuals and families, Indian and Native Americans, Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers, older workers and welfare recipients.

CATEGORY 5: *Serving Out-of-School Youth*

By providing out-of-school youth with experience, education and skills, we can help develop a pipeline of job ready individuals to serve the needs of business, and provide youth with paths to career enhancing opportunities and productive lives. The challenge for agencies that employ a demand-driven strategic approach to serving out-of-school youth is developing programs that balance traditional methodology with "outside the box" creative techniques to successfully match employers who need workers with young people who need jobs. This category recognizes honorees that employ innovative techniques and actively collaborate with business, industry and other essential partners in workforce and economic development to develop successful workforce solutions that address the education, training and hiring challenges of serving out-of-school youth.

Educating America's 21st Century Workforce

WINNER

BROWARD WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD – BROWARD COUNTY, FL

“Using Innovative Partnerships and Programs to Address Critical Nurses Shortage”

The Challenge: Broward County is one of Florida’s largest and fastest growing counties and one of the nation’s most diverse counties. Over 159 countries and 52 language groups are represented in Broward. Like much of the nation, the availability of licensed nurses in the State is woefully low. The Florida Hospital Association reports that 8,400 nursing jobs go vacant each year, 34% fewer licenses are being requested each year, and licensing for H-1B applicants, which addresses the shortage through use of foreign workers, often takes up to 18 months.

The Solution: Workforce One, together with Broward Community College, stepped forward to design a program to alleviate the shortage of nurses in Florida. They devised a “Workforce One” strategy with three components: 1) *A Registered Nurse (RN) Refresher Program*, for unemployed RNs interested in returning to work and working RNs who wished to update their skills. The *RN Refresher Program* is available nationwide through e-learning modules; 2) *A Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) – RN Transition Nursing Program* for LPNs who want to become RNs; and 3) *A Nursing Career Exploration Program* to attract high school students to the profession, creating a pipeline of youth to help fill the long-range shortage.

The *Registered Nurse Refresher Program* at Broward Community College consists of 10 college credits offered in a 16 week program two times a year. The training curriculum, developed in collaboration with local hospitals and health care related businesses, is computer-based and available “24/7”. After completion of the e-learning modules, the students are placed in a paid internship with a hospital partner. Hospitals also provide internships, scholarships, and compete for the opportunity to hire the graduates.

The *Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) – RN Transition Nursing Program* is also a computer-based, 10 college credit training program for LPNs who cannot return to traditional school. Students who complete the program are reimbursed by the hospital for school expenses and are guaranteed employment.

The *Nursing Career Exploration Program* attempts to interest and help students in 9th through 12th grades get a head start in the nursing profession. Ninth and tenth graders participate in a summer institute that focuses on career exploration and strengthening basic skills. Juniors and seniors are given the additional opportunity to “shadow” a professional in the nursing field. Interested students who complete the summer institute are guaranteed priority admission into Broward Community College’s nursing or other health science programs.

The Results: Two months before program completion, Workforce One reports outstanding achievements. The enrollment goal for all three components was 550 persons, 150 of which were to be youth. In May 2004, the total enrollment was 593 with 193 youth. Workforce One reports that 343 LPNs have transitioned to become RNs and at program’s end, the project is expected to graduate more than 80% of its enrolled students.

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Educating America's 21st Century Workforce

HONORABLE MENTION

THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING ALLIANCE – McALLEN, TX

“A Partnership to Provide Youth with Opportunities to Gain Highly Demanded Skills”

The Challenge: In 1999 the South Texas Manufacturers Association (STMA) and the McAllen Economic Development Corporation approached South Texas Community College (STCC) about a major skill shortage of journeymen in the McAllen area. Without a training program to produce the highly specialized skilled workers that local industries were bringing in from foreign countries, several companies would be forced to relocate.

The Solution: In response, STMA and STCC formed a partnership to collaboratively develop a regional apprenticeship training delivery system for Industrial Maintenance Tool and Die and Plastics. A *Youth Career Pathway* program provides high school Juniors and Seniors in five area school districts with the opportunity to take STCC courses and earn a Certificate under STCC's Precision Manufacturing Technology (PMT) program. Graduates of this program are given the opportunity to apply for the Apprenticeship program, or enroll at STCC and apply their earned credits towards an Associates of Applied Science Degree in PMT. An online classroom, funded by DOL H-1B Training Grants, was created to provide the rural school districts in the Rio Grande Valley access to the program.

The Results: The Apprenticeship Training Alliance expects to involve 96 students in five counties by 2005. To date, there have been 52 enrollees and 20 graduates.

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HONORABLE MENTION

FORSYTH TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE – WINSTON-SALEM, NC

“A Partnership to Retrain Displaced Workers in a Shifting Economy”

The Challenge: The unemployment rate in the Piedmont Triad Region of North Carolina has risen from 2.2% in 2002 to 6.1% in January 2004 as a result of an economic downturn prompted by a decline in the furniture, textile and tobacco industries. However, the growing biotechnology industry represents a viable and important growth industry both regionally and nationally.

The Solution: Forsyth Technical Community College (FTCC)'s *“Textiles to Technology: Developing a Biotechnology Workforce”* program was developed to train displaced workers laid-off from the furniture, textiles, and tobacco industries as laboratory technicians in biotechnology. High school students are also given the opportunity for a seamless transition into postsecondary work. Collaborative agreements with other regional community colleges, and the local One-Stop Career Center system ensure broad access to the program. Local biotechnology industry partners and university biotechnology research experts participated in the development of the program curriculum and host program participants in a required internship. Participants graduate with an associate degree in applied science in biotechnology from FTCC with the opportunity to pursue a bachelor's degree, continue with internships, or enter the workforce.

The Results: As of the spring of 2004 the total enrollment of the program is 106 students making it the largest associate degree program in biotechnology in North Carolina. The retention rate is 68%, equivalent to the college average. The program received recognition for leadership in biotechnology training from President Bush during a visit to FTCC and later at other cities facing economic downturns.

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Building an Industry/Business Driven Workforce Investment System

WINNER

SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL, INC. – MARSHALL, MN

“Charting the Course for Quality Healthcare in Rural America”

The Challenge: Rural Minnesota faced a shortage of nurses, particularly Registered Nurses, which was making growth in the industry as well as the delivery of quality healthcare to its residents difficult. The situation was exacerbated by a shortage of nursing educators to train new practitioners. Therefore, the Southwest Private Industry Council set out to build a pipeline to interested high school students to educate, train and place nurses in healthcare facilities in 80 rural Minnesota counties; and to bridge the gap between students in rural communities and healthcare education throughout the State.

The Solution: To build this bridge, three Minnesota workforce service areas began working together, researching and developing a strategy to address the immediate and projected shortage of nursing professionals in the State. A year later, in 2002, the Bridging Distances in Healthcare project was launched. The program design resulted from the collaboration of the workforce investment system, healthcare businesses, economic development agencies and education partners. The program was initially launched in 10 locations.

Each Bridging Distances in Healthcare project is characterized by a local “champion” who establishes and works with an advisory group composed of workforce development, healthcare and education professionals, students and local community representatives. Nursing education is provided through distance learning modalities, such as video tapes, CD-ROMs, helping to make education more accessible in the rural areas. Also, clinical experiences, a critical and required component, are provided by local healthcare providers. Each local advisory group is able to tailor its program to the unique needs and resources of the area. The goal is a 2-year Registered Nursing degree and State certification for each participant.

Looking toward the future, partners have leveraged resources to build a sustainable infrastructure to train and employ qualified nurses. Partner support includes providing student tuition, adding classrooms to healthcare facilities, collaboration between hospital and college staffs on instruction and mentoring programs and donating supplies and other resources.

The Results: Fourteen new cohorts have come on board since inception of the original 10 sites. Over three hundred persons have enrolled in the nursing programs. Though the two-year Registered Nursing degree program is still underway, the Bridging Distances in Healthcare initiative has already created other opportunities such as: development of Healthcare Careers Preparatory Academies to help more students get into a healthcare career; creation of a new nursing education program at a Tribal and Community College; and one school has placed all its nursing theory classes on-line for greater access to nursing education. The future looks bright for nursing in rural Minnesota.

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Building an Industry/Business Driven Workforce Investment System

HONORABLE MENTION

WASHINGTON EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT – OLYMPIA, WA

“Targeting Resources to Key Sectors of Local Economies”

The Challenge: Given skills needs of businesses in local economies, and limited public resources available to address these needs, Washington needed a way to maximize the funds and resources available to address business and job seeker needs.

The Solution: A partnership of the Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, Employment Security Department, and Community and Technical Colleges adopted a cluster strategy called “Washington State’s Economic Cluster Initiative.” Through this strategy they focused workforce development resources on key industry clusters, high concentrations of related companies and suppliers, in local economies. For the selected industries, they created Industry Skill Panels. These panels identify the strategies and resources to be used to address the workforce issues of the industry. So far they have organized 28 Industry Skill Panels in 10 high demand areas and established six Centers of Excellence, organizations that industries rely on to understand their particular needs and interests to solve their skill-related issues and provide a source of upgrading their existing workforce. These centers are formed for particular clusters, so that educators are able to stay abreast of changes in technology and employment.

The Results: Post-program employment rates have remained stable over two years despite economic conditions, and vary from 60 – 92%. In programs serving adults 68 – 92% report working in jobs related to training, and hourly earnings of participants increased significantly for almost all programs. The partnership reports that 85% of its employers are ‘somewhat’ to ‘very satisfied’ with the overall quality of the work of former program participants.

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HONORABLE MENTION

WORKFORCE CENTRAL FLORIDA – ORLANDO, FLORIDA

“Serving Business and Following a Demand-Driven Lead”

The Challenge: Florida needed to better serve area businesses and help ensure that their workforce investments were demand-driven.

The Solution: WORKFORCE CENTRAL FLORIDA’s Board of Directors restructured its workforce agency to become demand-driven, creating a business model that emphasized: 1) a tiered employer service menu, 2) an automated “Worker Readiness Pilot Certification Program”, and 3) networking experiences through roundtable discussions and seminars for job-seekers. Strategic outcomes of the restructuring are: a Worker Readiness Pilot certification program to assess the work readiness of job seekers; a unique reciprocal relationship with the staffing industry; and partnerships with new employers in the incumbent training program.

The Results: The new business model is credited for serving more employers and placing more job seekers and workers in higher paying jobs. Specifically, through June 2003, 2,913 employers were served; 10,298 job openings filled (job order closure rate of 17.1% vs. national average benchmark of 16.7%) and the average wage is \$8.77 per hour. Overall, job seekers and employers are expressing greater satisfaction with the services received from WORKFORCE CENTRAL FLORIDA.

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e³ Partnerships
(Employment, Education and Economic Development)
WINNER

EASTERN CONNECTICUT WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD – FRANKLIN, CT

“Win-Win Partnerships”

The Challenge: In the late 1990’s the labor market in eastern Connecticut began to shift from manufacturing to a fast growing service economy. The availability of workers was limited as evidenced by the low unemployment rate in the area which hovered around 2.2%. In early 2000, a major bioscience/technology company (Pfizer) announced its intent to spend \$600 million dollars on expansion, including building a clinical studies facility which would employ over 2,000 people in clinical drug trials research. A serious labor skills shortage loomed.

The Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board recognized the opportunity to move its workforce into the high-technology/high-paying jobs arena. It called together a working group composed of employers, educators, industry leaders, economic development agencies and local, state and regional government officials to chart this new course.

The Solution: In 2000, the working group developed a plan and received funding to design a training program for 200 Clinical Data Managers for the new clinical studies facility under development. The group determined that Clinical Data Managers would be a major need that could be addressed by their partnership. They created the Clinical Data Manager Training Program.

Industry experts created and taught the content of the 30 hour Clinical Data Manager course while instructional experts from local higher education institutions developed the course structure. They produced an innovative interactive multimedia curriculum to create work simulations that produced industry-defined skill competencies. The curriculum was certified by the Society of Clinical Data Managers. The One-Stop Career Center provided soft-skills training and job search skills training, such as critical thinking, effective collaboration, resume writing, interviewing skills, and more.

The Results: This win-win collaboration benefited all participants. The Clinical Data Manager program has enrolled 105 participants. Of the 105 trainees, 76 participants have completed the Clinical Data Manager program. Of the 76 who completed the training, 58 trainees or 76% have secured jobs and 12 or 15% are participating in internships. In addition, 45 persons or 59% have received promotions. The average wage per hour is \$25.58.

Further, because of the quality and novelty of this training program, a patent is being sought for its content and industry is interested in purchasing this Clinical Data Manager Training Program. An area community college now offers a 2-year degree for Clinical Data Managers. Also, this collaborative model has been used successfully by the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board to support other training initiatives.

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e³ Partnerships
HONORABLE MENTION

MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD – BALTIMORE, MD

“Innovative Statewide Collaboration Addresses a Critical Workforce Shortage”

The Challenge: Maryland, like much of the Nation, is seeking to overcome a crisis in the form of a healthcare workforce shortage.

The Solution: To address this shortage, the Maryland Governor's Workforce Investment Board convened a Healthcare Workforce Summit for stakeholders including employers, state licensing boards, educational representatives, Department of Labor, Department of Defense, and allied state agencies to develop an initiative to address the healthcare industry labor shortage. Over 650 persons attended the Summit. They developed an innovative cluster-based approach to address five areas: Attraction and Recruitment of skilled workers, Retention, Professional Development, State Policy and Finance, and Military Transition. Efforts toward meeting these goals include increasing enrollment in relevant training programs by making scholarships available, and providing funds to businesses for the training of incumbent workers in specific skills needed by the employer or industry.

The Results: The Maryland State Department of Education's preliminary report indicates a 2.3% increase in enrollment in Health Career & Technology fields, a 4.1% increase in completion of these programs, and an 11.3% increase in male participation. An employer dollar to dollar match in the Incumbent Worker Training program together with Federal funding has provided \$1.4 million for this program.

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HONORABLE MENTION

TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT COUNCIL – TACOMA, WA

“Effective Partnerships Utilize Collective Resources”

The Challenge: Utilizing data from economic development partners, the Tacoma-Pierce County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) identified healthcare as one of the county's top five high-growth industries offering stable employment. However, the industry faced difficulty finding skilled workers to fill positions.

The Solution: The Tacoma-Pierce County WIB's business-led healthcare partnership, the *Pierce County Health Services Careers Council (PCHSCC)*, is an extensive partnership of public and private stakeholders who have worked to maximize resources to address the needs of the local health services industry. The PCHSS uses its collective influence and resources to increase awareness of healthcare employment and training opportunities and to facilitate the selection of new workers and the progression of existing workers in the health care system. To date, the PCHSCC has successfully leveraged \$9 million in public resources with \$4.5 million in private resources. These funds have been used to create new training programs and to increase capacity in existing programs.

The Results: PCHSCC efforts have resulted in the doubling of student retention in registered nurse programs, from 47% to 95%. The WIB has successfully replicated the PCHSCC partnership model with the local construction industry.

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Recognizing the Demographics of the Workforce

WINNER

CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT TRAINING – SAN JOSE, CA

“Flexibility and Time-Honored Techniques Successful”

The Challenge: For the past 36 years, the Center for Employment Training (CET) has directed its attention to the populations most in need and often least likely to be served. CET has built its service delivery model around the needs of school dropouts, incarcerated persons, limited English-speaking persons, farmworkers, persons with disabilities, welfare recipients, and other populations with significant employment barriers. These populations come to CET with limited education, criminal records, substance abuse, physical disabilities, limited job skills and an estrangement from the workforce.

The Solution: CET has crafted and perfected a model that is currently operating in 33 centers in 12 States and the District of Columbia. The CET model is an open entry/open exit classroom training program with strong business involvement and support services. The classroom training options vary from community to community based on the local labor market. Local employers and business representatives serve on an Industrial Advisory Board that helps to ensure that skills curricula, equipment, materials and training processes are up-to-date and that training is appropriate for the labor market. A variety of skills training and education programs of different durations are constantly available allowing for a continuous flow of graduates ready for employment.

The CET programs seek to provide individualized service to the participants based on their needs. Remedial education and a variety of support services are available to participants as a result of active staff outreach to community agencies and organizations. Staff members attend manufacturing and trade union gatherings and chamber of commerce mixers. They also conduct “cold call” visits and use other forms of outreach to recruit new partners.

The Results: Between July 1, 2002 and April 29, 2004, the 22 CET sites served 7,367 participants. Of the 7,367 participants served, there were 5,352 terminations with 3,898 job placements. Of the 3,898 job placements, 80% were job related placements. The average hourly wage rate was \$9.94 and an annualized starting salary of \$24,821.

The populations served during this time period were: 30% farmworkers of Hispanic origin with an 80% school dropout rate and 75% limited English proficiency. Another 43% were TANF recipients and about 10% were persons with disabilities. CET proudly reports that childcare subsidies, housing assistance, nutritional support, health and other support services from California’s Community Services Block Grant made it possible for hundreds of farmworkers to complete training with high performance outcomes and go on to successful full-time jobs in careers other than farmwork.

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Recognizing the Demographics of the Workforce

HONORABLE MENTION

WORKNET PINELLAS, INC. – PINELLAS COUNTY, FL

“Accommodating Population Needs by Using Innovative Services and Technology”

The Challenge: According to the 2000 Census, over 205,000 Pinellas County citizens over the age of 5, or 24% of the County’s total population, have a disability. This rate is above both the state and national rate of individuals with disabilities. Therefore, the County concluded that it needed to focus on serving this population group and tap into this vital segment of the workforce necessary to grow its economy.

The Solution: WorkNet Pinellas’ Disability Navigator program has increased access, service, and acceptance of persons with disabilities in its three One-Stop Career Centers, and enhanced the individual’s ability to gain, return to, or retain employment. Navigators provide training and weekly disability resource information for all One-Stop Career Center staff and facilitate the installation of adaptive equipment and innovative technology in each One-Stop Career Center. Navigators have helped address negative employer preconceptions about people with disabilities in the workplace through outreach and awareness efforts. One example of this is the testing of the compatibility of adaptive equipment at employers’ sites. Also, over 50 agencies that provide services for people with disabilities participated in WorkNet’s Disability Consortium to coordinate service delivery, prevent duplication and identify gaps in service delivery and barriers to employment and training.

The Results: As of March 2004, WorkNet had nearly surpassed all of the goals set for PY 2004 with three months remaining: 1,544 individuals had registered (95% of the goal), 647 registrants were referred to jobs (meeting the goal of 42% of registrants), and 332 persons with disabilities obtained employment (130% of the goal of 256).

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HONORABLE MENTION

BALTIMORE CITY’S EX-OFFENDER EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION – BALTIMORE, MD

“Helping Ex-Offenders Overcome Workforce Barriers”

The Challenge: Baltimore City has a substantial population of ex-offenders. Annually, an estimated 9,000 people return to Baltimore City from the Maryland prison system and 20,000 Baltimoreans are currently on parole or probation. This population faces significant barriers to reentry into the workforce.

The Solution: The Baltimore City Mayor’s Office of Employment Development *Ex-Offender Program* features a collaboration of over 100 public and private sector partners on an Ex-Offender Task Force (EOTF). The EOTF has addressed the needs of the ex-offender population in Baltimore through: a partnership with one of the four Baltimore One-Stop Career Centers and a Parole and Probation office; the employment of a career agent dedicated to ex-offenders; and the sponsorship of two Employer Appreciation Breakfasts to encourage employer involvement in serving the ex-offender population. These efforts ensure that ex-offenders receive the services necessary to prepare them for employment and that they remain on the path towards employment rather than recidivism.

The Results: Between July 2003 and April 2004, the partnership between the One-Stop Career Centers and the Parole and Probation office resulted in 868 ex-offenders receiving employment services, with 134 placements. In the same period, the Career Agent directly connected 56 ex-offenders to employment. The two Employer Appreciation Breakfasts were attended by over 350 people and both received local and national coverage. In addition, the EOTF has been successful as an advocacy group, at both the city and state level, on behalf of the employment needs of ex-offenders.

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Serving Out-of-School Youth WINNER

LOS ANGELES YOUTH OPPORTUNITY MOVEMENT (LAYOM), LOS ANGELES, CA

“Collaboration Provides Answers to Youth Development”

The Challenge: Many out-of-school youth in the Boyle Heights, Watts and Pacoima/San Fernando Valley communities of southern California have low academic achievement, low incomes and face high crime, gang activity and drugs. Reaching, enrolling, retaining and providing opportunities for these out-of-school youth and successfully attaching them to the job market and steering them toward further education is a challenge requiring creative and community-wide attention.

The Solution: Partnership is one key to LAYOM’s success. LAYOM has partnerships with 20 local community-based organizations to assist in outreach and service delivery. Outreach is accomplished through door-to-door recruitment in public housing, referrals from siblings and friends (who receive an incentive for referrals), partnerships with agencies that serve homeless youth in the skid row section of downtown Los Angeles, partnering with the City of Los Angeles Probation Department to access probation camp returnees, and other partnerships with community-based agencies that serve youth.

Once youth are enrolled, LAYOM employs many strategies and more than 100 non-financial partnerships to provide services and help retain youth in the program. For example: seven organizations collaborate to run the “Weed and Seed Program” that provided employment for 200 youth from public housing developments; employers, vocational training providers, and community-based organizations cooperate in sponsoring an annual community job and resource fair; California State University hosts an annual “Wake-up, It Ain’t No Game” conference to encourage participants to get an education; Watts, YO! High and Los Angeles Conservation Corps and other alternative schools provide alternative opportunities for youth to obtain a high school diploma or equivalent; UCLA hosts 100 out-of-school youth in a residential learning experience each year where youth take a college-level course and learn about applying for college and transferring credits; during Education Month, LAYOM works with the Mayor’s Office to sponsor a citywide event called “Free Cash for College” for out-of-school youth to learn about and apply for financial aid for college education.

LAYOM’s business partners have donated over \$30,000 in cash and in-kind to support LAYOM programs. In-kind support includes business persons teaching job readiness classes, speaking at career events and participating in job and career fairs. Business partners include: Home Depot, Washington Mutual, Universal Studios and E! Entertainment.

Other training partners include: YouthBuild grantees, Job Corps, Boys and Girls Club, Los Angeles Housing Authority, Jobs Plus and Computer Learning Center. Also, in collaboration with Anthony School in Watts, youth are offered an eight-week accelerated class in Real Estate. Youth who complete this course should be ready to take the State of California real estate license exam and are offered employment if they are successful in passing the exam.

The Results: Since 2000, LAYOM has served 2,000 out-of-school youth with the following results: 200 youth have enrolled in two-or four year colleges, 200 have returned to alternative or regular high school; over 500 participants have been placed in unsubsidized employment and nearly 300 have completed work experience internships. The overall placement rate of this population with numerous barriers to employment is over 80% and the retention rate is almost 70%. Collaboration works!

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Serving Out-of-School Youth

HONORABLE MENTION

RICHLAND COLLEGE – DALLAS, TX

“Innovation to Meet the Needs of an At-Risk Youth Population”

The Challenge: The Dallas County education system faced challenges serving a diverse youth population and ensuring that these youth were integrated into the workforce and able to meet local labor market needs.

The Solution: Richland College designed an Out-of-School Youth program to improve educational achievement, lower school dropout rates, and increase GED offerings for this diverse Dallas community. The program features soft skills preparation through award-winning AchieveGlobal training, job fairs, job clubs and apprenticeship opportunities. Collaboration with youth-serving institutions, including school districts and juvenile corrections departments, as well as intensive and innovative recruiting measures significantly expand access to the program. The program also includes a Tier II Component which provides advanced training in several WIA Certified Occupational Skills Programs. All activities take place on a college campus to expose students to a higher education setting, and students participate in a graduation ceremony upon completion of their GED.

The Results: The Richland College program exceeded its goals in both 2001 and 2002. In 2002 the program achieved a GED graduation rate of 56.3%, 69% placement rate, 93.6% job retention rate and average earnings gained was \$3,910.

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