



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 30, 2007

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Department of Labor High Growth Youth Offender Initiative *FCM provides technical assistance to 16 sites to meet the needs of businesses*

The U.S. Department of Labor-Employment and Training Administration (DOL-ETA) is engineering a strategic shift in the design, implementation and operation of its key workforce development initiatives. The Presidents High Growth Job Training Initiative is a strategic effort to meet high growth industries workforce needs by preparing workers for new and increasing job opportunities in rapidly expanding or transforming industries. Traditionally, program initiatives have been primarily shaped by the education and training needs of job seekers and incumbent workers (i.e., the supply side). While this remains a core focus, the DOL-ETAs overriding mission is to pursue these efforts within a more demand driven context of employers workforce development and hiring needs. The net result, ideally, is a more productive alignment of supply (needs of job seekers and incumbent workers) with demand (needs of businesses/ employers).

Preparing youth for this demand driven market is the goal of the DOL-ETAs Division of Youth Services. Their High Growth Youth Offender Initiative (HGYOI) is a special project to provide opportunities for at-risk court-involved youth to successful transition into working in high growth industries. The HGYOI aims to serve the neediest out-of-school and at-risk youth through the workforce investment system by improving alternative education services and meeting the demands of businesses, especially in high growth industries and occupations. The foundation of these initiatives is partnerships that include the public workforce investment system, business and industry, community-based agencies, education, training providers, and the juvenile justice community to help youth offenders enter careers in high growth industries.

In April 2005, the DOL-ETA solicited funding applications for the HGYOI, and selected 16 Grantees from among 168 applicants who applied through a competitive procurement process. The grantees were selected to prepare youth offenders for successful entry into the workforce, specifically economic sectors identified as high growth

industries. Each grantee was awarded a two-year grant between \$851,000 and \$1,000,000, with a total of \$15.6 million distributed.

During the first year of the award, the 16 grantees focused on stabilizing their service delivery structure by assembling resources and planning services with their partner organizations. Each grantee focused on the youth customer and provided occupational training, on-the-job training, apprenticeship opportunities, internships and other work-based learning to help former offenders gain the skills for which high growth industries have strong demand. During year two, the grantees were expected to adopt a dual focus by expanding their attention to a second customer, businesses/ employers, and proactively supporting the DOL-ETAs demand driven emphasis, by developing and maintaining connections to high growth industries

Full Capacity Marketing, Inc. and Abt Associates provided technical assistance for the 16 grantees to help them 1) understand how to better communicate with business/employers; 2) create value propositions for their agency; and 3) build internal capacity to better outreach effectively to this market. Celina Shands Gradijan, president FCM said, “We couldn’t opt for a blanket approach that worked across all 16 sites, as each area has different high growth sectors, demographics and political landscapes. Instead, we tailored our approach for each of the 16 sites which proved to not only impact the project’s metrics, but help these agencies with a sustainable long-term approach.”

These strategies proved to highly effective in meeting the goals of the project. Over the course of the initiative, the 16 sites steadily reached out to more employers, increasing their employer contacts by almost 74 percent. Most importantly, the number of youth hired, either part-time or full-time, rose from 65 collective hires in the first month to 142 hires in the last month of the initiative

While many of the new business contacts had little exposure to the public workforce development system previously, the experience of the HGYOI grantees suggest that employers are willing to give full consideration to the alternative labor pool and support services provided. In the case of the HGYOI, employers are most receptive to partnerships when 1) they are faced with systemic labor and skill shortages; 2) understand the urgency of the labor market trends around building a current and future competitive workforce; and 3) they understand the “win-win” nature of the prospective engagements offered through the consultative sales process.

To review the full portfolio of the initiative, including an online presentation, final report, and toolkit, go to http://www.fullcapacitymarketing.com/portfolio_dol.shtml