



**OPPORTUNITY
CHICAGO**

News from Opportunity Chicago

A citywide effort to secure fulfilling jobs for Chicagoans and help local businesses find qualified employees

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"Green jobs" on the way for low-income workers

On behalf of Opportunity Chicago, The Partnership for New Communities was recently awarded a grant from Living Cities, an innovative philanthropic collaborative of 21 of the world's largest foundations and financial institutions, to catalyze new job opportunities in residential weatherization for low-income residents.

With Living Cities' funding, The Partnership, the Mayor's Office, Chicagoland Green Collar Jobs Initiative and Chicago Jobs Council will form a Workforce Partnership for Energy Efficiency to help ensure that all Chicagoans can benefit from the major public and private investments in the environment that are occurring now and are projected to increase. The strategy aligns with the Chicago Climate Action Plan and provides a platform to "green" Opportunity Chicago.

"The support from Living Cities will give us a chance to create an energy-efficiency training program that will reach Chicago Housing Authority residents and other low-skilled workers and prepare them for employment in this rapidly expanding industry," says Jennifer Keeling, Director of City Policy at the Chicago Jobs Council, which coordinates and facilitates Opportunity Chicago.

An estimated 30 to 50 public-housing residents will receive weatherization training through the Living Cities grant, and an additional 30 to 50 other low-skilled, low-income workers will be trained with support from public Workforce Investment Act funds.

Specifics of the training programs, including who will provide them, are being developed over the next several months. The chosen training provider(s) likely will build off of existing construction and carpentry programs, with a supplemental curriculum focused on improving the energy efficiency of residential buildings around Chicago.

In addition, participants will have the opportunity to improve basic reading, math and computer skills, as needed, to prepare them to advance along a career path in the field. Wrap-around support services also will be available to help participants overcome other potential life barriers to successful employment.

Mayor Daley announces \$34 million for job seekers, creates Chicago Workforce Investment Council

The city soon will receive \$34 million in federal funding to provide immediate support to Chicago's jobless. Mayor Richard M. Daley recently announced the blend of dollars from the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the annual distribution of federal Workforce Investment Act funds. The new money will help low-income adults, as well as other adults who have recently lost their jobs, connect to job training, search and placement services. The funds will be disbursed between now and summer 2010 and will assist nearly 11,000 residents, 5,000 more than the city helped last year.

Daley also announced the creation of the Chicago Workforce Investment Council (CWIC) to further strengthen the city's workforce development efforts during this economically challenging time. Comprised of business, education and civic leaders, the CWIC will use its collective expertise to guide the investment of the new federal stimulus dollars, as well as the city's annual \$300 million workforce-related spending. View the [press release](#).

For more information on Opportunity Chicago, visit:

[Opportunity Chicago](#)

[The Partnership for New Communities](#)

[Opportunity Chicago Public Agency Partners:](#)

[Chicago Department of Community Development](#)

[Chicago Department of Family and Support Services](#)

[Chicago Housing Authority](#)

[Chicago Workforce Board](#)

[City Colleges of Chicago](#)

[Private support for Opportunity Chicago is pooled through The Partnership for New Communities from these funders:](#)

[Bank of America](#)

[The Chicago Community Trust](#)

[ComEd, an Exelon Company](#)

[Harris Bank](#)

[The John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation](#)

[Joyce Foundation](#)

[Living Cities](#)

[Lloyd A Fry Foundation](#)

[McCormick Foundation](#)

[National Fund for Workforce Solutions](#)

[Peoples Gas](#)

[Polk Bros Foundation](#)

President Obama supports Transitional Jobs programs

President Barack Obama included \$50 million for Transitional Jobs (TJ) programs in the FY2010 Department of Labor (DOL) budget proposal for next year, demonstrating a commitment to strengthening the public workforce development system. Pending approval by Congress, this will be the first time TJ programs have received dedicated funding from the DOL.

TJ programs combine work-related training, subsidized employment and wrap-around support services to help disadvantaged jobseekers segue into the traditional workforce. The subsidized employment and support services typically are offered for a certain time period, after which participants are placed into unsubsidized employment. TJ program models have proven effective for individuals who face multiple barriers to work.

The National Transitional Jobs Network (NTJN) is urging Congress to approve the \$50 million appropriation for TJ programs and has detailed its advocacy priorities in a one-page issue brief ([available here](#)). The NTJN calls for the TJ appropriation to be a focused investment in order to ramp up program capacity quickly, develop infrastructure across the country and demonstrate the model's effectiveness. NTJN also promotes program flexibility to accommodate those jobseekers facing such challenges as criminal records, homelessness, low literacy skills and little work experience.

As it stands, the President's proposed budget allows for flexibility in that the funds will be transferable among the DOL, Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Justice. This presents an opportunity for multiple agencies to develop TJ programs collaboratively using their respective expertise on hard-to-serve populations. If Congress passes the \$50 million appropriation in its current state, those who seek services from multiple federal agencies could be served by the DOL funding.

To learn more, visit the [NTJN](#) online or contact Melissa Young at myoung@heartlandalliance.org. To support the budget appropriation for TJ programs, contact Senator Dick Durbin on the Senate Appropriations Committee at (202) 224-2152

Spotlight On Success: Cecilia Ruiz

When she decided to re-enter the workforce, Cecilia Ruiz found it difficult to find a job. With already limited experience, she also had spent a year away from work to be at home with her son. Her mother suggested she talk to a local community-based support organization.

From them, Ruiz learned about Chicago TechReach, a program that employment services firm Manpower, Inc. had developed together with community-based partners. TechReach is Manpower's collaborative, employer-driven, fast-track, intensive training, job placement, and mentoring program. It is designed to prepare economically disadvantaged individuals for career-ladder jobs and provide businesses with a new source of work-ready, skilled employees.

In addition to "hard skills" computer training, the two-week program provides instruction on many of the equally important "soft skills" needed to be successful in today's workplace – presentation skills, mock job interviews, résumé writing, teamwork activities, dressing for the workplace, and phone and customer service skills. After graduating from the program, Ruiz had gained much more confidence in her ability to find a job.

Key to the success of TechReach is forming partnerships with community, governmental and training institutions. Supported by The Partnership for New Communities and administered by the Chicago Workforce Board, this 18-month program is expected to help 160 individuals gain the specific skills needed to find employment in entry-level office positions around the city.

After graduating from TechReach, Manpower's staffing specialists worked closely with Ruiz to find a sustainable, career-ladder position that would provide opportunities for advancement. After a few short-term assignments, including one at Manpower, Ruiz interviewed for an administrative assistant position at a construction company and, after a week, was offered the job on a permanent basis. Among her multiple responsibilities are producing estimates and proposals and tracking the costs associated with the firm's construction jobs. She is also the key contact between customers and mortgage companies.

Ruiz, who resides within the Chicago Housing Authority's scattered-site portfolio on the Southeast Side, is especially appreciative of Manpower and the role it played in supporting her. "I love Manpower and am grateful to them. It would have been 10 times harder and taken 10 times longer to get a job without them. They went out of their way to work with me."

Opportunity Chicago is a citywide commitment involving employers, government agencies, foundations and non-profit community groups to help local businesses find qualified employees and to help Chicagoans secure real and meaningful job opportunities. This multi million dollar initiative—developed by The Partnership for New Communities, Chicago Housing Authority, and the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development (now the Department of Community Development and the Department of Family and Support Services)—seeks to help 5,000 public-housing residents prepare for and find lasting employment over five years (2006-2010).

This newsletter is a regular publication of the [Chicago Jobs Council](#), produced on behalf of Opportunity Chicago. As facilitator of the initiative, CJC is responsible for convening and fostering effective cooperation among members of its Strategic Advisers Group and its Public Agency Partners committee; driving the strategic planning process; managing the initiative's program evaluation; assisting in fundraising, communications and grant-making; and promoting continuous improvement of the Initiative's program model. Please send your questions, comments, and concerns to Sarah Klerk, Senior Policy Associate for the initiative (sklerk@cjc.net).

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