

\$4M federal grant gives boro big push on 'green jobs'

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Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. keeps saying the future of the Bronx is "green."

And to help it along, the borough is getting a \$4 million federal stimulus grant to create a free job-training program that will prepare about 400 borough residents for "green jobs."

"With this new training program, we are taking a big step toward becoming the 'greenest' borough in New York City," Diaz said in announcing the grant last week.

The SMaRT jobs program is funded through a \$4 million federal grant to the nonprofit Consortium for Worker Education. SMaRT stands for "Sustainable Mechanical and Retrofitting Technologies."

Program participants will get job training at several South Bronx sites that focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy industries, training in such areas as building green roofs, retrofitting buildings and planting trees.

"This is an opportunity to help businesses launch and grow and to help workers get good jobs that will help clean our environment," said Rebecca Lurie, director of development at the Consortium for Worker Education.

The program is designed to help English-language learners, veterans and eligible spouses, people with criminal records, disconnected youth and women.

Partner organizations include the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corp., The Osborne Association, Sustainable South Bronx, Nontraditional Employment for Women, Project HIRE (Help in Re-entering Employment) and Green Worker Cooperatives, with a goal of training more than 400 residents in the next two years.

Although there is plenty of development in the Bronx, Diaz said, the result for workers is typically low-wage jobs.

"If we continue with that cycle, we will continue to be No. 1 in poverty," he said.

"We can show the rest of the city and the rest of the state that the Bronx has a skilled workforce," he added, "and that we can provide for ourselves and also do so in a way that protects the environment."

The federal grant is part of President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to preserve and create jobs, promote economic recovery nationwide and assist those most impacted by the recession.

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To learn more, call the Consortium for Worker Education at (212) 647-1900 and ask about SMaRT jobs.