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NEWS

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MDC gets \$3.8 million U.S. grant for green jobs training in NC, SC, and VA

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. – MDC, a 43-year-old nonprofit focused on improving educational and economic opportunities in the South, has been awarded a \$3.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor's "Pathways Out of Poverty" program, a national green jobs initiative.

MDC was one of eight national and 30 local organizations around the country to receive \$150 million in grants, authorized as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to support programs that help low-income and disadvantaged populations attain economic self-sufficiency through good jobs in energy efficiency and renewable energy industries.

MDC will implement the program, called "Career Pathways for a Green South," working with four community colleges in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia:

- Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, N.C.
- Trident Technical Community College in North Charleston, S.C.
- Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College in Orangeburg, Calhoun and Bamberg counties, South Carolina
- Mountain Empire Community College in Norton, Va., serving Wise and Dickenson counties.

The sites represent both rural and urban communities that have suffered large manufacturing job loss in recent years; they are also communities where significant numbers of people live in poverty, without sufficient education and skills for living-wage employment and career advancement.

"For families, communities and the South to become economically stronger, we must train workers in the skills that the next generation of jobs will require," said David Dodson, president of MDC.

With *Career Pathways for a Green South*, MDC plans a new model for workforce investment in the region that draws on untapped potential of the region's citizens and relies on strong community colleges as hubs.

Though the South has a sizeable population of jobseekers, many are unprepared to take advantage of potential green jobs coming to the region. Community colleges in high-poverty areas are uniquely suited to bridge this gap by becoming hubs that connect workers with incoming green jobs through outreach, training, and support. While community colleges are experts at job training, they are less accustomed to roles that include placement and support systems. MDC's leadership and technical assistance will enable colleges to build strong partnerships to clear the path for individuals in poverty from skill-building to training to employment, with the requisite support along the way.

The institutions participating in "Career Pathways for a Green South" will develop strategies for participant recruitment, job placement, and job retention.

- Each institution will work with partners such as workforce development boards, community-based organizations, and faith-based organizations to recruit participants.
- The institutions will then work with local workforce development boards and One Stop Centers to provide services and resources including job search skills and online access to job listings. Institutions will identify placement opportunities through industry advisory boards and relationships with local employers.
- "Soft skills" will be included as part of training programs to prepare participants for employer expectations. Participants will be connected to community services that can support their financial independence. Each site will employ placement counselors or job coaches to identify barriers to employment and to visit program graduates and employers after job placement to assess transitions and identify additional skill development or services (including child care or transportation assistance) needed.

"MDC will work with these community colleges to develop the partners and networks necessary for this training to become an ingrained pathway to jobs and careers," said Program Director Colin Austin. "That way we hope to have a lasting human and economic impact long after this program is finished."

For more information about the project, see the U.S. Department of Labor news release at www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/eta/eta20100039.htm.

For more information about MDC, go to www.mdcinc.org.