

California Green Stimulus Coalition

Action for a Green and Equitable Economic Recovery

Applied Research Center
California Apollo Alliance
California Building and
Construction Trades
Council
California League of
Conservation Voters
Catholic Charities, Diocese of
Stockton
Center on Race, Poverty and
the Environment
Center on Policy Initiatives
Cesar Chavez Institute, SFSU
Communities for a Better
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Efficiency First
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Public Advocates
Sierra Nevada Alliance
Sierra Business Council
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Watershed Alliance
Sustainable Spaces
The City Project
TransForm (formerly
Transportation and Land
Use Coalition)
Urban Habitat
Western Center on Law and
Poverty

May 28, 2009

The Honorable Hilda Solis
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20210

Recommendations for Grant Guidelines for \$750 Million Competitive ARRA Grants—Worker Training & Placement (TEN 44-08)

Dear Secretary Solis,

We congratulate you and other members of President Obama's Administration for your great leadership in securing the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)—an unprecedented public investment that if implemented with a commitment to equity and environmental sustainability principles will create economic opportunity for America's vulnerable and help the nation tackle our greatest environmental challenges. We write today to share our recommendations for guidelines your Department will soon release for the \$750 million in competitive grants for worker training and placement in high growth and emerging industries.

The ARRA statute's charge to deliver benefits to those who were hit hardest by the current economic crisis; the Office of Management and Budget's April 3, 2009, guidance on best practices in local hiring and engagement with community based organizations; your Department's recent guidance on WIA training grants that would give preference to efforts that connect workers to career-ladder jobs in high growth sectors; and the President's executive order urging states to adopt Project Labor Agreements for major infrastructure projects are all critical federal tools that will increase the likelihood that these resources will reach those who face the greatest barriers to economic self-sufficiency and prosperity. We were pleased to see that the recent Training and Employment Notice 44-08 outlined a continued commitment to these ideas for the energy efficiency and renewable energy competitive grants. The final grant guidelines that your Department will soon issue should take these measures further by rewarding applicants who are committed to the President's vision of the ARRA as a down payment on the urgent task of building a robust green economy that supports the creation of healthy, opportunity-rich communities and shared prosperity.

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow were developed by member organizations of the California Green Stimulus Coalition, which includes leading environmental, social justice, labor, and workforce training and

education organizations. On the most basic level, we urge you to include preferences in the competitive grant guidelines for applicants that commit to the “pathways out of poverty” concept in the Green Jobs Act; whose training approaches to the greatest extent possible lead to “green-collar jobs,” and those which demonstrate the potential to prepare participants for well-paying, family wage jobs with full benefits in other high growth sectors in their regional economies.

Furthermore, we believe that successful applicants should demonstrate a capacity and plan to achieve the following:

- Career pathways: Training and education opportunities that are part of career pathway frameworks help workers increase their skills and prepare them for careers in high-growth or high-employment industries.
- Leveraging with existing programs and partnerships: Applicants should demonstrate the capacity to build upon and strengthen existing cross-sector and regional collaborative partnerships that align K-12 districts, community colleges, state universities, workforce investment boards, accredited apprenticeship programs, labor unions, the Employment Training Panel, and community-based organizations.
- Build on STEM initiatives. When possible, ARRA-funded training programs in renewable energy and energy efficiency, transportation, and water conservation should be aligned with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) educational programs.
- Certification and credentialing: Education and training should result in transferable degrees, credentials, and/or certifications that are recognized by industry, including community college certificates and apprenticeship training programs accredited by the Division of Apprenticeship Standards.
- Access: Applicants should demonstrate the capacity to create and manage effective job training programs for low-skilled, disadvantaged, and underserved communities that are connected with bridge programs that incorporate basic skills education and career pathways and have a proven track record of preparing low-skilled adults and youth for work. In addition, applicants should demonstrate how their training programs will build on the President’s call to improve post-secondary attainment for low income students and students of color. Finally, we are particularly concerned that the department’s guidance on the creating opportunities for Americans that were formerly incarcerated or have past criminal records be defined in a manner that provides the widest opportunity.
- Learning and Earning/Financial Support: Training programs that allow people to combine learning and earning over time should be supported, such as in-classroom experience with on-the-job training should get preference; as well as those that provide participants with the financial support needed to pursue longer-term courses of education and training that will move them higher up the Middle Skill career ladder.

- Leveraging workforce training with other neighborhood revitalization: The ARRA is an unprecedented opportunity to leverage resources toward the goal of creating health communities of opportunity. Applicants that demonstrate the capacity to leverage their workforce training with other community development efforts that draw on other ARRA funded programs, (e.g., Weatherization Assistance Program, HUD/DOT's Livable Communities Program, Neighborhood Stabilization resource, etc) are designed to revitalize neighborhoods that face the greatest challenges in regard to poverty, and other environmental hazards, should be prioritized.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We welcome the opportunity to support your efforts toward these ends.

Sincerely,

The California Green Stimulus Coalition

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