

CREATES Energy Training and Job Placement Program Best Practices

The Construction, Retrofitting, and Energy-Efficiency Assessment Training and Employment Systems (CREATES) Program is a DOL ARRA 1512-funded program that is training workers in the rapidly emerging energy efficiency and renewable energy industries, then placing those skilled workers into sustainable, living wage jobs in Southwest Virginia.

CREATES is a regional partnership led by Community Housing Partners in Christiansburg, Virginia. Key partners include a major land grant university, three community colleges and two workforce development boards. Innovative best practices are employed by this partnership in the areas of business modeling, participant recruitment and industry engagement.

Innovative Business Model

The CREATES business model brings together key partners in an unconventional, yet extremely effective, collaboration. The partners are charged with various responsibilities which, discharged separately and together, lead to a strong and skilled energy-savvy workforce.

Communication

The CREATES Program is based on a relationship model for which communication is the foundation. As the primary contractor on the grant, CHP facilitates communication among the partners and handles routine administrative work. Representatives from all of the partner organizations convene monthly to discuss program policies and procedures and to identify challenges and opportunities. This regular, facilitated communication ensures that CREATES participants are consistently well served and that the program stays on course to meet its deliverables.

Curriculum

The CREATES collaborative, regional distribution of curriculum offers participants a variety of training opportunities in an effective and efficient manner. While all three community colleges offer training in traditional construction trades, each college also specializes in a specific energy trade (see table below.) In this way, participants can circulate between community colleges to receive the specialized training they need. This structure provides a cohesive program that eliminates competition and duplication of effort. Ultimately, the whole regional program is greater than the sum of its local parts.

<i>Specialty</i>	<i>Training organization</i>
<i>Green Construction</i>	<i>Wytheville Community College</i>
<i>Wind and Solar</i>	<i>New River Community College</i>
<i>Energy Management</i>	<i>Virginia Western Community College</i>
<i>Energy Auditing/Weatherization (providing industry recognized credentials)</i>	<i>New River Center for Energy Research and Training</i>

Industry Representation

The CREATES Advisory Committee (AC) is comprised of representatives from the types of firms that will ultimately hire CREATES graduates, including energy assessment, renewable energy, residential construction, commercial construction, government, and manufacturing. The AC meets quarterly to ensure that the CREATES program provides training that is relevant to the needs of regional employers.

Success Story

Jack Wall, owner of Wall Residences and the Hotel Floyd, and a leader in the regional green business movement, is a distinguished member of the CREATES AC. When Wall needed a new Project Manager, he had to look no further than CREATES graduate, Andrew Chester. Please see success story attached: **Managing Energy – Andrew Chester**

Innovative Participant Recruitment Strategy

Use of Compliance Requirements to Recruit Incumbent Workers

The CREATES Program curriculum offers compliance-driven courses like EPA-mandated Lead Safety for Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP); and state-mandated Basic Contractor Business Licensing to attract and recruit incumbent workers. Self-employed contractors and workers employed by smaller contracting firms and were given the needed support to become certified professionals, and thus become more competitive in their given field.

Lead Safety for Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) Course

EPA's Renovation, Repair and Painting Final Rule (40 CFR 745) mandates that renovations conducted for compensation must be performed by Certified Firms using Certified Renovators. Participants in the Lead Safety for Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) were recruited through employer outreach to renovation firms. This one day course offered through CREATES is the EPA model course for Certified Renovators and as such meets all requirements in 40 CFR 745.90.

Basic Contractor Business Licensing Course

As of August 21, 2006, a worker applying for initial contractor licensure for the first time (i.e not currently licensed) must successfully complete an eight-hour business course approved by the Virginia Board for Contractors. The curriculum for the CREATES **Basic Contractor Business Licensing** Class was developed by community colleges working in conjunction the Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation, Board for Contractors. This course is recognized by the Board; therefore, upon successful completion, participants are provided with a certificate of completion that can be presented upon application for a contractor's license. There is an agreement in the works to combine the contractor's licensing course with the RRP course so that contractors can be in compliance with the EPA rule as soon as they are licensed.

More than 50 contractors who secure building permits in Grayson County, Virginia were invited and attended a focus group event on February 4, 2011 hosted by Jim Moss, Grayson County Building Inspector. Presentations from CREATES partners provided the contractors information about available CREATES grant funded training, employment and placement services. Contractors were then asked to provide feedback about anticipated future hiring and training needs, building code compliance, EPA

regulation, OSHA compliance and their own experiences with “green” building practices. The focus group also served as an effective recruitment tool to enroll participants. After that particular group, 27 individuals enrolled in the EPA Lead Safety course and 23 have taken or are scheduled to take the Contractor’s License class.

Success Story

To learn about one CREATES graduate who is taking contracting to the next green level, please see the attached success story: **Building Opportunity - Jeb Huddle**.

Innovative Industry Engagement Process

Industry Roundtable Discussions

Virginia Tech team members held five focus group meetings with representatives from regional employers to solicit input on existing training programs in the region, state of the regional industry, the impact of “green” practices in the industry, and Identification of current and future workforce needs. Participants represented firms in commercial construction and residential development; and manufacturers like Amcor, PepsiCo, Blue Ridge Gatorade, Somic America, Magnetic Technologies, and EvaTran.

Virginia Tech team members have conducted analysis of the industry roundtable data and are developing findings in the form of a white paper to share with all CREATES partners and with the Project Advisory Committee. These findings will help inform future development of curricula and training.

Green Technology Brown Bag Series

CREATES and the New River Valley Homebuilders Association partnered to host a Green Technology Brown Bag Series. Each session in the series highlighted emerging energy efficient and renewable energy construction technologies. Professionals currently working in the energy efficient and renewable energy fields presented by during lunch, followed by a hands-on demonstration or tour.

Reverse job Fair

The “Minute to Get It” Job Fairs are an innovative opportunity which allows potential employees to present their experience and skills (in just one minute) to a room of employers. Employers are given a dossier of participant resumes and offered assistance to coordinate a follow up interviews. These events were a success, generating employment opportunities for CREATES graduates and eliciting very positive employer reviews.

Success Story

To learn about one CREATES graduate who received employment as a direct result the Reverse Job Fair, please see success story attached: **Volunteer for Energy - Nora Smith**.



Best Practices Success Story

Managing Energy: Andrew Chester

Thanks to CREATES I will be able to make a lasting positive affect on the environment as well as bring income to Virginia through tax dollars.

- Andrew Chester



Andrew Chester is employed as a Project Manager at Wall Residences.

The Roadblock

CREATES has played a major part in Chester's recent career improvements. Before receiving education made possible by the CREATES grant, Chester was a college graduate with a degree in Building Construction but was unable to find employment due to the struggling construction market.

Training and Result

While studying Alternative Energy at New River Community College, Chester was able to receive a part time job for a national green developer that is purchasing an apartment complex in Blacksburg, VA. His role was evaluating apartment units based on their energy efficiency and suggesting options for saving costs through minor renovations. Following Chester's completion of the Alternative Energy program, he gained full-time employment as a project manager for a green construction company, also managing projects for its alternative energy division.

The CREATES Program is a Community Housing Partners (CHP) initiative, funded by a \$3.8 Million Department of Labor Grant. For more information: www.createsprogram.org





Best Practices Success Story

Building Opportunity: Jeb Huddle

"The CREATES program has helped me pursue my dream. I want to be able to work under a general contractor at first, and then to hopefully run my own general contracting business." - Jeb Huddle



Thanks to CREATES, Jeb Huddle is now a licensed contractor, as well as a certified Lead Safety specialist and a solar installer

The Roadblock

Huddle had worked for the same manufacturing company for 31 years. He was laid off when the company moved its operations to Mexico. With Department of Labor Trade Readjustment Allowance funding, he was able to pursue a Construction Technology with Electrical Specialization Degree. He wanted further training to pursue a specific career options in contracting, electrical, HVAC, and solar fields, but he could not afford to go back to school and support his family.

Training and Result

CREATES funding paid for his Huddle's Solar Technology degree, HVAC classes, Contractor's License Preparation training and Lead Safety training. He has decided to continue with the HVAC classes in order to complete the degree and is looking for another funding source (is applying for scholarships) for a May 2012 graduation. Therefore, he was able to obtain a contractor's license, a lead safety certificate, and a solar diploma. Now, Huddle will be able to pursue a construction career with training providing the opportunity for jobs in all different areas.

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Best Practices Success Story

Volunteer for Energy: Nora Smith

"I had given up on finding a worthwhile job due to my age. I enrolled in the CREATES program, but I was not confident that I would actually get a job from it. My career path is going in a new direction—but I love it! The classes I am taking relate with the knowledge requirements in my energy assessment job. It is a good fit. I feel that it was a privilege that I was able to get into the Creates program and honestly believe that it is a wonderful program." - Nora Smith



Nora Smith is employed as Technical Writer at Volunteers for Energy as a result of CREATES training and the

The Roadblock

After being laid off in January 2010 I put in applications and did get two interviews (one as a corporate trainer which I did not get) and one with a training company for a special assignment—I got that job—but then the client decided not to use the company. Being in Southwest Virginia there are few jobs that require a college education. I am overqualified for most of the job openings. My age is a barrier. I was 62 when I began job hunting. In July 2010 I went to a job fair at the Salem Civic Center and walked to the CREATES booth. I heard "How would you like some free training?" I said, "Sounds good, I'm not doing anything else." Then Vincent Randall and I talked, I filled out some paperwork, went home and wondered if I would hear anything. I did, and I liked what I heard. It is a green energy program funded by Stimulus, so I figured the government thinks this is an important program and would be worth getting into.

Training and Result

The first semester I took Electricity, Introduction to Alternative Energy (received Green Card), Industrial Safety (received OSHA 10-hour General Industry Safety certification). I also received the Gold Virginia's Career Readiness Certificate and a Career Studies Certificate for Energy Management Systems Introduction. I received a certificate for *Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting – Initial English Training Course* from Greenville Technical College in South Carolina. This summer I am taking Introduction to Construction where the class is building a storage shed, and Print Reading, which will be a good introduction to the CAD class in the fall. Through the CREATES Reverse Job Fair I obtained a job as a technical writer for the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Commission's Volunteers for Energy. I go with a team to assess the areas where energy use could be improved and then I gather the information into a technical report for the client.

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