

Business Solutions

INITIATIVE AIMED AT ADDRESSING EMPLOYER DEMANDS

With the recent attraction of several large manufacturers to the area, who with them bring over 300 new manufacturing jobs, the Lubbock MSA continues to experience significant growth. Recent employers' concerns with the lack of qualified HVAC and General Maintenance Technicians prompted WorkForce Solutions to develop immediate solutions to meet these demands.

WFS worked with South Plains College to provide a short-term training course that will ultimately prepare a pool of skilled workers in the areas of building maintenance and heating and air conditioning mechanics. During the initial discussion phase, additional concerns were noted regarding the number of individuals in the region currently unemployed or underemployed, who receive welfare subsidies, and who lack the skills necessary to gain employment at self-sufficiency wages.

In partnership with WFS, Bruce Thornton Heating & Air Conditioning, Stellar Property Management and Armstrong Mechanical, SPC customized a training curriculum that will prepare individuals with the basic skills needed to be successful in the fields of HVAC and building maintenance. Additional curriculum components were incorporated to help the individuals with work-readiness training and financial education. The project was awarded a \$90,720 self-sufficiency grant from the Texas Workforce Commission as a result of its innovative, employer-driven design. Presently, there is not a certification or industry-recognized curriculum in Texas used to train individuals entering this field. The curriculum will allow SPC to continue the program after the grant ends in February 2009.

"The value of this program is that employers have taken part in developing the curriculum that will help produce a labor pool of qualified, well-trained employees," said Martin Aguirre, CEO of WorkForce Solutions.

Following successful classroom completion, participants are guaranteed employment with one of the three partnering employers. These employers have agreed to hire the less qualified workers who are on a career path to becoming experienced HVAC Technicians, pay them a self-sufficiency wage and continue to develop their skills through on-the-job training. Participants must meet self-sufficiency standards and income level requirement to be selected. Upon completion of the training, incumbent workers will receive pay increases and achieve a higher level of employment with one of the three partner businesses. WFS will assist in the screening and matching of eligible participants.

"Each participant will receive 65 hours of training," said Rafael Aguilera, associate dean for Workforce Development at SPC Byron Martin ATC. "Participants must have an interest in the industry and meet the eligibility requirements. They will be subjected to a drug test to make sure they are hireable at the end of the six week training period."

SPC is currently seeking participants for the General Maintenance Training Program. If you or someone you know is interested in General Maintenance or HVAC Technician, contact WorkForce Solutions South Plains toll-free at 866-765-5038



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