



## An Innovative Summer Youth Stimulus Project in Oregon Yields Strong Results for Participants and Employers

(Salem, OR) The Arbor E&T, LLC's Salem Youth Project, serving three communities in central Oregon, responded to the Request for Proposal (RFP) announced by the Enterprise for Education and Training with an innovative program designed to quickly engage out of school youth and prepare them to enter a diverse workforce. The Arbor team proposed to recruit, train and place 120 youth over the course of the summer. To keep cost ratios low, existing WIA staff were reassigned to work with the youth, making efficient use of personnel and contributing their expertise to the success of the project.

Early on, the Salem Business Team set about contacting employers in the areas surrounding the three youth center locations. Because a large number of strong partnerships were established prior to the announcement of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), the Business Team quickly found sites willing to accept youth, and because of the diversity of employers, most youth are able to designate their work preferences. Employers have the opportunity to participate in mock interviews with the youth participants, serving to develop interview skills and give the employers a "first look" at prospective candidates.



Young man taking pride in his work.

To accomplish efficient and high quality soft skills development, the Salem Youth Project partnered with the Quality Group to develop a web-based training portal that includes four skills modules and a new module specific to Lean training. "Lean" is a business model developed by Toyota to ensure continuous improvement at all levels of work.

The modules were specifically developed for the average out-of-school youth's 9th grade reading level, and each section includes streaming video presentations that are self-paced and remotely monitored by the Career Coaches. Because of the concern for accountability and outcomes, pre- and post tests were built into each module.



One participant enjoying the web-based training.

Using laptops and headsets assigned to each youth, a single Career Coach is able to facilitate training for up to thirty youth at a single setting. The youth, when surveyed after participation, genuinely enjoyed the format and felt they learned a great deal of valuable information. The average pre test score on a 100 point scale is 63, and the average post test score is 87, demonstrating the efficacy of web-based training in workforce development.

Since the outset of the program, 60 youth from the first of two sessions have been placed in jobs ranging from health care to grounds maintenance. Arbor is now receiving a number of requests from employers asking to convert the summer youth into full-time employees. Without exception, the employers have complimented the quality of the youth sent to participate, and many are interested in

becoming a part of our year-round WIA workshops. Additionally, a few of the youth employers would like their existing employees to receive similar training.

Given these early results, the Salem Youth Project is confident the second session, set to begin in August, will be every bit as successful as the first. Because of the youth program's success, Arbor plans to integrate more web-based skills development into the year-round WIA program beginning in September, to include Green Trades, Industrial Arts, Health Care and Computer Literacy. Although the Summer Youth Project was a sudden opportunity, necessitating many hours of planning and hard work, the results promise to benefit Oregon communities for years to come.