



# Bridging the Needs of the Community with the Needs of the Labor Market

## Jobs for Youth, Boston

Many of the towns and cities in the northeastern United States developed their economies during the Industrial Age and have an industrial heritage to prove it. The widespread closure of old mill buildings and manufacturing facilities led to the decline of local labor forces and an eventual legacy of long-idle properties. Using the funds provided through a Brownfields Job Training grant awarded by EPA, Jobs for Youth-Boston is continuing its efforts to help local residents develop the technical skills needed to clean up these properties and move them back into productive use.

Since 1998, Jobs for Youth-Boston has used EPA Brownfields funds to concentrate its efforts in the Cities of Lynn, Somerville, Chelsea, and Boston, Massachusetts, targeting low-income residents for recruitment. In the decade prior to the award of the Pilot, Lynn lost 15,000 jobs due to a decline in manufacturing, corporate downsizing, and relocation of retail establishments. In Somerville, the state's most densely populated city, much of the population lives in proximity to aging industrial and commercial areas. Although Boston is known as the economic hub of New England, it has an industrial history and the associated economic and social blights: poverty, abandoned properties, and pollution. Following EPA's award of Brownfields Assessment Pilots to Lynn, Somerville, and Chelsea, studies estimated there were more than 300 brownfields in the area, identifying a community need for skilled environmental professionals. The Jobs For Youth-Boston Job Training helped meet this challenge by providing an opportunity to train un- and under-employed local residents to create a permanent environmental services workforce.

Through seven training cycles, Jobs for Youth-Boston trained 80 students in the program and has achieved a 76 percent employment placement rate to date. Moreover, the graduates are tracked for one year following completion of the program. Thirty-two percent of the population in Lynn, Somerville, and Chelsea lives in poverty and 75 percent are minority; the environmental job training program targets these residents, including youth and adults living near brownfields, particularly those properties targeted by Lynn's, Somerville's, and Chelsea's Assessment Pilots. The training program includes courses about the environmental assessment of properties, cleanup methods, environmental mapping, and the use of innovative technologies. Equally important, the trainees received



*Students learning through the Jobs For Youth-Boston Job Training program*

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additional support such as classes in remedial math and English, interview preparation, workplace skills, and resume writing. The combination of job-related training and support helps ease graduates into the job market to perform environmental lab analysis, conduct field work, and treat contaminated properties.

The training efforts of Jobs For Youth-Boston, including curricula development, are supported by a variety of local employers, colleges and universities, and other community-based organizations. The partnerships built with local environmental technology firms also strengthens the grantee's ability to more directly access information about employment opportunities. In turn, this allows better matching of job assignments with graduates' skills.

In August 2001, EPA awarded \$75,000 in supplemental funding to Jobs for Youth-Boston and followed that with an additional \$50,000 in August 2002. Even before receiving the supplemental funding, over a two-year period the grantee leveraged \$293,934 from a variety of public and private sources, including the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay. This funding helped the grantee to continue expanding the job training program; increase the enrollment base; enrich the curricula to include more innovative technologies, laboratory time, and additional certifications; and perform post-placement follow-up with graduates.

Jobs For Youth-Boston is making a real difference in the quality of life for graduates and in the community. One job training graduate, Stan Osinski, went from struggling to find another retail position amid widespread downsizing to learning technical skills through the job training program, and finding a new career as a foreman at a storage facility owned by a local environmental services company. Stan manages staff who specialize in the cleanup of petroleum spills such as waste oil from auto body shops and gas stations; they test media, dispose of contaminants, and then ship whatever is left over to another location for recycling into heating oil for paper factories and other users.

Graduates of the Job Training program are not only prepared to obtain a job, they are poised to become active participants in their local economy. "Brownfields can spur the economy," said Robert W. Varney, EPA New England Regional Administrator. "These grants will go a long way to ensuring that there is a trained work force ready to take on the work of cleaning up these sites and getting them back into productive use."

## **CONTACTS:**

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Visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:

<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>



*Graduates of the Jobs for Youth-Boston  
Job Training program*