

Green Employment Expo at AEA

It was an unusual setting for a job fair. Thirteen employers set up tables at AEA's training center at 105 Bruckner Boulevard in the Bronx on January 27th for a "Green Employment Expo." They were there to fill jobs -- mechanic's apprentice, sales rep, installer, construction supervisor. Many are experienced subcontractors to the Association for Energy Affordability and its New York area members who perform upgrades under Weatherization and other energy efficiency programs. Some are members of the citywide Big Apple Green Business Network, an outgrowth of the original Bronx Green Business Network founded by CWE and BOEDC in conjunction with AEA. Many were represented directly by their owners. They came to meet recent graduates of a unique employment and training program funded by the US Department of Labor.

The 87 job seekers were all participants in the Center for Environmental Workforce Training's Pathways Out of Poverty project, a partnership of workforce development groups and training organizations funded with federal Stimulus dollars. The project is led by the Consortium for Worker Education and housed within the Association for Energy Affordability's 30,000 square-foot Energy Management Training Center in the South Bronx. AEA is the lead occupational skills trainer. Participants (who must be unemployed and most of whom live in the Bronx) enroll in the program by contacting one of the project's workforce partner agencies: South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (SoBro), The Osborne Association, Sustainable South Bronx, Project HIRE, and Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW).

Most of the job seekers at the Expo were graduates of AEA's [Energy Efficiency Technician I](#) course, whose students learn how buildings use (and lose) energy, and are introduced to the work and skills needed to provide upgrades in a variety of building settings. After graduating from this class, many move directly into entry level jobs in the energy efficiency field. Some candidates exhibiting strong aptitude for analytic or installer work have taken AEA's Building Analyst or Basic Air Sealing and Insulation courses, to prepare for certification by leading industry standards organizations like the Building Performance Institute (BPI).

Energy efficiency retrofit work requires employees to take accurate measurements, perform calculations, and meet strict specifications for installation of upgrades to achieve planned energy savings. Before enrolling a student in training at AEA, the project's workforce partners assess the candidate using a tool developed in conjunction with AEA. CWE and workforce partners provide courses in mechanical reasoning and math, environmental education, tool use, data entry and other skills job seekers will need to succeed.

Many of the contractors who came to the Expo have taken classes or participated in educational events at AEA that helped them to earn their BPI certifications and contractor accreditation and attract new customers. Some had already hired graduates of AEA's previous EETI classes and commended their dedication and performance. Job seekers at the Expo were optimistic to see employers so genuinely interested in their development and success.

With many large Stimulus-funded Weatherization projects ending, you might ask why companies who came to the Expo are hiring now. But Weatherization will continue, though with sharply reduced funding. NYSERDA and utility energy efficiency programs fund similar work with incentives that reduce the costs of improvements to owners. Contractors are also seeing increased demand from owners of buildings that must meet a series of upcoming deadlines under New York City's Greener, Greater Buildings Plan, for which they will be expected to perform efficiency upgrades. They are planning to expand their businesses.

Prior to this project, AEA collaborated with CWE and workforce partners on a New York State-funded project for Emerging and Transitional Workers serving targeted areas of the Bronx and Brooklyn. The current project builds on this history with an even deeper focus and commitment to AEA's Bronx neighbors.

"This was part of our dream when we first opened our training center in the Bronx," says AEA Executive Director David Hepinstall, who has hired several project participants himself. "This is deeply gratifying work."



"We do complete building envelope reduction in buildings, from caulking to window sealing to aerators to building control systems to roofing, etc... What we're looking for now are installers. We have already hired four people out of this program - and they are probably the best workers we have on our program right now."

Dan Etheridge
Senior Energy Consultant
Quality Conservation Service

[Insert a [direct link](#) from this page to the Employment Expo video for those who land on this page without first seeing the slider on the homepage.]

EET 1 Training in Action

