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S.F. Foundation scores grant for job training plan

BY SARAH DUXBURY

San Francisco Business Times

San Francisco Foundation has won a \$600,000 matching Social Innovation Fund grant to develop job training programs at Skyline College in San Bruno and Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz. It is the only such grant being awarded in California.

The Bay Area Workforce Funding Collaborative, an 11-member consortium of foundations including the San Francisco Foundation, has already raised the full \$600,000 match.

As a result, at least 630 job seekers will receive entry-level training for careers in the allied health care field over the next two years. These jobs include medical assistants for people who might move up to become nurses, lab assistants, surgical assistants and the like. Better still, the training is for jobs that exist.

"Employers are really the ones driving the training in terms of indicating what are the skills and labor market needs they will have," said Jessica Pitt, initiative officer for the Bay Area Workforce Funding Collaborative. "These programs are responding to employer needs, making sure that individuals are prepared for the jobs that are out there."

The workforce funding collaborative brings money to the table, including this Social Innovation Fund grant; it also creates partnerships with potential employers, educators and others to tailor training to local needs and achieve maximum impact. The collaborative spends over \$1 million a year on training programs and to date has trained several thousand people with over 1,000 of them securing good, career-ladder jobs.

"We're really interested in helping those individuals who have the highest barriers to move into the workforce," Pitt said.

BAWFC was founded in 2004 and is one of the first regional workforce funding collaboratives in the country. It has invested over \$10 million to date in regional training initiatives.

The Social Innovation Fund money will provide particular support for job seek-



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ers whose reading or math skills aren't yet at a college level, a hard-to-employ group for whom supportive funding has dried up with recent budget cuts.

Despite the recession, there are jobs available for people with appropriate training, Pitt said. Placements have gotten harder and many program graduates don't land their dream job, but if they are willing to settle for a different, maybe less desirable area of health care, there are in fact jobs, and there will be many more in coming years.

"My department now is in non-recruitment mode, but in the next three to four years, I have a large population of therapists who will be retiring, so I am very anxious to make sure that down the road I have qualified therapists to pick from," said Chris Comstock, director of respiratory care services at Mills-Peninsula Health Services and a big supporter of the Skyline training programs. "No matter how much health care right-sizes and gets more efficient, there's still going to be need for qualified ancillary staff."

Comstock also said that the high cost of living in the Bay Area makes it all but impossible to recruit qualified employees from outside the region, so it is necessary to train Bay Area residents for these jobs.