



## **OAI Inc's Chicago-Southland Brownfields Job Training Program (CS BJTP)**

OAI, inc., a non-profit workforce development organization based in Chicago, has been awarded \$499,947 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to fund the *Chicago-Southland Brownfields Job Training Program (CS BJTP)*. The primary goal of the proposed program is to provide a minimum of 80 Illinois residents living in Brownfields-impacted communities in southern Cook County with core hazardous waste and worker safety training followed by specialized training and placement into one of two employment training tracks: **Environmental Remediation** or **Weatherization**. A second goal is to create a professional level Weatherization Curriculum that will be shared with all area training providers who wish to use it.

To accomplish training goals expeditiously, effectively, and as a coordinated response to anticipated market demand, OAI and its partners propose to:

1. Use OAI's existing curricula and leveraged resources to train and certify all participants in **Core Courses** of 40-hour HAZWOPER; OSHA 10 for Construction; Confined Space Entry, CPR and Basic Construction.
2. For participants who choose the **Environmental Remediation Track** after completing core courses, use existing OAI curricula and equipment to train and certify participants in Asbestos and Lead removal, both of which will result in State licenses required to work in these fields.
3. For participants choosing the **Weatherization Worker Track** to become energy measurers and installers, develop and use curriculum incorporating best practices from existing weatherization courses.
4. Review and adapt existing weatherization curricula to develop a professional, worker-level Energy Measurer/Installer Curriculum with a view to laying the foundation for the establishment of a weatherization training standard.
5. Place trainees who complete the program in training-related jobs.

**The Weatherization Worker Track** fills a critical gap in the continuum of energy efficiency training offerings in the region, which currently focus primarily on energy raters and contractors. Under the stewardship of OAI, inc., the development and implementation of a **Weatherization Energy Measurers/Installer Curriculum** will be facilitated through a partnership of Illinois' top subject matter experts, employers, community partners and local community colleges, which will accredit the program so participants can gain transferable college credits. Once completed, the curriculum will be published online and linked to OAI's website.



**The Environmental Remediation Track** builds on OAI's existing training program that prepares individuals for careers in environmental remediation. Training includes certifications and state licenses in Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER), lead abatement, asbestos removal, OSHA safety training, First Aid/CPR and other related courses. Certifications and licenses received by trainees enable them to work in building cleanup and demolition, brownfields cleanup, and any other environmental remediation work requiring certifications and/or licenses.

Two of Chicago's southernmost wards and seven south suburban villages and cities form the core of the targeted communities for this program. Collectively these communities had an average unemployment rate of 17% BEFORE the current economic crisis and have been identified on the Illinois EPA's Site Remediation Program ("SRP") database as containing at least 125 Brownfields sites. The targeted communities are: Chicago's 9<sup>th</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Wards, Villages and Cities of Riverdale, Harvey, Blue Island, Robbins, Calumet Park, Dolton, and Dixmoor.

**Qualifications:** OAI is uniquely qualified to expeditiously and effectively accomplish these goals. Having operated EPA Brownfields and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)-funded worker health and safety and employment programs in the Chicago region and nationwide for the past 15 years, OAI has a solid track record of OAI graduates securing sustainable employment through our well-established network of environmental remediation employer-partners. For weatherization jobs, OAI has established linkages with the primary disseminators of weatherization contracts in Chicago and Cook County to assure weatherization track trainees of employment.

**Overview of OAI:** OAI, Inc. is a workforce training and development agency founded 32 years ago. OAI's broad goal is to empower and enhance the capacity of underserved individuals and their communities by applying innovative practices and paradigms that contribute significantly to social-environmental equity, equal access to educational and employment opportunities and economic self-sufficiency. With its main office located in Chicago's Loop, OAI operates programs in Chicago; Kansas City, MO; Dallas, TX; New York City; Portland, ME; New Orleans; and throughout the State of Indiana and the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

OAI's programs and services are designed to provide people and communities in poverty with a bridge to rewarding careers and self-sufficiency through community outreach, intake, assessment, job-specific screening/recruitment, training, job placement, and post-job-placement support services and follow-up. Target clients include at-risk youths from environmentally distressed areas, public housing residents, welfare recipients, ex-offenders and dislocated or low-skill/low-wage earners. Many are single heads of household with poor work histories or without high school



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diplomas/GEDs. OAI focuses its education and training on basic academic and life skills, computer and workplace literacy, hazardous materials/environmental remediation, basic construction and green industry jobs.