

Editorial: Marin green job training program showing results

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SELF-EMPLOYED contractors have been a big part of Marin's economy over the past few decades — creating jobs and spending money at other local businesses.

They also have taken a huge hit as the local construction, remodeling and housing industries have contracted along with overall economy.

This is an ideal time for those workers to update their skills and make themselves more marketable. A nearly \$400,000 grant through the state is helping them do just that — and building on the success of a two-year-old green jobs program.

The efforts of the program run by the Marin Employment Connection was validated by the new grant. Marin was one of five counties in the state to receive a total of \$3.4 million for job training in such industries as solar, energy and water efficiency and clean vehicle technology.

The grants are part of a state effort, using federal stimulus and workforce training money, to help workers develop stronger environmental skills.

This is a program that makes sense, especially in Marin, which has a strong commitment to green building practices, starting with the county's General Plan.

Project GREEN — Green Regional Education & Employment in the Northbay — also is showing real results.

Of the 78 workers who have received training, 58 are now employed, compared with just 20 employees when the program started, said Racy Ming, manager of the Marin Employment Connection.

The program was first funded as part of a \$1 million grant for Marin, Sonoma and Napa counties. The new \$400,000 infusion is just for Marin, which is a show of support for what is being accomplished here. Alameda, Kern, Riverside and Sutter also received grants.

The money will allow the program to be expanded to train 100 more workers in all industries. The focus is on the underemployed and unemployed and workers with minimum-wage jobs looking to learn and find better jobs.

Part of the money has helped bankroll a tool lending library through a partnership with the Marin Builders Exchange. Officials say at least one set of tools is checked out each week.

We applaud the efforts of the Marin Employment Connection and everyone involved in this program — especially the contractors and other workers who have the desire to add valuable new tools to their personal set of skills.

When the local economy finally starts to rebound, they will be ready to help the county grow in ways that also benefit the environment.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED

Workers 18 and older who want to seek training can attend an informational meeting from 8:30 to 10 a.m. Sept. 28 in the third-floor Sycamore Room at Marin Employment Connection, 120 N. Redwood Drive in San Rafael. Call 473-3300 to register or visit www.marinemployment.org for more information.