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SECTOR SKILLS ACADEMY GRADUATES 19 PARTICIPANTS: PROGRAM HELPS BUILD LEADERS IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Washington, DC, July 17, 2007 – Nineteen professionals specializing in a type of workforce training known as “sectoral employment development” have completed a series of leadership workshops developed by the Aspen Institute’s Workforce Strategies Initiative (WSI) and Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), two organizations known for their research on workforce issues.

Projects using the sectoral employment development approach attempt to prepare workers by developing a deep understanding of important industries in their region, and partnering with area employers to create training and other services that both support the industries’ competitiveness and connect workers to good-paying jobs. These sector projects focus on jobs in a variety of industries, including health care, information technology, construction and manufacturing.

Participants in the Sector Skills Academy, as the program is known, work in urban, suburban and rural locations across the country in such settings as community-based organizations, community colleges, state and regional government, business associations and labor-management partnerships.

As part of the yearlong Academy, the group met for three, three-day meetings in Queenstown, Md., Chicago, Ill. and Seattle, Wash. There they heard from experienced program directors, visited well-known local training programs, shared their own experiences and engaged in classroom-style learning activities.

“We get many well-qualified candidates from across the country for the Academy each year, and participation – both in the three meetings and the assignments in-between – requires quite a commitment,” said Maureen Conway, director of WSI.

“We’ve designed a rich experience that exposes participants to some of the country’s best thinking about and examples of sectoral employment development, so that when they return to their community they can become a valuable resource to those formulating workforce policies and practices. It’s been exciting to hear past participants describe how they’ve done just that,” she added.

Completing the Academy were:

Rajani Adhikary, Restaurant Opportunities Center, New York, N.Y.
Diana Carpenter, Michigan Dept. of Labor & Economic Growth, Lansing, Mich.
Mary Coonan, Project Hope, Roxbury, Mass.
Camille Cormier, Wider Opportunities for Women, Inc., Washington, D.C.
Erin Currier, Women Work! Washington, D.C.
Drew Douglass, Rubicon Programs, Inc., Berkeley, Calif.
Andrea Fozard, Fair Cities Brent, Wembley, United Kingdom
Eileen Haggerty, Commonwealth Corporation, Boston, Mass.
Matthew Houghton, Shoreline Community College, Shoreline, Wash.
Rebecca Kusner, WIRE-Net, Cleveland, Ohio
Brenda Lopez, Mi Casa Resource Center for Women, Inc., Denver, Colo.
Guy Loudon, Jane Addams Resource Corporation, Chicago, Ill.
Valerie Palamountain, Piedmont Virginia Community College, Charlottesville, Va.
Jerry Petrick, Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council, Vancouver, Wash.
Renee Pietrangelo, American Network of Community Options and Resources, Alexandria, Va.
Elise Scala, Muskie School of Public Services, University of Southern Maine, Portland, Maine
Susan Speetzen, Minnesota Dept. of Employment & Economic Development, St. Paul, Minn.
Jim Torrens, Jewish Vocational Service, San Francisco, Calif.
Kathy Zavala, Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council, St. Cloud, Minn.

WSI and P/PV launched the Academy in 2005, with assistance from the National Network of Sector Partners and funding from the Flint, Mich.-based Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. It was established to train and support the next generation of sectoral employment development leaders. To date, 49 people have participated in the Academy. A new group of 27 participants had its first three-day meeting in late June in Denver, Colo. Additional information about the Academy is available at: <http://www.sectorskillsacademy.org>.

WSI (www.aspenwsi.org), a program of the Aspen Institute in Washington, D.C., identifies and advances strategies that help low-income Americans gain ground in today's labor market. It engages in applied research, facilitates dialogue, shares new ideas and disseminates research findings.

P/PV (www.ppv.org), based in Philadelphia, Pa., is an action-based public policy and program development organization.

The Aspen Institute, founded in 1950, is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering enlightened leadership and open-minded dialogue. Through seminars, policy programs, conferences and leadership development initiatives, the Institute and its international partners seek to promote nonpartisan inquiry and an appreciation for timeless values. The Institute is headquartered in Washington, DC, and has campuses in Aspen, Colorado, and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Its international network includes partner Aspen Institutes in Berlin, Rome, Lyon, Tokyo, New Delhi, and Bucharest, and leadership programs in Africa, Central America and India.

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