



## College of the Desert, county join in 'green jobs' effort

**MICHELLE MITCHELL • THE DESERT SUN • OCTOBER 14, 2009**

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College of the Desert and Riverside County's Workforce Development Division are working together to use federal stimulus dollars to turn unemployed valley residents into skilled, green-energy workers.

The county's EDA Workforce Development Division contracted with the school to provide job skills training, using about \$1.15 million in stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

College of the Desert, which recently received an \$800,000 grant for California's Clean Energy Workforce Training Program, is using about half of the contracted dollars to provide courses in wind turbine technician training, said Larry McLaughlin, director of COD's Advanced Transportation Technology and Energy Center.

The rest will fund a variety of training programs such as job skills or refresher courses.

“These classes are funded entirely through this project” and will be free to eligible workforce development participants, McLaughlin said.

“They tend to be short term, intensive training.”

Eligibility requirements for laid-off workers enrolled with EDA include passing a skills test, holding a GED or high school diploma, and ability to handle the demands of the job. There could be no fear of heights for the wind turbine position, for example, said Wendy Frederick, the eastern regional manager for the Riverside County EDA Workforce Development Division.

“We want people who really want to do this as a career,” Frederick said.

The EDA is going to continue to work with the valley's economic base of tourism and retail, but is focusing on emerging renewable energy programs and "recession-proof" fields such as health care to diversify, Frederick said.

Green-energy programs are expected to grow in Riverside County, and College of the Desert wants local workers to be ready, McLaughlin said.

"We don't want companies to bring people in when we have such a high unemployment rate," he said. "We want people who are desperately in need of employment to have this opportunity."