



Commissioner Brad Avakian Bureau of Labor and Industries

Press Release

For Immediate Distribution

February 14, 2011

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BOLI Awards First Contracts to Reduce Barriers to Employment

Program will help keep Oregonians on the job, recruit and retain women and people of color

PORTLAND – Oregon’s Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) announced today that Cooper Zietz Engineers, working with four subcontractors, and Portland Youthbuilders have each been awarded a portion of the \$1 million available through the BOLI-ODOT Heavy Highway Workforce Development Program. The program will connect current and aspiring Oregon workers, especially women and people of color, with services that support employment in the highway construction trades.

“This is priority one for BOLI: helping Oregonians to get and keep high-skill, living-wage jobs,” said State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian, head of BOLI. “We are eager to see the impact of these services on recruitment and retention of women and people of color, helping them to overcome traditional barriers to good jobs and career pathways in construction.”

“It is in the best interests of every Oregonian that we build a qualified workforce that can successfully compete in the state marketplace,” said Oregon Department of Transportation Director Matt Garrett. “The BOLI-ODOT Program will help us do that by removing barriers for people who want to enter the highway construction industry.”

Cooper Zietz will work with Lois D Cohen Associates, Oregon Tradeswomen, NECA-IBEW Electrical Training Center and Pacific Northwest Carpenters Institute to provide information to students interested in the highway construction trades, prepare individuals to enter an apprenticeship program, and support apprentices who are starting their careers. The Cooper Zietz contract includes mentoring, travel assistance and child care subsidies that will help Oregonians to prepare for, accept, and maintain employment in construction trades statewide. Cooper Zietz and its subcontractors will receive about \$633,200 for services in all five ODOT regions as part of the BOLI-ODOT Program.

The Portland Youthbuilders contract includes over \$69,000 in funding focused on youth pre-apprenticeship services in the Portland/METRO region, including orientations to the trades, career counseling, training in foundational skills and apprenticeship preparation. Portland Youthbuilders is a state-approved pre-apprenticeship program and an AmeriCorps affiliate, qualifying participants to apply for educational assistance to prepare for careers in the trades.

“The proposals that we are funding will attack recruitment and retention issues from several directions,” Avakian said. “This strategy will bring a range of services to communities around the state, directly enhancing the employment opportunities of Oregonians.”

BOLI will announce more contract awards soon, including additional services reaching regions outside the Portland Metro Area.

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The mission of the Bureau of Labor and Industries is to protect employment rights, advance employment opportunities, and protect access to housing and public accommodations free from discrimination.