

# Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board

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## Recommendation #268 Continuation of SRS Superfund Job Training

### **Background:**

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded a contract in 2008 for the Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) to fund a job-training initiative (JTI; [1]). The JTI tasks were to recruit, evaluate, teach, train, and fully prepare underserved citizens for full-time employment at the Savannah River Site (SRS). As used by EPA, “underserved” connotes disadvantaged, disabled, or “not work ready” [2]. As a result of this initiative, 16 formerly underserved citizens have secured full-time employment at SRS. Three (3) others will be hired as full-time employees, pending receipt of their High School General Equivalence Diplomas (GED).

The Superfund JTI Management Team was staffed by personnel from EPA, the local Imani Group [3], the Department of Energy (DOE), Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) and Parsons [4]. Work began in December with an initial Management Team meeting, the recruitment of underserved citizens from January-May 2009, training from May-June 2009, on – site interviews July 2009, job placement July-August 2009, and follow-up activities from August 2009-August 2010.

Volunteers assisted the Superfund JTI management’s team. They were the Security Federal Bank; Dry Forks Farm; Aiken Schools; AST Enterprises; Friendship Baptist Church; and the Imani Group.

The Program is a five-step process. First, it includes stakeholder meetings to meet potential candidates. Over 456 local underserved citizens participated (over 300 from Allendale; 45 from Aiken; 12 from Augusta; 38 from Barnwell; and 61 from Graniteville). Second, during orientation, candidates learned about the requirements for the positions offered and the expectations from their new employers should they be hired. Third, candidates brought the documents and identifications that were required of them for processing. Fourth, candidates were provided training in teambuilding; leadership skills; and role playing skills. They also attended classes in mathematics, writing essays, physical fitness, and personal interviewing. Lastly, there is a one year follow on job evaluations.

After screening 89 candidates were evaluated for their potential as employees by SRS Superfund JTI partners. Evaluators discussed each candidate’s qualifications and suitability for the new employment. Factors affecting their selection were commitment, ability, experience, and interests. The end result was that 21 candidates were chosen to participate in the SRS-Superfund JTI formal classes and job interviews; subsequently, one candidate was unsuccessful during the interview phase of the program [2], leaving:

- 9 from Aiken
- 4 from Allendale
- 1 from Augusta
- 2 from Barnwell

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- 2 from Blackville; and
- 2 from Hampton

The 20 candidates remaining were diverse in age with the following ranges: 7 in the 18-24 years range; 7 in the 25-30 years range; 4 in the 31-45 years ranges and 2 in the over 46 years. They also add to the demographic diversity of the SRS workforce across gender, residence, work experience, and education lines.

They then participated in a two week life-skills training with a course titled “The World of Work” and another on “Environmental Justice”. They learned how to write a resume; performed a community service project; conducted mock employment interviews; and how to gain cultural competency.

New coursework on technical training subsequently took three weeks. It included training in hazardous waste operations and emergency responses (HAZWOPER); cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)/First Aid; and mathematics, computers, and valving. Then the candidates were interviewed by personnel from Parsons, and attendance at the SRS Job Fair.

After completing all of these steps to enhance their employability, job placement activities took place. Interviews of the prospects were held by SRNS; they were considered a success. Sixteen of those who were chosen started work on August 17, 2009 as operators and material handlers. Three more were given tentative job offers and they are set to be hired after they successfully complete their high-school GEDs. One more candidate of the 20 failed to meet all standards reducing the total to 19 candidates fully prepared for employment at SRS [2].

Follow-up is planned via communications with the JTI graduates and their employers over the course of one year. Any changes in their employment will be recorded. Follow-up will also be conducted by the primary community partner (the Imani Group).

### **Comments:**

The SRS CAB was very pleased with the results presented at the September 2009 Board meeting on the SRS Superfund JTI.

The CAB understands that possibly an additional 50 underserved citizens from the local area have been pre-cleared for work at SRS. The CAB also understands that EPA hopes to fund its JTI project again in the January-March 2010 timeframe [5].

Representative J.E. Clyburn, D-SC, recently wrote [6] that the \$1.6B SRS stimulus bill was designed to “preserve and create jobs and promote economic recovery and to assist those most impacted by the recession.” He added that this included the job fairs conducted by SRS and its planned 37 Road-to-Recovery Tours scheduled with van trips to workforce employment centers in the communities hard hit by the current recession.

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The SRS CAB is also very pleased by the many services that were donated to help the Superfund JTI process succeed. These services were offset for employers by the “long-look” over time that prospective employers were given to consider the worth of their potential hires. Ultimately, the overall success of this program is a win for the underserved communities in the two-State region and a win for SRS and the JTI partners by the good will that they engendered with this program.

The SRS CAB would like to see more of the contractors at SRS supporting this initiative (e.g., Savannah River Remediation [SRR], Shaw, etc.).

### **Recommendations:**

The SRS CAB advises DOE to:

1. Continue the work initiated by the Superfund JTI team by supporting EPA as it funds additional job training for a new group of underserved citizens taken from the areas hard-hit by the recession (these could be part of the group already pre-cleared to be considered for a job at SRS).
2. Fund a similar program modeled after the EPA program; alternatively, work with EPA to expand the EPA program and fund it jointly by EPA and DOE.
3. Take steps to increase participation in this initiative site-wide among SRS contractors.
4. Take steps to assure workers hired under this program will receive consideration for long-term employment after the Stimulus funds terminate at the end of FY 2011.
5. Report back to CAB on status by June 2010.

### **References:**

- [1] Savannah River Site Superfund Job Training Initiative (2009, September 29), presented to the SRS Citizens Advisory Board in Charleston, SC, by Tiffany Reed, E<sup>2</sup> Inc., and Anna Cornelious, Techlaw.
- [2] Anna Cornelious, EPA Contractor (2009; 10/30/09 & 11/12/09), two telephone calls.
- [3] [www.imanigroup.org/meetthevisionary.htm](http://www.imanigroup.org/meetthevisionary.htm)
- [4] Parsons is building the Salt Waste Processing Facility at SRS; see <http://www.parsons.com/projects/Pages/salt-waste-processing-facility.aspx>
- [5] Rob Pope, EPA Remedial Project Manager for SRS, EPA Region 4 (2009, 10/29/09), telephone call.
- [6] Clyburn, J.E., Rep (2009, 10/13), Guest Columnist, “If job creation is wrong, I don’t want to be right”, retrieved 10/20/09 from aikenstandard.com.

## **Agency Responses**

[Department of Energy - SR](#)