

Contacts: Philip Cynar
Allegheny Conference on Community Development
(412) 281-4783, ext. 4573; E-mail: pcynar@alleghenyconference.org

Anna Marie Palatella
Westmoreland County Community College
(724) 925-4091; E-mail: palatellaa@wccc.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A potential national workforce model for 21st-century workforce training, Marcellus ShaleNET is a pathway to well-paying, plentiful natural gas industry jobs

A \$4.964M U.S. Department of Labor grant awarded to Westmoreland County Community College will fund recruitment, training and job placement across a multi-state Marcellus Shale footprint

PITTSBURGH [July 21, 2010] – For the first time since the Marcellus Shale natural gas industry began to boom, workers in the multi-state Marcellus Shale footprint will have the opportunity to receive standardized training for employment around this burgeoning energy resource. Marcellus ShaleNET, a comprehensive recruitment, training, placement and retention strategy for jobs in the Marcellus Shale gas industry is launching with a \$4.964M community-based job training grant from the United States Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration (ETA). The grant is the largest awarded nationally in this federal funding opportunity.

A consortium of community colleges, led by Westmoreland County Community College (WCCC) and the Pennsylvania College of Technology, is the recipient of this federal grant and will be coordinating the training of interested and qualified workers across Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia.

Working with the 10-county Pittsburgh region's private sector leadership organization, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, and the Pennsylvania Independent Oil and Gas Association (PIOGA), the grant partners* have devised a comprehensive network that will allow recruitment and training to build scale quickly, while ensuring that individual regions can respond flexibly to rapidly changing workforce needs.

Initial focus on training to fill high-demand jobs

The initial focus will be on linking industry, workforce investment boards and community college and other training providers to recruit, train and place low income and dislocated workers, as well as veterans, in six high-demand occupations: derrick, rotary drill, and service unit operators; roustabouts; welding and brazing operators; and truck drivers.

“Super giant” gas field offers opportunity to earn ... build strong career pathways

Production of natural gas from the Marcellus Shale formation is a rapidly emerging industry in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. Drilling in this “super giant” gas field can yield decades of gas production near the major population centers of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, offering workers an exceptional opportunity to earn family-sustaining wages and to build strong career pathways.

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“The greater Pittsburgh region holds a key for releasing America from foreign oil dependence with the Marcellus Shale natural gas play. In addition to being one of the cleaner energy sources that’s important to a balanced, environmentally sound energy portfolio, this natural gas resource is equally important as a job creator in our region,” said U.S. Congressman Tim Murphy, co-chair with Congressman Dan Boren (D-OK) of the bipartisan Congressional Natural Gas Caucus.

A well formed, experienced workforce is in demand

The drilling of a single well requires 400 people working in nearly 150 occupations. Because production of gas in the Marcellus Shale region is a new industry in the Mid-Atlantic, a well formed and experienced workforce capable of filling the available positions is lacking, even though many of the positions do not require a two- or four-year college degree. Despite high unemployment rates, and therefore available labor, much of the current gas drilling workforce is not local.

“We believe that the industry will be hiring thousands of individuals in the foreseeable future to support responsible natural gas extraction. At EQT, we unquestionably want to fill those jobs with individuals who call Appalachia home,” said EQT Corporation President and CEO David Porges. “Through the Marcellus ShaleNET program, the training and public workforce systems are going to help develop a large pool of residents uniformly trained to industry standards, but also more attuned to our region’s insistence that these activities are conducted in a manner consistent with our community’s strict environmental and safety standards. These individuals will be our first choices for high priority, well-paying jobs in an energy economy that’s bound to create prosperity for the region and its residents.”

Community colleges and other community partner at the core of developing, imparting job training

To make the largest workforce impact, Marcellus ShaleNET’s geographic scope includes Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. This comprises 69 counties and 16 workforce investment boards. (New York will be a participant in Marcellus ShaleNET if and when drilling begins in the state.) The consortium includes five community colleges throughout the footprint: Westmoreland County Community College (Pennsylvania), Pennsylvania College of Technology, West Virginia Northern Community College, Eastern Gateway Community College (Ohio), and Broome Community College (New York). Westmoreland County Community College in the west and the Pennsylvania College of Technology in the east will act as hubs to disseminate information and ensure uniform actions. “We are pleased to work with our community college partners, other training providers, the workforce investment boards (and their career counseling and placement offices) and industry to develop and implement this job training program which will meet both industry’s needs and those currently seeking family-sustaining jobs,” said WCCC President Daniel J. Obara.

Marcellus ShaleNET: a noteworthy model for meeting workforce demands over a broad geography

The ShaleNET hubs will identify and convene relevant and interested training partners in the Marcellus Shale footprint and develop industry-approved criteria for training and certification programs that will ensure the local workforce’s entry into industry vacancies. The public workforce placement offices will work with industry and job seekers to match candidates with vacancies through a comprehensive Talent Matching System. This system will present job seekers with a realistic overview of the available positions and an understanding of the work. It will screen interested candidates for vacancy matches, and if no matches are found, identify training programs and facilities through which they can receive the training needed to enter the gas industry workforce.

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“Working with the PA CareerLinks across the state, the Talent Matching System is an innovative model as it creates a positive loop and, when combined with the close collaboration with the training community and industry, provides a potentially highly effective way to meet workforce demands over a broad geography,” said Dr. Robert G. Garraty, deputy secretary workforce development, PA Department of Labor & Industry.

“Pennsylvania’s future depends on preparing ourselves for opportunities and challenges and ensuring that our citizens are well qualified and technically trained for jobs in our industries. Through a unique partnership between industry, community colleges and the workforce system the Marcellus ShaleNET program will ready a workforce for a future in which energy – traditional and alternative – is a key driver of the economy,” said U.S. Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

For more information about Marcellus ShaleNET, contact James H. Hayes, director, workforce and economic development, at Westmoreland County Community College. Phone: 800-262-2103, ext. 4090 or e-mail, hayesj@wccc.edu. Web: www.wccc.edu.

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* In addition to the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and PIOGA, grant partners include: Westmoreland County Community College, Pennsylvania College of Technology, Broome Community College, Eastern Gateway Community College, West Virginia Northern Community College, Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board, Belmont CDJFS-Ohio WIA Area 16, Mahoning/Columbiana Training Association Ohio WIA Area 17, Trumbull CDJFS – Ohio WIA Area 18, West Virginia NPWIB, Inc. – Region V, West Virginia Region VI WIB.