

PROPOSAL TO THE CLEAR FUND – CAUSE 5 – ROUND 1

From St Nicholas NPC/Williamsburg Works - 51-0192170

I. Description of St Nicholas NPC/Williamsburg Works and our Programs

St Nicks is a 32-year-old community development corporation working to keep North Brooklyn sustainable for people of modest means. During its first 20 years St Nicks restored the physical infrastructure, chiefly housing. It organized and supported the business community, especially the sizeable industrial sector, engaging private investment and stabilizing the neighborhood. St. Nicks then turned to second-wave strategies, launching health care, youth development and education, and workforce development efforts.

St. Nicks' \$42 million annual operating budget with over 1,300 employees is divided into five divisions: Housing, Economic Development, Workforce Development, Youth and Education and Health Care. These core areas implement our high-performing, success-driven strategy to meet our mission: create community sustainability for North Brooklyn's low- and moderate income people.

St. Nicks annually provides a wide range of services and activities to more than 8,800 people. St. Nicks manages 1,000+ units of affordable family housing for formerly homeless, developmentally disabled and people suffering from HIV/AIDS. Each day over 800 elderly people receive home health care from St. Nicks and more than 3,000 children annually participate in St. Nicks' literacy after school and summer camp programs. St. Nicks provides entrepreneurial training and assistance through the Brooklyn Business Center while also administering the Brooklyn Navy Yard Empire Zone and two Industrial Business Zones.

St. Nicks' workforce development efforts, called Williamsburg Works (WW), grew out of our economic development work and our extensive relationships with local business. During the past 15 years St. Nicks has developed a comprehensive workforce development operation providing targeted services to residents with multiple barriers to employment including: public assistance dependency; low educational attainment; poor work history; limited English proficiency; cultural isolation; ex-offender status; and single parenthood. Williamsburg Works' recent growth and on-going excellent results, while working in a challenging operating and funding environment, demonstrate the advantages of community-anchored and employer-linked employment and training services.¹

Williamsburg Works' philosophical framework has a "work-first" approach that seeks rapid attachment to the workplace. We succeed in that goal because we have a comprehensive range of services tailored to customers' needs and preferences. All services begin with thorough assessment. Customers receive strong case management and supportive services during all phases of their journey as they make the transition to work and beyond, including post job placement. Customers not only leave with a job but they have also gained the skills necessary to achieve economic self-sufficiency through St. Nicks' financial literacy and wealth building trainings.

St. Nicks customers can take one or more tracks in pursuit of jobs and economic self-sufficiency: *First Job*, which provides job readiness training and job placement; *Skills Training*, which provides credentialed, industry-linked technical training in environmental remediation, commercial truck driving and culinary skills; and *Career Path*, which offers adult education—ESL, GED and Basic Education—blended with employment services. All tracks are supported by *Wealth Building* and other specialized services to ensure job retention, wage growth and true economic self-sufficiency. We recently launched our *Fatherhood Initiative* which provides a unique set of services to non-custodial fathers—combining employment services, legal and court assistance, and parenting support—to lead these fathers and their children to sustainable economic self-sufficiency. These are described more fully, with results noted, in an attachment.

Our featured program is our Skills Training Division. For customers with some work experience and demonstrated aptitude, we offer *Skills Training* including: Environmental Remediation Training (ERT);

¹ St Nicks/Williamsburg Works was highlighted in a recent PPV publication (included).

Commercial Truck Driver (CDL), and; Culinary Skills Training (CS). We expect to introduce additional skills programs in 2008. Wage growth, workplace success skills, industry-recognized certification, and strong employer involvement are key elements of Williamsburg Works' skills training. In 2006 we trained 116 customers in 5 cycles of ERT, placing 63 at an average wage of \$14.19 and plan to offer 5-6 cycles in 2007. We trained and placed 11 commercial truck drivers in one pilot cycle at an average wage of \$12.78 and expect to expand to 2 cycles in 2007. And we piloted a Culinary Skills class, training 14 and placing 11 at an average wage of \$10.46. We will expand this program to include local restaurant internships and will operate 2 cycles in 2007.

In this proposal, we will focus primarily on our Environmental Remediation Technician training program, which has been operational since 2000 and has well documented results. We will discuss in less detail and emphasis, our other two skills trainings, Commercial Truck Driver, offered during 2000-2003 and 2006 to present, and Culinary Skills, offered since 2006.

II. Population Served by our Skills Training Programs

Our Skills Training programs are open to all adults with few requirements or restrictions. In fact, we have found this program to serve a high number of individuals who have been turned away from other programs and are less likely to be accepted elsewhere including: men, ex-offenders, those with limited English proficiency, and others with multiple barriers.

We recruit widely throughout the neighborhood, working with our partner agencies and CBOs and other St. Nicks operating divisions. Each potential participant is fully oriented to all services at Williamsburg Works and specifically to our Skills Training programs. Our orientation clearly describes the nature of the training and the realities of the industry (i.e., physical labor, travel, dangers posed, working conditions, etc.) If (s)he does not self-select out and is interested, a careful assessment is conducted to ensure that the candidate meets the basic requirements of that skill; and that (s)he is able to fully participate in training and is likely to be successful in training and on the job. Specifically, we require that ERT candidates have a 9th grade math and reading level (as assessed by TABE testing). CDL candidates need a 7th grade reading level; a clean (automobile) driver's license; and ability to pass an employer's drug test. Culinary Skills has no absolute requirements. In meeting with a case manager, barriers to program participation are determined and a plan is put into place to address and minimize these barriers. We ask participants to sign a Participation Agreement that clearly lays out program expectations and their responsibilities. In effect, we have found that if candidates meet our minimal program requirements, fully understand the program and agree to participate, they are enrolled.

St. Nicks has maintained detailed and careful demographics for each of our enrollees since 2006. (Prior to that time, client demographic data was collected and used individually in their case management services but was not entered in our database nor aggregated. In our ERT program, 49 % have dependents. These participants also face other barriers: 9% have substance abuse issues, 30% cite housing issues and 43% are ex-offenders. In our CDL program 100 % of participants have dependents and 25 % are ex-offenders. In our Culinary Skills program we focus on a limited English proficient population. In our first cycle, all candidates were limited English; our second cycle was geared to a bi-lingual (English/Spanish) population.

We also serve local and regional employers. St. Nicks' three skills trainings tracks grew due to expressed demand from local employers; each program was designed with employer input; each skill training track continues to include employers in the training (guest speakers, mock interviews, field trips) and incorporates their input and needs in all planning.

III. Program Activities and Budget for our Skills Training Programs

Our Skills Training division includes three distinct training programs. As noted earlier, we will focus on our largest, longest tenured and most successful Environmental Remediation Technician (ERT) training program but will also highlight our Commercial Truck Driver and Culinary Skills trainings. Each of these

trainings result in employer-recognized credentials and lead to employment in growing, high-demand, high-wage industries.

In St. Nicks' 20+ years of experience in workforce development, we have found that no single approach can meet the needs of all low-skilled, un- and under-employed adults. A variety of tools is needed to help each individual achieve their potential, increase their personal and professional skills, get a job, keep that job and progress along a career path. And participants must be matched to the appropriate program according to their interests, needs and circumstances. We provide a wide variety of programs and conduct a proper assessment to ensure a good customer-program match.

We have had remarkable success in providing skills training leading to careers with high initial wages and salary growth potential. Each training has several key elements that ensure high placement and retention rates including employer involvement, achievement of industry-recognized credentials, development of clear workplace expectations and placement (and replacement) through a proven employer network. We have found that skills training, especially in these three fields—ERT, CDL and CS—has been appropriate for a limited English, ex-offender, and/or male population that often does not find success in other “First Job” type job placement programs.

The *Environmental Remediation Technician* training is a 390-hour, 12-week course in which participants are trained to work in the environmental remediation or construction industry and are certified in the following areas: Emergency Response (HAZWOPER); Construction Health and Safety; Lead Abatement; Asbestos Handling; Asbestos Sampling; Indoor Air/Mold Assessment and Remediation; OSHA Site Disaster, Confined Spaces, Soil Vapor Intrusion, Professional CPR/First Aid and Blood-Borne Pathogens. All of these are required certifications that are highly valued by employers. The course begins with a 13-day introduction to environmental studies, including math, chemistry, environmental procedures and basic industry vocabulary. This serves both to lay a solid foundation for further technical training as well as to help participants who may not have the interest or aptitude to be successful in class or in the profession to self-select out. The curriculum also includes job readiness and job search support through instructor-led exercises in employability, job search and interview techniques; regular contact with employers during field trips, weekly guest speakers and employer interviews; and support during training from case managers and job developers. Williamsburg Works conducts all non-certificate training; Ando International² is contracted to offer the technical training.

This training leads to entry-level, skilled, well-paid jobs at leading environmental remediation firms such as Clean Harbors, Miller Environmental, and Primary Resources. Graduates work on clean-ups that range from ‘Ground Zero’ to oil spills on the Jersey Shore to dredging jobs for Con Edison. The average starting salary for our graduates is over \$14/hour. Starting salaries generally range between \$12 and \$25/hour and quickly rise to \$16 to \$35/hour and higher.

Each of these certifications has a distinct career opportunity that can be extremely lucrative. Asbestos workers generally earn \$17-\$20/hour, Asbestos Supervisors \$25-\$30/hour, Lead workers \$24-\$30/hour, and Confined Space Entry Workers vary by job but the base is \$14/hour. Those working in mold remediation make \$30-\$35/hour, and the base is as high as \$70/hour for Anthrax investigation and remediation. In addition, there are other entry-level environmental jobs such as Hazardous Waste Pickers at waste management companies, Hazardous Waste Technicians in hospitals, as well as jobs at scaffolding firms and heating and refrigeration installation companies.

² Ando International is a for-profit environmental training vendor. Ando is approved to teach more than twenty five courses accredited by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and New York, New Jersey and Connecticut regulatory agencies. Further, Ando is approved by the New York State Department of Education and Department of Labor to service its clients in several apprenticeship programs. Ando has facilities in New York and New Jersey. Its main office is located in Brooklyn, NY. Courses are offered in English, Spanish, Polish, Russian, Slovak and Serbo-Croatian languages. Our training materials and their translations represent the highest standard currently available.

There is also considerable opportunity for career progression. A Field Technician earning \$12/hour cleaning oil from coastlines or removing contaminated soil from a Brownfield can expect to be promoted to a Field Technician II within 18 months, where they will supervise a crew of 8 to 10 and the salary is doubled. The broad training provided to our graduates makes them very attractive to a variety of firms and they have easily switched employers to maximize job and salary growth. Further, when our graduates are hired for contractual jobs they are frequently given a supervisory designation, and more money, because of their certifications. Our Union Affiliate status with Local 78 (Mason); Local 201 (Hazardous Materials Removal) and Local 12a (Asbestos) allows us direct placement into these unions for our graduates, which leads to better jobs and long-term opportunity. We are developing a Skills Upgrade training for our graduates to help them access Project Monitor position, entailing a promotion, salary increase and an improvement in working conditions.

Each cycle enrolls up to 30 participants.

The *Commercial Truck Driving (CDL)* training is a 120-hour, 7-week course in which participants are prepared for the Department of Motor Vehicle Class B truck driving test and achieve the Class BP license credential. This credential is recognized and required throughout the industry and guarantees high wages. Students engage in all aspects of professional driving including open road and city driving, intersections, adverse weather driving, general rules of the road, vehicle inspection, backing up skills, standard transmission training, use of air breaks as well as preparation for the DMV road test. Participants train for the DOT's Hazardous Materials, Tanker, Passenger, and Air Breaks endorsements, allowing them to drive an even wider variety of medium trucks. Participants complete the 5-hour Smith System for Defensive Driving.

The course begins with two weeks of job readiness training and one-week teacher-assisted Learner's Permit self-study conducted by National Vocational Driving School.³ Upon passing a written test at DMV and securing their Learner's Permit, participants attend four weeks of "in-the-truck/bus" driving training which includes actual driving time with an instructor as well as observation time in the truck while other participants drive. The DMV driving test is scheduled during the 7th week; and participants conduct job search during that time as well.

The "in-the-truck/bus" training is conducted on the campus of our training provider, the National Vocational Driving School. Road training is conducted in city coach buses, 53-passenger capacity with a GVWR of 33,000 pounds and Class B manual transmission truck with a GVW of 26,500 pounds. Both have air breaks.

This training leads to well-paid jobs in a wide variety of industries. Graduates are trained and credentialed to drive a variety of vehicles including general delivery trucks, dump trucks, cement mixers, school buses and tour/coach buses, or virtually all trucks except tractor-trailers, which require a Class A license. As such, graduates work as truck drivers, delivery persons, bus drivers, ambulette drivers, school bus drivers in industries as diverse as bus companies, distributors, manufacturers, transportation, construction and delivery. The minimum starting salary is about \$10/hour but often as high as \$14/hour and can grow to \$20/hour with experience.

Each cycle enrolls up to 15 participants.

In June 2006, we piloted a Food Service Worker training for a limited English (Spanish-speaking) population. The Food Service training is an 11-week, part-time, 150-hour training course in which participants achieve two industry recognized credentials: the NYC Food Handler Certification from the NYC Department of Health; and the ServSafe Food Handler Certification from the National Restaurant

³ National Vocational Driving School is a 15-year-old for profit training vendor. They train CDL drivers in all classes. They are currently contracted by the US Postal Service to train their New York Tractor Trailer drivers.

Association. Trained within an institutional commercial kitchen in Williamsburg, students have 90 hours of hands-on Food Handling instruction with ESL support conducted by Kingsborough Community College. Working with a professional chef, students learn many aspects of cooking, kitchen equipment and food handling and are exposed to "kitchen culture". A 30-hour Sanitation curriculum prepares students for the safety certification. The course begins with a 20-hour job readiness training and concludes with 10 hours of job search assistance conducted by WW. We are currently conducting our third cycle.

Food service jobs are plentiful, with placements in restaurants, hotels, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, corporations, and prisons, as well as in food manufacturing and entrepreneurship. Starting salaries range from \$8 to \$12/hour.

Our partners are Southside Mission, which assists in recruiting, Nuestros Ninos, which provides the commercial kitchen, and Kingsborough Community College, which conducts the technical training.

Each cycle enrolls up to 15 participants.

We are also exploring other potential skills including: Emergency Medical Technician; Pharmacy Aide; and Microsoft Office Suite certification.

Attached is our 2007 budget, both overall for the Williamsburg Works employment operation and for the featured Skills Training division. This document notes each budget line for the overall organization; how much is funded by the Skills Training division (in the case of shared staff and overall organization expenses (i.e., rent), and our funding sources for the Skills Training division.

Our program is funded by government contracts, private funding and earned income from participants' Individual Training Grants. It is also supported by other elements of the Williamsburg Works program and infrastructure including the reception, data management and post placement services funded by other programs; and the outreach, intake, assessment and case management expertise of our First Jobs staff who are funded by other contracts.

IV. Evaluation of our Skills Training Programs

Williamsburg Works is led by Ron Lee, an employment professional with seven years experience at St Nicks/Williamsburg Works. He is responsible for monitoring our employment programs on a day-to-day basis and ensuring results for our funders and our participants. He reports to Associate Executive Director Jose Leon and also meets regularly with St. Nicks' executive director, Michael Rochford. Further, St. Nicks' Board of Directors is kept fully informed of program activities and a board subcommittee conducts oversight of the Workforce Development division.

Mr. Lee meets regularly with program staff including Michelle Matthews, the WW Deputy Director and Manager of the Skills Training programs, to discuss program issues, achievement of outcomes and goals, and individual student issues. These conversations identify successful activities that should be duplicated or expanded, identify problems and develop programmatic changes to address these problems.

Upon enrollment, all participants complete applications and meet with intake and counseling staff to gather demographic information, education and employment goals and make a participant needs assessment. This information is documented and maintained in a paper file created for each student. Further, this information is entered into our Williamsburg Works customer database.⁴ All further contact with and outcomes for the participant continue to be documented in the paper file and the database.

⁴ Skills Training data is fully computerized. We are currently updating and expanding our Access-based customer database to include demographic, assessment, customer goals, and program outcomes for all of

We are able to track the immediate and longer-term impact of our programs on our participants for two main reasons. First, we carefully document and review participant outcomes, programs results and progress toward program goals as required by each of our funding sources. We follow clients for two years, tracking their job retention, job growth and salary increases. With regular follow up (bi-weekly for three months, quarterly thereafter) we know of each participants' successes and struggles and are able to help them with their needs.

Second, we offer extensive and long-term post-placement services to our program graduates, both to improve job retention, as well as to maximize the financial impact of working for each of our clients. Through our Wealth Building post placements supports, also known as EarnBenefits, we build on the financial literacy addressed during the soft skills training, provide transitional benefits and help clients to maximize the financial impact of having a job. Specifically, we offer transitional benefits to working clients including transitional childcare, food stamps and transportation assistance. We help our graduates access free checking accounts, sign up for Direct Deposit, enroll in a matched IDA savings plan, access additional classes on financial literacy, first time home purchase and the like. And we make sure that graduates maximize their income by submitting tax returns to increase their refunds and take full advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit. For the 2006 tax year, we prepared 835 tax returns, triggering over \$1.4 million in tax refunds including \$635,000 in EITC.

Attached please find three internally generated reports for the three primary funders of our ERT training: the US Environmental Protection Agency; the Robin Hood Foundation and the Independence Community Foundation.

V. Other Support for our Skills Training Programs

St. Nicks is able to leverage its talented, experienced leadership into a competitive advantage inside and outside the organization. St. Nicks' board and senior managers form a leadership team with unique range and depth which contributes to the success of the Skills Training Programs and all other activities. As a result of its programmatic and personal diversity, the team is in close contact with critical segments of the community, including the local commercial and industrial base, and is able to foresee and serve emerging needs.

The race, gender, religious, and ethnic diversity found within St. Nicks' leadership not only enhances its service levels and customer satisfaction, but it also strengthens the organization's long-term competitiveness, enhances its reputation, and helps attract and retain talented people. St. Nicks' leadership offers very positive and diverse role models for customers and staff. Improved innovation and creativity among staff also result from this diversity, along with increased staff motivation and efficiency.

The team-based approach St. Nicks takes with critical strategic planning decisions is a major strength of our leadership. Board and staff have made deep, long-term commitments to the community and the organization and approach their work with collegial professionalism that feeds the team-focused methodology. Creative dissent is part of the approach, which also strengthen decision making.

VI. Confidentiality

We too encourage open information and discussion in our field about successes and failures; program costs; and best practices. We participate in a number of consortium and sub-contracting arrangements (Seedco; STRIVE) in which practitioners share operating information in order to learn from each other, and improve program design; and are committed to open dialogue. As such, we are open to sharing of any information provided in this document, with the single exception of the specific salary of individual positions. We prefer that this data be aggregated or summarized in a way that does not allow readers to easily identify a

our employment and education programs. We expect the new database to be fully operational by October 2007.

particular staff member and determine their actual salary. In addition, some of the reports provided to you may include participant names, PA case numbers and/or social security numbers. If so, these should not be made public.

ATTACHMENTS

2007 St. Nicks Skills Training Budget

Public/Private Ventures Report—*Locally Grown, Key Strategies for Expanding Workforce Services* (see Pages 11-15)

Robin Hood Report

ICF Report

ICF-LISC Report

EPA Report

WW Overview of Outcomes