



For Immediate Release:

November 17, 2011

Press Contact:

Margret Graham

(206) 914-5904

mgraham@seakingwdc.org

WDC-led youth employment program wins Governor's award

SEATTLE—The WDC-led [SODO Inc. program](#), which provides young people with skills training and hands-on work experience in the industrial trades, has won a 2011 Governor's Best Practice Award for Workforce and Economic Development.

Announced yesterday by Governor Chris Gregoire, the awards recognize projects that benefit both workers and the economy. SODO Inc., a federally funded collaboration between the [Workforce Development Council](#), [King County Work Training/YouthSource](#), [South Seattle Community College](#), and the [Manufacturing Industrial Council of Seattle](#), allows low-income young adults to gain a foothold in the trades.

"We are so proud of this partnership between the private sector, the college, and the workforce system and the way it has gained employer support," said Marléna Sessions, CEO of the Workforce Development Council.

"Employers need these skills for their businesses to thrive, and for the youth, this is a career and education path with real opportunities," she added. "For many of these young people, SODO Inc. is the first time they have been given a chance to pursue it."

Almost 250 young people have participated in the program since it began in 2009. The students, 18 to 24 years old, come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Many lack a high-school diploma, speak English as a second language or are ex-offenders.

Program components include:

- **Four weeks of hands-on classes** at the trades-focused Georgetown campus of South Seattle Community College. The youth learn a wide variety of skills—including tool use, safety, first aid, and basic work habits and attitudes—while learning about apprenticeships as a path to successful careers in the trades.
- **Paid four-week internship with a private employer** to apply learning on the job. More than 50 employers have hosted interns (who are paid by the program). Most are small companies in the fields of manufacturing, marine, and general trades.
- **Individual support** through a case manager who provides one-on-one mentoring and career/education planning, as well as assistance with program-related expenses such as boots, tools and transportation.

Begun in 2009 as part of the one-time summer-jobs program funded by the Recovery Act, SODO Inc. is now part of the WDC's GreenLight Project, a federally funded, community-wide training program.

For more information on SODO Inc., visit www.seakingwdc.org/youth/SoDoInc.html.

The [Governor's Best Practices Awards for Workforce and Economic Development](#) are a collaboration among the Office of the Governor, the Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board and the Department of Commerce. They recognize programs and projects that demonstrate excellence and achievement in both workforce development and economic development.

###

100% of the SODO Inc. project, or \$824,030, is funded by a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Labor through the Workforce Development Council of Seattle King County. The WDC and the SODO Inc. partners are Equal Opportunity Employers and Providers of Employment and Training Programs. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. WTRS 800.833-6384 or 711.

The **Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County** (www.seakingwdc.org) is a nonprofit workforce "think tank" and grant-making organization that oversees employment-related programs for youth, the adult workforce and employers in King County, with the goal of a strong economy and self-sufficiency for every resident.