

The Epoch Times

Bloomberg Announces Citywide Job Grants

By Ivan Pentchoukov

Epoch Times Staff *Created: Sep 13, 2011 Last Updated: Sep 13, 2011*



Mayor Michael Bloomberg speaks at Brooklyn-based Terrafina, a workforce training grant recipient, on Tuesday. (AMAL CHEN/The Epoch Times)

NEW YORK—Four small businesses will receive grants from the city for employee training that total more than \$182,000. Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced the grants on Tuesday, at Terrafina, a grant recipient in Brooklyn.

The grants have been made available through the Department of Small Business Services (SBS), which has awarded close to \$700,000 for workforce training to small businesses in 2011.

“Creating jobs remains our number one priority,” Bloomberg said. “We’re going to do everything we can to make sure that everybody here gets a job. One of the principal ways we’re doing that is by supporting small businesses, which I keep telling everybody I think are

the heartbeat of our economy and really the solution to our jobless problems in this country.”

According to Bloomberg, employee training spurs business growth, which in turn leads to job creation. The mayor spoke at a press conference held at Terrafina’s warehouse, amid shelves stacked with clear containers of trail mix and candy Swedish fish and gummy worms. The company will use the \$27,824 award to provide 12 employees with training in manufacturing, food safety, and English as a second language. The training is expected to result in a 10 percent wage increase for the employees.

“The funds will allow Terrafina to better train our team,” said James Locke, CEO of Terrafina.

The city grant is matched by a \$15,900 investment from Terrafina. The company started in Brooklyn five years ago and has since grown to 14 employees. It specializes in packaging nuts, dried fruit, trail mixes, granola bars, and candy. The company has outgrown its current space in Brooklyn and is relocating to a larger space in the Bronx. Locke plans to hire an additional 25 employees over the next 18 months.

“Our business is committed to remain in New York City. New York has a great talent pool,” Locke said.

The largest of the four grants, \$100,131, went to Abtron, a Brooklyn based demolition and environmental contracting firm. Queens-based Jamaica Physical Therapy received \$29,785. Rennert International, an English and foreign language school, received \$25,007.



Employees at Terrafina LLC package nuts for wholesale in Brooklyn on Tuesday. (AMAL CHEN/The Epoch Times)

The city's SBS helped place 31,000 New Yorkers in jobs in 2010, and is on track to place 35,000 by the end of 2011. Since its inception in 2005, SBS has provided more than \$8.1 million in training funds to New York City businesses. In addition, SBS has helped secure \$21 million in financing for start-up capital to 639 entrepreneurs.

"What this is all about is investing in companies and individuals who are investing in New Yorkers," said Rob Walsh, department commissioner of SBS.

The grants, titled NYC Business Solutions Training Funds, are administered by Workforce Development Corporation, a nonprofit contracted by New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC). The funds are aimed at eliminating the training barrier so that small businesses can invest in new technologies or software and expand to new markets.

New York City is driven by small business. According to Seth Pinsky, president of the New York City Economic Development Corporation, 63 percent of all businesses have fewer than 5 employees, and 98 percent of all businesses have less than 100 employees.

"These small businesses really are the economic engine of growth for our city and the future of our city depends

on these businesses," Pinsky said.

New York City's food manufacturing has grown by 6 percent since 1990 while manufacturing in the rest of the nation has fallen, according to Pinsky.

"New York City is about small businesses, certainly Brooklyn," said Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz.

Markowitz referred to a Crain's New York Business article that stated that Brooklyn gained 14,000 jobs in 2010 and was "at the forefront of New York City's economic recovery." According to the latest data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics more than 114,000 people, or 10.1 percent, are unemployed in Brooklyn.

The next round of grants will make \$500,000 available in NYC Business Solutions Training Funds. Applications for the program are due by Sept. 15, 2011.