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Contact:

Laura Magee (ESD) | laura.magee@esd.ny.gov | (716) 846-8239

ESD Press Office | pressoffice@esd.ny.gov | (800) 260-7313

Empire State Development Announces Operator of Western New York Workforce Training Center

Buffalo Niagara Manufacturing Alliance, Catholic Charities of Buffalo, Goodwill Industries of Western New York and Buffalo Urban League will partner to operate center

Empire State Development (ESD) announced today that Economic Development Group (EDG), Inc., a nonprofit entity comprised of four lead partners—Buffalo Niagara Manufacturing Alliance (BNMA); Catholic Charities of Buffalo, Inc.; Goodwill Industries of Western New York, Inc.; and Buffalo Urban League—will be the operator and administrator of the Western New York Workforce Training Center (WTC). The WTC will house administrative, classroom, and shop facilities designed to train and turn out highly-skilled members of the local workforce to meet the requirements of the twenty-first century electric utility and advanced manufacturing industries. Also targeted to serve some of the most underrepresented populations in the region’s workforce, the WTC is being developed as an adaptive reuse of up to 100,000 square feet of space in the former Clearing Niagara factory at 683 Northland Avenue on Buffalo’s East Side.

Working with other resource subconsultant partners like Dream IT Do IT WNY, Inc. and the University at Buffalo Center for Industrial Effectiveness, EDG will undertake all administrative, financial control, internship/job placement, and coordination activities necessary for the operation of the WTC. The ESD Board of Directors approved entering into a three-year contract with EDG, with the option for up to two, one-year contract extensions. The Board also approved up to \$5 million in subsidies from the Buffalo Billion to be applied over the contract term toward the WTC’s annual operating budget.

“The Western New York Workforce Training Center will be a one-stop educational facility, operated by a consortium of social service, labor and industrial liaison organizations,” said **Empire State Development President, CEO & Commissioner Howard Zemsky**. “With more than 100 years of experience in workforce development under one roof, the Center will be able to effectively focus on teaching area residents the necessary skills to fill local manufacturing jobs.”

“The Economic Development Group is excited, along with its partners, to be chosen by Empire State Development for this critical effort,” said **Kevin Donovan, Chairman of the Board of the EDG**. “This initiative will give people, especially those from the underrepresented sectors of our community, the opportunity to be trained and qualified to fill the many advanced manufacturing jobs that currently exist and will be available in the future. We look forward to working with ESD to increase the pool of skilled manufacturing workers for these career opportunities.”

The WTC is being funded by ESD and the New York Power Authority (NYPA)—as part of the Buffalo Billion initiative—to be the initial anchor facility in a redevelopment of a largely-abandoned Northland Avenue industrial corridor on the East Side of Buffalo. Together with the City of Buffalo, the entire Northland Corridor Redevelopment represents a \$48 million public investment to help create public/private partnerships to realize a state-of-the-art hub campus for both workforce training and other advanced manufacturing establishments. ESD has committed up to \$29 million for the entire Northland Avenue effort, while NYPA and the City of Buffalo will contribute \$15 million and \$4 million respectively.

“These four organizations have long demonstrated their commitment to improving the lives of Buffalo residents, especially the underserved and those in need,” said **NYPA Chairman John R. Koelmel**. “Having observed their tremendous work over the years, I am confident they will provide the right leadership to ensure we fully realize the critically important mission of the Workforce Training Center.”

“I am thrilled by today’s announcement that Economic Development Group Inc. will operate the Western New York Workforce Training Center, which will be a vital resource for our local workforce,” said **City of Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown**. “I am pleased to see the former Clearing Niagara factory on Buffalo’s East Side being redeveloped as the WTC, which will help to further the redevelopment of our entire city.”

EDG is grounded in the partners’ expertise in workforce training; manufacturing industry knowledge; experience working with manufacturers and apprenticeship programs, including energy-related jobs along with experience recruiting, screening and placing candidates into appropriate training programs and supporting their progress toward advancing their education and securing gainful employment.

EDG will be required to fully orchestrate and coordinate with State University of New York (SUNY) educational partners that will staff the actual training components of the WTC—Erie Community College, Alfred State College, and Buffalo State College—to structure/schedule programs and curricula in initial targeted industries (i.e., advanced manufacturing and energy sectors). The operator will also liaison with private industry on refining programs/offerings to best respond to local private industry workforce needs.

EDG will also be required to coordinate/facilitate three other key functions of the WTC: wraparound services necessary to enable patrons/students to be fully prepared to participate in WTC programs (e.g., access to child care, transportation, training for pre-

requisite testing, etc.); Placement Services, both in terms of internships/externships during training and in full-time positions for patrons/students after completing certificate/degree programs; and Case manager/monitoring of individuals placed after training for a period of at least three years of WTC program completion.

In consideration that the WTC operations are evolving during its final design phase, EDG's contract term will be preceded by an initial "planning/ramp-up" period that will run until the WTC's opening in 2018. During this period, EDG will work with ESD and its team from the University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI) to finalize/operationalize the business plan and standard operating procedures for the WTC. UBRI will be assisted in this effort by Sharon Jones at O-H Community Partners—who helped formulate the draft business plan for the WTC—and the Institute for Social Entrepreneurship, a NYS-certified Minority Business Enterprise based in Rochester, NY.

NYPA President and CEO Gil C. Quiniones said, "This is an important milestone and a great choice. The EDG consortium has a long history of successful job training. We're excited there will soon be a new pipeline for people to learn the skills needed for careers in the energy field, especially when nearly half of the industry's workforce is eligible to retire in the next decade."

Peter M. Coleman, Executive Director of the Buffalo Niagara Manufacturing Alliance, said, "The Buffalo Niagara Manufacturing Alliance is excited to partner in this innovative training program for tomorrow's advanced manufacturing workforce. A strong manufacturing industry is fundamental to Buffalo Niagara's economic prosperity. The primary challenge our manufacturers face is the access to skilled talent. Creating the supply of talent with needed skills will be critical to the future competitiveness of companies and the industry as a whole. Empire State Development and Governor Cuomo have taken the lead in managing this talent crisis by developing a strategic investment that will not only provide a solution to the need of manufacturers, but provide economic opportunities for a community that has been impoverished for far too long."

Dennis C. Walczyk, Catholic Charities of Buffalo Chief Executive Officer, said, "Catholic Charities is thrilled and honored that EDG, Inc. was selected as the organization entrusted to oversee operations of the Western New York WTC. We are grateful for the opportunity to bring our 40 years of experience in providing Workforce Development and Education assessment, life skills training, case management and support services to this collaborative effort. We are very confident that this comprehensive project will be a major factor in reducing poverty in the City of Buffalo in the years to come."

Thomas Lynch, President & CEO of Goodwill of WNY, said, "Goodwill is honored to be a member of EDG, a unique partnership of Workforce Development and Industry organizations, and to have EDG be awarded the responsibility of operating the WTC. We're excited about the positive impact the WTC will have on the East Side and the opportunities that will be afforded the residents as part of the entire Northland

Corridor initiative. Goodwill has been part of the Buffalo community for nearly 100 years and, having provided disabled and disadvantaged individuals the opportunity to work in our manufacturing shop since the mid-1930s, we're encouraged by the support this initiative has received and look forward to being part of a thriving manufacturing center that Northland will become."

Brenda McDuffie, President & CEO of Buffalo Urban League, said, "The Buffalo Urban League is excited about being part of this critical partnership that will not only ensure individuals are prepared for career opportunities in advanced manufacturing and energy, but will also contribute to the economic resurgence of the East Side of Buffalo."

The Northland Corridor Redevelopment Project and the Western New York WTC are being developed by the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC, the City of Buffalo's not-for-profit development agency, under a funding agreement with ESD. BUDC will act as the long-term landlord for the WTC, is facilitating public infrastructure investments, and is marketing various vacant industrial spaces in the Northland Corridor for reuse and/or redevelopment.

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