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## PRESS RELEASE

### Green Jobs, Green Economy Initiative in New Bedford

The [Marion Institute](#), in collaboration with local organizations, the [New Bedford Economic Development Council](#) and the Mayor's Office, announces the creation of the Green Jobs, Green Economy Initiative. The objective of the initiative is two-fold: to ensure that New Bedford accesses American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding - which will support green business and green job development - and to ensure that the city's initiatives specifically benefit and are accessible to low income communities and communities of color in the city. The overarching goal is to help New Bedford become a national leader in the green jobs and sustainability movement.

Funding opportunities through ARRA are abundant, with over \$60 billion allotted specifically to green jobs initiatives nationally and hundreds of millions of dollars coming to Massachusetts alone. The opportunity is enormous. New Bedford is particularly well positioned to participate in, and benefit from, this movement to build an equitable Green Economy that will restore communities and the environment.

However, there's a lot of work to be done to access this funding and not much time to do it. Most of the ARRA money will be designated by June and must be used by September of 2010. Many of the grant applications are due in the next 3-8 weeks. What's more, ARRA has a strict "Use it or Lose it" policy - if the money is not used effectively and efficiently, it will be reallocated to other states and cities.

Recognizing the urgency of this opportunity, the Marion Institute specifically sought out funds from outside the city of New Bedford to create this Green Jobs, Green Economy Initiative. "This initiative is a natural outgrowth of the Marion Institute's [Bioneers by the Bay: Connecting for Change Conference](#)," said the Marion Institute's Executive Director, Desa VanLaarhoven. "The Marion Institute and our board, led by Michael and Margie Baldwin, are responding to the consistent requests to support and serve the community of New Bedford not for just one weekend a year but throughout the year. We felt that this was the best way to lend a hand."

Kalia Lydgate, formerly the Youth Coordinator for the Marion Institute and their Bioneers

by the Bay: Connecting for Change conference, will be the Director of the Green Jobs, Green Economy Initiative. In addition to her work at the Marion Institute, Lydgate co-founded the Massachusetts Green Jobs Coalition (MAGJC) - a statewide organization that played a crucial role in ensuring that Pathways out of Poverty language was included in the Massachusetts Green Jobs Act (H4844) - and has been working on Green Jobs initiatives locally and at the state level for the past two years. The majority of her time will be spent in New Bedford but she will also continue her work at the state- and national-levels, working to put New Bedford in the National spotlight.

A large percentage of ARRA funds will go towards projects that improve the energy efficiency of buildings, which are responsible for upwards of 40% of carbon emissions. New Bedford, with a 15.2% unemployment rate and seemingly endless inventory of old buildings and homes, is perfectly positioned to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the ARRA. Energy efficiency work creates both business opportunities and jobs, while lowering energy bills for consumers and reducing fossil fuel emissions.

Temistocles Blessed, Community Service and Green Solutions Coordinator of P.A.C.E. YouthBuild, sees firsthand the value in this opportunity, "the youth of the city of New Bedford need real hope and real opportunity. The Sustainability Movement and Green Jobs provide them with a way to achieve equitable employment, creatively help the environment, and become leaders of today's green economy."

The idea of building a Green Economy is not new to New Bedford. The city has deep roots in the Environmental Justice movement and a strong grassroots green jobs movement. Moreover, Mayor Lang and the New Bedford Economic Development Council have made renewable energy a priority for the city. Van Jones, the founder of Green for All and now Special Advisor on Green Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation in the Obama White House, has made several visits to speak at Bioneers by the Bay in New Bedford in the last three years. He specifically praised New Bedford's efforts in his speech at the National Powershift09 Conference in Washington DC in March.

"We will have succeeded if we eliminate the need to talk about the 'Green Economy,' because the green economy simply is the economy," explains Lydgate. "This is bigger than just weatherization jobs, it's about making our systems more sustainable."

Collaboration between different sectors - industry, community based organizations, labor, education and elected officials - will be essential in creating entrepreneurial and employment opportunities. "My role will be as a connector. I cannot do any of this alone, nor do I have all the answers. But I'm hopeful that I can bring together the right people and add some energy to the great ideas and projects that already exist," says Lydgate. "I see this as an open-source movement. We need to pool resources, share ideas and act quickly. We may not get another chance like this."

The way ARRA is set up, much of the responsibility for accessing these funds falls on Municipalities, and to a lesser extent, non-profit organizations. However, many of the important stakeholders are already stretched too thin. Without adequate time and energy dedicated to identifying and planning for these funds, New Bedford could miss its opportunity. "In her two and a half years of working with the New Bedford

community, Kalia has been a solid force in building sustainable bridges among a broad base of organizations, and involving the youth in that process," says Ben Gilbarg, Executive Director of 3rd EyE Unlimited. "Now more than ever, her collaborative spirit is needed to assure that New Bedford is a leader of the Green-Collar Economy and that those opportunities reach the people who need them."

**About the Marion Institute**

*Founded in 1992, the [Marion Institute](#) is a member based nonprofit that acts to identify, promote and incubate a diverse array of projects that serve to create deep and positive change for the Earth and its inhabitants. One such program is the Annual Bioneers by the Bay: Connecting for Change conference.*

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