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## Group launches training program

By Jay Fitzgerald

Corporate, government and nonprofit groups are banding to create a jobs-training program they hope will avert the type of skilled-labor shortage companies saw in the 1990s.

The Boston Foundation yesterday officially launched a \$ 14 million, five-year initiative that will team up industry and nonprofit groups to train 3,000 low-income and immigrant residents for skilled and midlevel jobs.

Officials hailed the program as the largest - and most innovative - work-force training program involving private and public funds in Boston's history.

"This is about the future," said Mayor Thomas M. Menino, noting the gap between high demand for skilled labor and a large pool of unskilled workers who can't move up the economic ladder.

Paul Grogan, president and CEO of the Boston Foundation, said job-training programs have been a major disappointment in the past, largely because they didn't match what companies needed. "There's been a lot of good intentions that haven't borne fruit," he said.

Area companies learned the hard way during the 1990s' economic boom that they have to tap into the low-income and immigrant communities for skilled and midlevel workers, he noted.

One of the lessons was the need for businesses to work with training groups on what jobs are available and skills needed.

The "Boston Work Force Development Initiatives" will accept applications for grants only when they're jointly proposed by industry and training groups, Grogan said.

The foundation has received \$ 10.1 million in pledges from groups, including \$ 1.1 million from FleetBoston Financial charitable trusts and \$ 300,000 from the State Street Foundation. Other groups pledging funds are: the city of Boston; the state; the Annie Casey Foundation; the Paul and Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation; the Hyams Foundation; the Rockefeller Foundation; and the United Way of Massachusetts.