

Post-9/11 effort placed 7,000 workers

■ Retraining helped many, but the city still has 150,000 fewer jobs than before the terrorist attacks

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STAFF WRITER

Four years ago, Abdoul Deen was an office manager for an office equipment company in midtown Manhattan. He and his wife both worked, trying to support their young daughter, now 12.

But the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks hit the company hard, as most of its customers were downtown. "Sept. 11 wiped us out," Deen recalled. "They laid a couple of people off, and I was one of them."

After several months of unsuccessful job-searching, Deen discovered the Consortium for Worker Education, a Manhattan nonprofit agency that was trying to place laid-off workers after the attacks.

A year later, after assistance and training, he was teaching in a Manhattan high school. He is now completing his certification so he can make a career of teaching.

Deen is just one of tens of thousands of workers who lost their jobs after the World Trade Center attacks.

Three years and \$32.5 million later, the consortium's Emergency Employment Clearinghouse program has been able to place more than 7,000 workers, all of whom had been laid off as a result of the 2001 attacks, in new jobs.

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— Joe McDermott,
executive director
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for Worker Education

According to a report that will be released today, 3,000 more were able to keep their jobs thanks to wage subsidies and other assistance programs. More than 300 small businesses were able to remain open — and, in some cases, grow. Job training and educational services were a steady part of the three-year effort.

"We responded to crisis with a classic New York City solidarity," said Joe McDermott, the consortium's executive director. "That was a magic moment."

The consortium's effort began the day after the World Trade Center attacks as the organization established hotlines and centers for the unemployed. The \$32.5 million in federal funding, the report said, began flowing fairly quickly. To handle the situation, the consortium, which is an umbrella group covering 46 major city labor unions, itself hired 200 new employees — many of them jobless in the aftermath of the attacks.

Working with the Partnership for New York City, a business group, the consortium tried to help businesses and

workers beyond lower Manhattan, too. Queens Theatre in the Park, for instance, was on the verge of canceling 12 productions and laying off some staff. An \$80,000 wage subsidy from the consortium allowed the theater to retain its employees full-time and keep its production schedule, the report showed.

The consortium was unable to get a renewal of the federal grant when it expired last year, McDermott said. New York City still has about 150,000 fewer jobs than it did in 2000.

For Deen, however, the program was "a lifesaver."

"What they did was to direct me to a career change, which I couldn't have done on my own" after the attacks, he said. "It's still a struggle and it's going to take some time, but I'm definitely going to get there."