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'Skills mismatch' in state leads to \$10 million training program

By [Lee Howard](#) Day Staff Writer

The U.S. Department of Labor on Friday announced a nearly \$10 million investment in training state workers, including those in eastern Connecticut, to address the issue of a "skills mismatch" between job applicants and the requirements of employers.

The two H1-B Technical Skills Training grants totaling \$9.97 million will be funneled through state groups charged with providing unemployed workers with education, training and job-placement assistance. Part of a \$4.97 million grant given to the Workforce Alliance Inc. in New Haven will be going to train workers in the region who will be matched to local employers by the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board.

"The skills gap issue is of particular importance in an industry like advanced manufacturing where technology is so prevalent," John Beauregard, executive director of the local workforce board, said. "Our educators are striving to keep pace with the needs of business, but change is so rapid in the private sector that a combined public-private solution is the best way to meet the needs of a changing economy."

The local funding will allow workers in high-growth, high-skills occupations who have been out of work for at least 27 weeks to receive on-the-job training in such fields as information technology, engineering and advanced manufacturing. Preference is given to the long-term unemployed and those who have exhausted benefits, and about 10 percent of the participants are expected to be veterans.

"Employers will hire the participants as full-time, regular employees and will provide them with an average of 16 weeks of on-the-job training," according to a program description, with 50 percent to 75 percent of an employee's wages being reimbursed through the program.

Among the participating local companies are Electric Boat, SIP Energy Solutions, Advanced Turbine Systems and General Cable Corp.

Costs of the program are funded through application fees paid by employers for foreign workers with H1-B visas who are placed in U.S. jobs. The idea is to raise American workers' skill levels so U.S. businesses don't have to look outside the country for skilled labor.

"This critically needed injection of funds will deliver valuable new skills to employees competing for the jobs of the 21st century right here at home," U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, said in a statement.

In addition to funds going to local workers, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board in Waterbury received \$5 million. Twenty-eight states received a total of \$183 million in skills-training awards from the same funding source.

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MORE INFO

For more information on how the program works, call (860) 859-4100.
