



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES VITAL JOB TRAINING GRANT FOR THE WORLD'S LEADING FARM EQUIPMENT PRODUCER

50 plus companies and 400 employees will also benefit from innovative grant

MOLINE - Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced a **\$110,000** *Opportunity Returns* workforce-training grant to Deere & Company, the world's leading producer of farm equipment. Headquartered in Moline, John Deere is the Northwest region's largest employer and most prominent manufacturer. Beneficiaries of the grant, however, will include a multitude of manufacturing companies throughout the region. Training dollars will be used to bolster skills of workers across John Deere's supplier chain, totaling more than 50 companies and **400** employees. Courses will be taught in principles of efficient business production and management at John Deere locations and at its supply chain manufacturers across the Northwestern Illinois. Strengthening job training for Illinois workers is one of the major priorities of the Governor's innovative *Opportunity Returns* initiative - the historic, regional economic development plan that he rolled out for the Northwest Region during his visit to East Moline last October.

"For over 160 years, John Deere has been a stalwart of the Moline community and a dynamic economic force for this entire region. Thousands and thousands of dedicated and determined people built this company's lasting reputation of quality and innovation," Governor Blagojevich said. "Hard work is still the foundation for its success, but today, in the face of such fierce international competition, that work must be as efficient and effective as possible. Ensuring that these workers are equipped with the most advanced and desirable skills will help John Deere, and manufactures across the region, prove that Illinois companies can thrive on the world stage."

The grant to John Deere is being awarded through the Employer Training Investment Program (ETIP). ETIP is a new generation of employer-focused, customized training grants created through the "21st Century Jobs" Training Initiative. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) administers the ETIP grants, which reimburse companies and organizations for up to 50% of the costs of training their employees.

Governor Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois' history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn't work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort for the Northwest region was the product of significant outreach over several months with
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business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. The more than 25 projects that the Governor announced last October for Northwestern Illinois are designed to be flexible and effective. This plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

“The Northwest region must become more productive and competitive in manufacturing to compete in the new global economy,” said DCEO Director Jack Lavin. “This initiative will help accomplish that priority by offering key assistance to address the training needs necessary to retain and expand manufacturing companies in the region and state, especially those businesses that act as suppliers to larger companies like John Deere.”

“This *Opportunity Returns* grant supports the small to medium sized companies in the State of Illinois that are critical to John Deere's success,” said Donald DeDobbelaere, Manager, Global Learning & Development, Deere & Company. “As John Deere drives to the attainment of a high performance workforce, our supply base also needs to develop a highly competent workforce. This crucial training grant supports that goal by offsetting the educational cost to the companies.”

The workforce-training grant to John Deere is the second such ETIP grant to be released to the Northwest region in the last month. In December, the Governor announced the awarding of a \$295,000 grant to the Northwest Illinois Training Consortium, bringing the total amount of ETIP grant dollars invested in the region under *Opportunity Returns* to **\$405,000** - providing training for an estimated **3,500** area workers.

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