



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOVERNOR BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES A \$295,000 JOB TRAINING GRANT FOR NORTHWEST ILLINOIS

Community colleges working together to upgrade workforce for 21st century

CHICAGO – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today announced a \$295,000 *Opportunity Returns* workforce training grant awarded to the newly formed Northwest Illinois Training Consortium (NITC). The NITC is comprised of the business and industry centers at five community colleges - Black Hawk College in Moline, Highland Community College in Freeport, Illinois Valley Community College in Oglesby, Kishwaukee College in Malta and Sauk Valley Community College in Dixon – that serve the entire Northwest region in *Opportunity Returns*, the Governor's regional economic development plan that he announced in October in East Moline. For the very first time, these community colleges worked together to secure this *Opportunity Returns* grant, which is being awarded through the Employer Training Investment Program's (ETIP) Small/Mid-sized Company component and will be used to upgrade the skills of approximately **3,100** employees at an estimated **90** companies.

"Keeping workers up to speed with new technologies and business practices is vital to increasing business productivity, reducing costs, improving quality and boosting the competitiveness of not only the state's workforce but of Illinois' companies as well," Governor Blagojevich said. "This is a great example of what *Opportunity Returns* is all about – bringing the state together with a group of highly respected community colleges to ensure that we have a skilled workforce necessary to entice even more businesses and jobs back to Illinois."

These colleges have a long history of providing training and consulting services to local employers and partnering on a variety of educational and economic development projects. The employees of local manufacturers and distributors will upgrade their computer skills, learn more efficient and effective ways to do their jobs and other technical/workplace skills training. Sauk Valley Community College will head the training project. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) administers the ETIP grants, which reimburse companies and organizations for up to 50 percent 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 is a product of significant outreach over several months throughout each region, with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. These economic initiatives are designed to be flexible and effective. Each plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

“The Governor is ensuring that our workforce is ready for the 21st century and beyond,” said DCEO Director Jack Lavin. “This initiative will offer assistance to address the training needs necessary to retain and expand manufacturing companies in the state, especially those businesses that act as suppliers to larger companies.”

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