



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES MORE THAN \$50,000 IN FUNDING FOR INNOVATIVE BOOT CAMP AIMED AT ENHANCING QUALITY OF WORKFORCE AND INCREASING COMPETITIVENESS OF REGION'S MANUFACTURERS

CHICAGO – In an aggressive effort to strengthen the competitiveness of manufacturers throughout the North Central region by ensuring they have a steady pipeline of skilled labor, Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced an innovative new initiative called the Manufacturing Boot Camp. The program is providing high school graduates (or those with a GED equivalent), aged 18 – 24, with intense, thirteen-week training and instruction on basic skills that will help them prepare for manufacturing employment. This grant is a part of the Governor's *Opportunity Returns* program for the North Central region, his comprehensive, pro-active plan for creating jobs and spurring economic growth across the region and throughout the state.

“Manufacturing is still tremendously important to the economic vitality of this region, and we’re determined to do everything we can to help our manufacturers meet the unique challenges of today with unique approaches to doing business. By targeting our resources to customized efforts such as this Boot Camp, we can ensure manufacturers have a skilled and flexible workforce at their disposal, allowing them to increase their efficiency, productivity and competitiveness over the near and long term,” Governor Blagojevich said.

The customized Boot Camp curriculum includes classes on workplace communication, applied mathematics, teamwork, safety, blueprint reading, problem solving, critical thinking and business writing. An introduction to modern manufacturing techniques (quality systems, technology, lean processes) will precede the classroom training. Boot Camp graduates will be provided with 4-week internship training opportunities (160 work hours) and be paid \$9.00 per hour.

The Boot Camp project is a collaboration between the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Illinois Manufacturing Extension Center (IMEC), and Illinois Central College (ICC). The program was initially conceived at a roundtable discussion of area manufacturers hosted this summer by DCEO Director Jack Lavin and IMEC, which came as part of *Opportunity Returns'* aggressive outreach effort to identify the region's most pressing challenges and highest priorities.

(more)

“Governor Blagojevich continues to find new ways to prepare our workforce to excel in the 21st Century economy. The truth is that the manufacturing industry offers many well-paying jobs – the trick has been finding ways to position our young workforce to take advantage of these opportunities. This Boot Camp project is an innovative way to facilitate that match and will help strengthen the foundation of the industry over the long term,” State Senator George Shadid (D-Pekin) said.

IMEC, a non-profit economic consulting organization that works with manufacturers to be more efficient, was tabbed by DCEO to create and manage the program due in part to its locations and relationships with manufacturers throughout Illinois. Another pilot program is slated in the Rockford area.

“Boot Camp is a novel approach to preparing a whole new pool of potential workers. This initiative will provide instruction in the fundamentals of manufacturing, giving these individuals the solid base they need to become attractive candidates for advanced training in well-paying jobs in the manufacturing industry,” said JC Harms, President of Standard Sheet Metal in Peoria, and a member of the Boot Camp advisory board.

Local manufacturers are being recruited to host internships for the program graduates. At the conclusion of the internship, candidates may be offered full-time positions.

“Governor Blagojevich believes that the manufacturing industry has the potential to act as a more dynamic force of growth in the local economy. We’ve taken many steps to make our manufacturers more competitive and better equipped to meet today’s challenges, and this Boot Camp initiative is another important tool we’re utilizing to help accomplish that goal. Illinois will always compete on the strength of its workforce, and we want to ensure we continue to have a workforce second to none,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

Boot Camp begins January 10, 2005. For information, call **815-921-2071** or visit www.mfgbootcamp.com

The *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 with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business.

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