

NJBIA

REPORT TO MEMBERS *By Philip Kirschner, President*

Workforce Training is Done Right in NJ

When Governor Jon Corzine talks about New Jersey's probusiness advantages, he usually talks about the quality of New Jersey's workforce and the state's workforce development and training programs as key assets. It's true. By any measure, New Jersey's workforce is among the best educated and most skilled, and New Jersey's workforce training programs consistently earn high marks from employers.

Like most states, New Jersey has extensive job training programs for people who have been laid off or are otherwise transitioning to another vocation or career. What sets New Jersey apart are the outstanding training resources available to businesses for their existing employees.

New Jersey provides between \$30 and \$40 million annually on job training and workforce development programs for the employees of businesses. This includes a customized training grant program where training providers such as New Jersey's county colleges (through the NJ Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development) will develop a training program specifically designed to meet your business's particular needs.

Last year, more than 60,000 workers benefitted from such customized training.

The grants are funded through the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD). In most cases, there are no direct costs to a business, although employers are

expected to match the costs of the training by paying employees their regular salaries or wages during the training.

The state also offers basic skills training to incumbent workers. Employees can get training in computer applications, communications, mathematics and English as a second language (ESL) at no cost to the business beyond paying employees' usual wages during the training period. In some cases, the training can even be conducted at your workplace.

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If there was one glitch in the training programs in the past, it was that most small businesses had trouble participating in them. Officially, they were eligible, but workplaces with few employees were usually unable to meet the minimum participation requirement of 10 employees per training program.

To solve this problem, NJBIA formed a partnership with the Department of Labor and the Community College Consortium to permit a number of small companies to pool their employees to get the required 10 participants. The Consortium acts as a clearing house, putting together a number of companies that can send one, two or three employees each for training.

In the first two years of the basic skills program, approximately 9,000 workers from 850 companies have received training. (To learn more about the basic skills training partnership, contact Chris Emigholz at 609-393-7707, ext. 201, or visit www.njbja.org/resources/train.)

A well-skilled workforce is crucial to business success, particularly in these tough times. Experienced, knowledgeable employees can improve both quality and productivity. New Jersey has developed the programs that businesses need to get the most out of their workforce. This is one great program that employers should utilize. **NJB**

