



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Contact: Scott R. Price, Price Communications
Tel.: 203-723-0110
E-mail: sprice03@snet.net

Employee Training Grants Now Available

*By helping area organizations hire and train new employees for skilled jobs,
NRWIB matching grants will stimulate hiring and business growth*

DANBURY, CONN.— The Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce today announced that grants for customized On-the-Job Training (OJT) programs are now available through the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NRWIB).

For eligible organizations and programs, NRWIB matching grants will reimburse employers up to 50 percent of eligible employees' starting wages during their training periods, up to 800 hours per employee. Monthly reimbursements from the NRWIB may continue for two to nine months, depending on the complexity of the jobs and skill levels addressed by the OJT programs. The Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce has contracted with Renzulli and Associates, a non-profit business consulting firm, to provide free professional counseling and assistance for Greater Danbury-area organizations that wish to apply for these grants.

“The Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce is very pleased to be partnering with the NRWIB and Renzulli and Associates on this new program,” said Stephen Bull, president of the chamber. “With the unemployment rate in the Greater Danbury area at seven percent and the national unemployment rate quickly approaching 10 percent, this continues to be an extremely challenging time for workers and businesses alike. These grants will help area organizations hire and train new workers for jobs that are critical to their long-term growth and profitability, and they will help dislocated workers find good jobs and advance in their careers.”

Companies in the health care, advanced manufacturing, finance and information technology industries may be eligible for OJT grants, as well as those in the construction, creative, logistics, maritime, retail and warehousing sectors. Priority will be given to those organizations that can demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous improvement and front-line worker training, and which offer a safe, healthy workplace and wages and benefits that typically exceed industry averages.

To be eligible for matching grants, OJT programs must be oriented toward significantly improving an organization's profitability and global competitiveness. Training programs that support new or innovative technologies or production equipment meet these criteria; these programs may include lean manufacturing, Six Sigma and ISO 9000 training and other similar programs.

Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

39 West Street • Danbury, Connecticut 06810
Tel.: 203-743-5565 • Fax: 203-794-1439
E-mail: info@danburychamber.com
Web: <http://www.danburychamber.com>

Working cooperatively with grant recipients, the NRWIB will design OJT programs customized to employers' requirements. OJT programs make use of skilled workers within the recipients' organizations to provide specialized training for new employees in a skilled occupation. Employers select these new hires from a pool of individuals who are eligible for OJT programs under the guidelines of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). WIA-certified individuals are dislocated workers whose jobs have been eliminated and who are enthusiastic about learning new skills and progressing in their careers.

June Renzulli, a partner with Renzulli and Associates and a program manager for the OJT grant program, will be helping the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce promote the OJT grant program to area businesses and will be providing professional, one-on-one counseling for interested organizations. Renzulli, aided by Glenn Renzulli and Janice Wiggins, also of Renzulli and Associates, will assist eligible organizations with all aspects of the application process.

"Renzulli and Associates is uniquely qualified for this program," said Bull. "As the former CEO of United Way of Western Connecticut and the current director of philanthropy and major gifts for Regional Hospice of Western Connecticut, and through her involvement with so many other outstanding community organizations, June Renzulli continues to demonstrate her great talent for business and an unwavering commitment to those living and working in the region."

"Renzulli and Associates, the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce and the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board have enjoyed a very successful, longstanding partnership, and we are excited to be working with them on this program," said Renzulli. "A healthy community relies on job growth. On-the-Job Training grants are a great opportunity to improve our communities and make this a stronger and more vibrant region in which people can live, work and enjoy life."

Those interested in applying for grants should contact the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce at 203-743-5565 or info@danburychamber.com.

About the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce

The Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce is the largest regional business advocacy organization in Northern Fairfield County representing the 10-town Connecticut business community of Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield and Sherman. Founded in 1915, the Chamber is currently comprised of approximately 1,200 members. Membership is diverse with representation from manufacturing, hi-tech, retail, service, professional and corporate and ranging in size from sole proprietors to more than 2,000 employees.

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