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Governor awards \$1.4 million in workforce education and training grants

Grants support workforce training in communities across Oregon in manufacturing, metals, information technology and green collar jobs

(Salem) – As part of an ongoing effort to build Oregon’s workforce in response to the needs of existing and emerging industries, Governor Ted Kulongoski today announced nearly \$1.4 million in competitive workforce development grant awards. The funds were awarded to organized partnerships among employers and the education and training community that are working together to develop the skilled workforce businesses need.

“Workforce development is the single biggest factor in business retention, expansion and recruitment,” Governor Kulongoski said. “Together we can address our workforce shortages in key sectors and diversify our economy in areas such as green building and renewable energy. The economic vitality of our state depends on it.”

In 2003, the first year the Governor took office, he established the Employer Workforce Training Fund. Those funds were targeted to facilitate economic growth by ensuring that a skilled workforce was available to existing businesses.

The dollars awarded today, secured by the Governor in the 2007 Legislative session, will not only continue to build upon existing workforce development efforts, but also will invest in new partnerships that have come together to train workers for emerging industries.

The Governor continued, “Collaboration between the private and public sectors should be rewarded. These partnerships provide the business community a first-hand opportunity to shape education and training curriculum and to create the workforce they need.”

Over time, the Governor has required greater coordination of workforce development efforts between state agencies, the education and training community and businesses to create clearer outcomes for Oregon. The criterion for the grant dollars awarded today required a public-private partnership that included multiple employers or an industry association representing groups of companies.

Employers come together based on common workforce needs, whether it is to simply train more workers in a certain skill set using existing curriculum or to develop new education and training programs to grow an entire industry. This collaboration allows businesses to provide education and training in a cost-effective manner.

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Since the 2003, the Employer Workforce Training Fund has created or retained more than 29,000 jobs and has trained nearly 27,000 employees.

The 2008 recipients are:

Lane Workforce Partnership -- \$275,000 for strengthening the pipeline of trained workers that connects the local education and workforce system with manufacturers of wood products, transportation equipment, machinery, metals, computer/electronics and food processing equipment. This project is an initiative of Lane Workforce Partnership, the RV Consortium and the Emerald Valley High Performance Enterprise Consortium (EVHPEC).

Enterprise for Employment and Education -- \$328,246 to a partnership in Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Linn, Lincoln, and Benton counties of the Mid-Willamette Metals, Food Processors, Secondary Woods and High Performance Consortia. To alleviate worker shortages, the partnership proposes to deliver an industry-recognized Entry Level Credential and access to advanced skills training along with an outreach strategy to interest workers in manufacturing.

Trucking Solutions Consortium -- \$303,000 to the Oregon Trucking Association and Clackamas Community College to address the truck driver shortage in Oregon. The consortium plans to deploy to four additional regions a model developed by the college that creates additional regional consortia, aligns training and certification, and engages partners in gaining state certification of the curriculum.

Southern Oregon High Performance Enterprise Consortium -- \$32,000 to the Southern Oregon High Performance Enterprise Consortium to bring together seven companies (Carson Helicopters of Merlin, Erickson Air Crane of Central Point, Croman Corporation of White City, Superior Helicopters of Glendale, Columbia Helicopters of Aurora, Evergreen Helicopters of McMinnville, and HTS of Corvallis) in the heavy-lift helicopter sector to evaluate mutual workforce development needs. In partnership with the education, workforce training and local economic development communities, the consortium will develop scalable solutions to meet the most pressing workforce needs.

Southwestern Oregon Community College -- \$128,000 to Oregon Metals in Transportation Pathway in Coos and Curry Counties. Industry partners in the metals and transportation equipment sectors will link with educators and skills trainers to create a comprehensive workforce strategy. These employers need to replace retiring workers in production, welding and metal fabrication. The collaboration gives employers an opportunity to review and provide critical input to high school, college and skills training curricula as they are created, revised, and aligned with current industry standards.

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South Central Oregon Economic Development District -- \$128,000 to the Green Building Value-Added Wood Product Cluster in South Central Oregon. This project will grow “green-collar jobs” such as solar panel installation, weatherization, and organic farming. It calls for developing green collar curricula, creating a highly trained workforce to support the green building and other value-added wood products industries. It will also focus on responding to business needs as well as preparing residents to take advantage of new economic opportunities.

Rogue Valley Workforce Development Council-- \$128,000 to the Rogue Valley’s “PowerUp Southern Oregon” Initiative which is designed to support the retention and growth of living wage jobs, a skilled workforce, and critically important, globally competitive businesses in Jackson and Josephine counties. The project will create an academy with community partners (community college, university, and public school) to offer training and education opportunities to high school students and individuals in the PowerUp program considering a career change. The academy’s curriculum will support the region’s existing and emerging industries, such as information technology and bioscience.