

Agency offers employers work force training

Program aims to help develop high-tech skills

By **LEE HOWARD**
Day Staff Writer

A \$200,000 incumbent-worker program is offering companies in eastern Connecticut up to \$20,000 to help train their work force.

The training-reimbursement program, available for the fourth year through the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board in Franklin, matches employer-training costs dollar for dollar, up to \$3,000 per employee. And this

year, for the first time, the program is kicking in for wages employees earn during their training.

"The idea is to get companies to stay and grow in southeastern Connecticut," said John Beauregard, executive director of the Workforce Investment Board. "This year, we are putting a high priority on the kinds of training and the industries and companies in the area that can lead us to high-wage, high-skill jobs."

These so-called STEM jobs — an acronym denoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Math — could involve such areas as infor-

mation technology, entrepreneurial skills and energy management.

"Technology stops for no one," Beauregard said. "It's all about productivity and profitability at this point."

Money from the program — about 50 percent higher this year than last year — comes from state and federal sources. Employers are asked to select a training program, designate employees to train and find a training provider, and a review panel will decide on which skill upgrades will have the highest priority.

"It's a competitive program

... and we think it could be more competitive this time," said John Markowicz, a member of the training program's review panel and executive director of SeCTer, a regional economic-development group also known as the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region.

American Ambulance, a 37-year-old Norwich company owned by Ron Aliano, used money from the program last year to improve the communication and leadership skills of 20 managers.

"We probably wouldn't have
SEE JOBS PAGE C7

Jobs program hopes to aid 30 companies

FROM C6

done this if we didn't have the (50-50) match, and the opportunity to grow our front-line supervisors was very beneficial," said Janet Welch, human resources manager at American Ambulance in Norwich.

Welch said she believes the ambulance company, which employs about 200,

emerged with a more unified management group. She said the best part of the program is that the managers were able to take training together, rather than piecemeal, leading to more cohesion.

"We are constantly trying to raise the bar here," she said. "We were very, very happy with the results."

Beauregard said he ex-

pects about 30 companies to receive training this year. Each company could send anywhere from one to 200 employees, he added.

"Everyone's facing global competition," said Beauregard. "We want to make the eastern Connecticut work force as competitive as they can be."

l.howard@theday.com