

## Local firms benefit from federal funds for retraining

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Eleven businesses from the region have received federal stimulus funds from the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board and state Department of Labor to train employees to become more competitive in the global marketplace.

In all, 37 businesses in eastern Connecticut received funds totaling more than \$330,000. But requests for funding exceeded \$600,000, and 50 businesses applied.

"The good news was that this year we had nearly twice the funding available (than in) the past due to the use of stimulus funds and a state commitment to invest in the skills upgrading of Connecticut workers," said John Markowicz, executive director of the South Eastern Connecticut Enterprise Region, in a statement. "However, we would have to double that investment again to meet this level of demand."

When adding matching funds that local businesses kicked in to complete the training, more than \$739,000 will be available for developing the talents of more than 800 workers in the coming months.

Much of the training will be invested in high-skilled jobs in key areas of innovation known as STEM — for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Cynthia Lamb, chair of the workforce board's STEM Council, said the

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training areas included aerospace, biomedical, energy, technical services and material industries.

Nearly 60 percent of the companies that applied for funding this year had never received help from the workforce board before. Nearly half of the companies receiving help had fewer than 100 employees.

Ninety-three requests were reviewed, and the final list of grant winners was released last week. Locally, they were:

Plas-Plak Industries, Dime Bank, Consumers Interstate Corp. and Hospice of Southeastern Connecticut, all of Norwich; S&S Worldwide, Colchester, and Sheffield Pharmaceuticals, New London. Also, Birk Manufacturing, East Lyme; Seconn Fabrications and EasyWeb-Creations, Waterford; Tee's Plus, Groton, and Cable Components Group, Pawcatuck.

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