The Day

September 30, 2015

Region's manufacturing pipeline to get $6 million push from grant

Initiative to help workers acquire advanced skills

By LEE HOWARD
Day Staff Writer

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy announced Tuesday a $6 million federal grant intended to help hundreds of new workers in the region develop advanced job skills.

The Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative, supported by the U.S. Department of Labor grant, will customize manufacturing training programs in eastern Connecticut while also targeting the aerospace industry throughout the state.

Manufacturers, community colleges, technical high schools and the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board are among the partners involved in the initiative, which grew out of Electric Boat's desire to hire more than 500 workers with advanced manufacturing and welding skills over the next few years.

"We can create a pipeline for manufacturing jobs through customized training programs that will translate into well-paying jobs for the residents of our state," Malloy said in a statement.

The submarine builder Electric Boat, which projects needing an additional 5,000 workers between now and 2030, plans to provide on-the-job training for anyone it hires, an expected 350 in all under this program.

Members of the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance also have committed to hiring people

SEE LAWMAKERS PAGE A3

Lawmakers praise job pipeline initiative

FROM A1

who complete the customized training courses in an average of about eight weeks.

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., noted that the federal grant was one of only six for the manufacturing pipeline initiative awarded nationwide.

"I am confident the pipeline initiative will become a model for job training nationwide," Blumenthal said in a statement.

"This funding will help accelerate programs that are already working to connect employers with trained workers they need," added U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District.

U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., referred to a sit-down meeting he had along with Blumenthal and Courtney with U.S. Labor Secretary Thomas E. Perez last May in Groton to push for more investments in the region's manufacturing force.

"The Workforce Innovation Fund grant will put more than 400 under- and unemployed workers back to work," Murphy said.

The local workforce board, which operates four job centers in the region, will be in charge of the program.

The state Department of Labor's Office for Veterans' Workforce Development will be involved in recruiting veterans to get new job skills, while its Office of Apprenticeship Training will be involved in hiring instructors and developing training programs.

The program could eventually be expanded into other areas of the state.

"The jobs are out there if we have the people to fill them," said state Sen. Cathy Osten, D-Sprague, in a statement. "Today's $6 million grant is going make a huge difference. It's a shot in the arm for our regional economy."

John Beauregard, executive director of the Eastern Workforce Investment Board, said this is the fifth federal grant earned by the region in the past few years as the Norwich-New London area continues to struggle with recouping jobs lost during the Great Recession.

Many of the region's long-term unemployed will be eligible for retraining under this program, he said.

"This is a partnership with the employer community," said Beauregard.

l.howard@theday.com
Twitter: @KingstonLeeHow