

## **Incumbent Worker Training Career Enhancement for Connecticut's Workers**

### ***Growing Connecticut Jobs***

Slow population growth and the changing demographics of Connecticut's workforce are clear warning signs for the state's economic future. Even with modest job growth, it will be increasingly difficult to replace existing workers, especially those with the most sought-after skills. Connecticut's best chance of remaining competitive and growing jobs is to effectively utilize our existing workforce: incumbent workers.

Incumbent worker training is the solution for employers who want to retain good employees, grow their businesses and modernize to compete on a global scale. Connecticut needs workers that are able to keep pace with the accelerating educational and technological demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace. The state has long been admired for its abundance of educated workers, its high-skilled, high-value-added manufacturing employees, and the ability to innovate at all levels of the workforce. Connecticut's ability to sustain its competitive position will ultimately and absolutely depend on our ability to develop and train our existing workforce.

### ***An Excellent Track Record***

Over the last two years Connecticut's five Workforce Investment Boards utilized \$1.5 million of federal funding which was matched with an additional \$2 million in employer contributions to support incumbent worker training throughout the state. This investment met the workforce needs of 128 CT businesses and to increase the skills of 4,054 CT workers. Employer satisfaction with the incumbent worker projects has been extremely high, with **93.5%** reporting they were satisfied or very satisfied with the experience and nearly **80%** indicating that the projects exceeded their expectations.

Typical incumbent worker projects include collaborations targeted at professions with severe worker shortages, such as nursing, patient care associates, and allied health. Manufacturers need their employees to upgrade skills to maintain competitiveness. Many of Connecticut's manufacturers are especially challenged to upgrade their worker's skills and production techniques to compete against 21<sup>st</sup> Century international players. Incumbent workers also benefit through skills upgrades, career advancement and increased earning potential.

### ***Insuring Connecticut's Economic Future***

The continuing cutbacks and increasing limitations on the use of federal funds require Connecticut to develop a new strategy for the sustainability of incumbent worker training. The challenges of a global marketplace require a greater investment to maximize opportunities for job growth. Demand for incumbent worker training in the five Workforce Investment Areas in Connecticut has far exceeded available resources. State and local workforce professionals have estimated that \$3 to \$5 million would be

necessary to meet the needs of Connecticut businesses (Massachusetts invests \$21 million per year; Rhode Island invests \$8 million).

### ***A Big Payback in Productivity and Taxes***

Employers are actively leveraging every public dollar that goes into incumbent worker training. Not only do they help design the specific training, they also provide a dollar for dollar match to the initiative. This means that for every dollar the public invests, two dollars or more in training is purchased. With skills upgrades leading to promotions and pay raises, the employees pay more taxes. The employer's productivity and competitiveness gains can also mean increased taxes and the retention of the company in Connecticut. Workers trained to move up to better positions create entry level opportunities for our next generation workers that are critical to Connecticut's economic future.

Finally, Incumbent worker training is an excellent use of important public institutions including Adult Education and Connecticut's Community College System. Designing training approaches with employers and trade associations helps educators better understand the latest needs in the business market. The process also makes full use of the CTWorks One-Stop Career Centers and opens doors for future hiring.