

WAT grants benefit area employers

In today's global economy, businesses are constantly seeking opportunities to gain a competitive edge, something Blackhawk Technical College (BTC) knows all too well. With that challenge in mind BTC is excited to report that \$283,161 in Workforce Advancement Training (WAT) grants have been secured for nine different area businesses. These grants will be used during the 2017-18 academic year for customized employee training designed to improve productivity and competitiveness, augment the state's economic base, and expand technical college training services to business and industry.

"Training like this is crucial in the type of economy we are in," said Colleen Koerth, BTC Manager of Workforce Development. "These grants are incredibly important to help businesses educate, train and improve their workforce."

Established in 2005, WAT grants are funded by the State of Wisconsin and administered by the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). Each year, the WTCS awards WAT grants to the state's 16 technical colleges in conjunction with Wisconsin businesses. WAT grants range from \$2,500 and \$200,000 per company for general businesses and from \$2,500 to \$50,000 for small businesses. Occupational skills are the main focus of the grants, but "soft skills" also may be included in the training. Grants are awarded to a technical college in conjunction with an individual business or a consortium of employers who require the same training.

"The Workforce Advancement Training Grant has created a synergy between Blackhawk Technical College and SSI Technologies, Inc. focusing on development of skills and competencies of our employees. As a result of this partnership, SSI employees are upskilled to do new and different tasks which provides positive results to our employees, customers, and our company as a whole," said Jean Randles, SSI Technologies Corporate Training and Development Manager.

"Thanks to the WAT grant, Blackhawk Transport has been able to provide six classes in leadership training to our management team. This will help our organization grow, learn, and function even more efficiently," said Anne C. Pesik, Blackhawk Transport Director of Safety and Recruiting."

Area businesses that will benefit from a WAT grant this year include Humane Manufacturing, Corporate Contractors Inc. (CCI), Blackhawk Transport, Emmi Roth USA, Inc., Stainless Tank and Equipment, Impact Confections, Inc., SSI Technologies, Inc., Van Galder and Orchid Monroe LLC.

In the past five years, BTC's workforce development team has helped more than 25 area businesses train over 10,000 area employees with WAT or Fast Forward grants. According to Koerth, the grants have had a huge impact on local communities, allowing businesses to retain and retrain experienced workers or expand their workforce.

Employers wishing to partner on a WAT or Fast Forward grant for the 2018-19 academic year should contact Colleen Koerth at ckoerth@blackhawk.edu, 608-743-4597 or Matt Urban at murban@blackhawk.edu, 608-329-8202.