

# PRESS RELEASE

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## For Immediate Release

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## STATE LABOR DEPARTMENT RECEIVES \$5 MILLION TECHNICAL SKILLS TRAINING GRANT

*Department of Labor and Workforce Centers to address labor shortages that  
prompt employers to recruit H1-B workers*

(DENVER) – The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment announced today that it has been awarded a \$5 Million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to launch a training initiative that will prepare workers for careers in Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, and the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industries (with a focus on Aerospace).

Many Coloradans are lacking the skills to compete in these industries and the problem will only get worse in the years ahead if action isn't taken now says Department of Labor and Employment Executive Director Ellen Golombek. "Our economic recovery must focus on skills, not just jobs," she says. "This grant – called *Strategies to Advance Colorado's Highly Skilled Workforce* -- is designed to help close Colorado's growing skills gap."

Even in an economy with an unemployment rate over 8 percent, employers in high-demand, high-wage occupations are still not able to find workers with the right skills and training to fill their job openings. How bad is the problem? Between January of 2010 and the present, Colorado employers spent more than \$19 million in H1-B visa fees to bring in 5,761 foreign workers to fill job openings they couldn't fill with Colorado workers. These workers have taken jobs as computer programmers, computer software engineers, IT analysts and other occupations requiring technical skills.

Importing workers is no long-term solution to Colorado's skilled worker shortage. Through this initiative, businesses stand to save nearly \$3 million in visa costs and approximately \$2.3 million in training costs they would have paid to keep their workforce competitive. The grant's return-on-investment for business and for Colorado exceeds \$6 million for the 4 year grant period of performance.

(More)

*Strategies to Advance Colorado's Highly Skilled Workforce* will target 797 workers statewide, upgrading their skills in information technology, advanced manufacturing and STEM (Scientific, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) capabilities. Of the individuals selected, 558 will be incumbent workers whose skills need upgrading to ensure they stay employed. The grant will also speed the rehire of 239 long-term unemployed workers. A priority of service will be offered to veterans, minorities and women.

The Department of Labor and Employment and local Workforce Centers aren't tackling this initiative on their own. Innovative partnerships will make the initiative successful and Workforce Centers will be partnering with educators and trainers, businesses and non-profit industry-based organizations in targeting workers for training that will build a stronger economy and get Coloradans back to work.

Partners in the initiative include:

- **Colorado's Workforce Development Council;**
- **Other state agencies** (the Office of Economic Development and International Trade, the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Human Services);
- **Educators** (the Colorado Community College System and the University of Denver Women's College);
- **Business Associations** (the Metro Denver Economic Development Council, the Longmont Area Economic Council, the Colorado Association for Manufacturing and Technology, Colorado Photonics Industry Association, the South East Business Partnership, Coolest Women We Know, Colorado Coalition for Gender in Information Technology, Colorado CleanTech Industry Association and the Boulder Economic Council) and
- **Employers** (Allon Hill, Atlasta Solar Center, Evraz, GPS Source, IBM, Imprimis, Inc., JGMS, Inc., Leitner Poma, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, RK Mechanical, Trane, Wall Street On Demand and Wren Industries);

"This is very much a collaborative approach," Golombek says, "and it is a catalyst for creating a solid foundation for the future of technical skill occupations and for workforce development in Colorado."

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