

Governor Kulongoski Announces Workforce Training Strategy

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Governor Ted Kulongoski was joined by the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) today for the release of his strategic plan to transform Oregon's workforce education and training system to ensure that Oregonians have access to the training they need and Oregonians have the highly skilled workforce they need to compete in a global economy. The plan, titled "Winning in the Global Marketplace," was developed by OWIB at the Governor's direction in partnership with leaders in the business, labor, education communities, and local workforce board partners. The plan makes recommendations for targeted investments in innovation, skills training and workforce education, particularly to help meet the high demands in manufacturing and health care industries. "I want every Oregonian to have a good family wage job and every business to have a healthy bottom line that enables them to grow, pay good wages, and keep ahead of the global competition," Governor Kulongoski said following a meeting with the Oregon Workforce Investment Board in Salem. "But we won't achieve those goals with old education tools and old ways of thinking, which is why we must embrace a new approach to global competition, education, and workforce training and why we must make the investments this plan outlines." The strategy outlines the state's plan to address the urgent need for more skilled workers to drive Oregon's economic growth. Oregon is expected to experience 15-percent growth in employment between 2004 and 2014. Yet for every job created, two openings are expected due to replacement needs. That means Oregon will need 700,000 skilled workers to fill openings created by economic growth and retirements by 2014. "How are we going to meet these demands? By creating a workforce education and training system that meets the needs of every Oregonian," continued the Governor. "That means increasing the value of the high school diploma - so more students are better prepared for college and work, expanding career and technical programs, and aligning the skills of workers with the needs of employers. And that's what we're going to do." The Governor also called on the legislature to approve his budget, which provides more than \$25 million in workforce training enhancements, and increased, targeted spending in education at every level "pre-k through post-secondary education. The Governor's budget includes investments in the following initiatives:

Cluster Investment Fund - \$15 million in lottery funds to increase the skills of employed workers, targeted to demands of employers and clusters of businesses in area of high demand, such as manufacturing, food processing, biotechnology, alternative energy and nanotechnology training programs

Skill Up Oregon Fund - \$10 million to upgrade the skills of unemployed and lower wage workers to advance to higher wage jobs in partnership with Local Workforce Investment Boards, and targeted to increase employment opportunities for Oregonians who lack a high school diploma, GED or other professional certificates.

Targeted Education Investments "The Governor's budget increases investments in every level of education by at least 12% over the current biennium, with specific investments in areas, such as:

Career Pathways to connect high school and college programs to jobs in all parts of Oregon.

Work Readiness Certificate comparable to a high school diploma for adults not formally engaged in our education system.

Healthcare training in Oregon's colleges and universities to add 170 additional nurses, 20 nurse educators, 42 clinical lab scientists, 24 dental hygienists, 15 ultrasound techs and additional physicians each year.

Increased math and science programs, engineering and pre-engineering, manufacturing research and development.

Apprenticeship opportunities and strengthened connections between high schools and apprenticeship programs.

"Today, our strategic plan marks a new beginning. It sets us on course for a better future for Oregon

businesses and workers," said the Governor. "For business owners, it means finding the best skilled workers. And for Oregon, it means more living wage jobs and another step toward a future of prosperity, equality, and economic opportunity." For a copy of the Governor's Winning In a Global Market strategic plan, go to his website: http://www.oregon.gov/WORKSOURCE/OWIB/docs/OWIB_1006.pdf

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