



New York State Department of Labor

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NEW YORK STATE, CONGRESSWOMAN LOWEY, LOCAL OFFICIALS RESPOND TO RISING UNEMPLOYMENT NUMBERS IN HUDSON VALLEY REGION

Layoff Aversion Programs, Thousands of Dollars in Training Grants, Federal Tax Incentives Available for Businesses in the Hudson Valley

Joined by a number of local officials at a press event in White Plains, State Labor Commissioner M. Patricia Smith, Congresswoman Nita Lowey and Westchester County Executive Andy Spano today outlined a wide range of initiatives administered by the NYS Department of Labor designed to help businesses in the Hudson Valley region weather the current recession. These include training programs, federal tax credits for new hires and an initiative that helps companies avoid potential layoffs. In the Putnam-Rockland-Westchester area, the unemployment rate in May was 6.9 percent, compared to 4.5 percent just a year earlier.

“As Governor Paterson often says, we are a state rich with resources, the most impressive of which is our human capital,” said Commissioner Smith. “We need to invest in that capital here in the Hudson Valley region, and let it grow. That is the ultimate goal of these initiatives, funded in part by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.”

“Businesses in our area are hurting due to tough economic conditions,” said Lowey. “But resources are available to help relieve employers’ tax burdens, avoid layoffs, and give employees new, marketable skills. I am pleased the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is making possible these initiatives to create and save jobs in our area that would have been lost otherwise.”

Commissioner Smith, Congresswoman Lowey and County Executive Spano encouraged Hudson Valley businesses to tap into the Labor Department’s Building Skills in New York State (BUSINYS) program and upgrade the skills of their incumbent workers. Under this \$5 million training program, funded in part by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, businesses with four or more workers are eligible to apply for up to \$50,000 in worker training funds from the Department of Labor.

The purpose of the BUSINYS initiative is to ensure that the skills of workers do not deteriorate or become "stale" in an ever-more competitive and technologically complex global economy. Once awards are made to Hudson Valley businesses, incumbent workers will be trained in specific occupational skills needed by that business or industry. Eventually, this can lead to potential career growth and increased wages.

In order to be considered for an award, an applicant must:

- Be a private sector, for-profit, or not-for-profit business, and have four or more employees; or a consortium of two or more such businesses that have the same training needs.
- Be headquartered or have at least one physical location in New York State at the time the proposal is submitted. (Funds awarded to applicants must be expended on employees working at the applicant's New York State facilities.)
- Have contacted their local workforce investment area.
- The position(s) targeted for training must exist and be filled at the time the proposal is submitted.
- The applicant must demonstrate that the training will result in the workers' acquisition of transferable occupational skills.

Businesses have until July 20, 2009 to apply for the BUSINYS training program. There is no minimum award amount. Contracts will be awarded for a period of up to six months. For more information or to download an application, visit the Labor Department's homepage at www.labor.ny.gov.

Businesses in the Hudson Valley that are hiring are encouraged to take advantage of federal Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) administered by the Department of Labor. These credits, which can amount to thousands of dollars for each new hire, are available for any business that hires WOTC-eligible individuals, including: long-term Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients; TANF recipients; veterans (eligibility criteria for veterans has expanded under the federal stimulus package); ex-felons; summer youth (eligibility criteria for youth has expanded under the federal stimulus package); vocational rehabilitation referrals; 18 to 39 year-old food stamp recipients; Supplemental Security Income Recipients; and individuals living in designated zones across the state. Businesses in the Hudson Valley region interested in WOTC should call 1-888-4-NYSDOL.

“These added funds being made available to businesses through the Building Skills in New York program are yet another example of how federal stimulus dollars are helping to strengthen our local economy,” said Westchester County Executive Andy Spano. “I would urge local businesses to visit our One-Stop Employment Center to get help applying for these job training funds. Businesses must have a skilled workforce to meet the challenges of this difficult economy and prepare for the future.”

“Clearly this is a most needed investment for our region,” said William M. Mooney, Jr., President, The Westchester County Association. “All one has to do is look at the unemployment rate which at the end of May was almost 7% up from 4½% a year earlier. We will alert our members about the availability of these initiatives. It’s comforting to know that our Congresswoman Nita Lowey and the other state and elected officials are helping the business community.”

Officials also called upon businesses in the region that are considering laying off workers to look into the Labor Department's Shared Work Program. Shared Work provides employers an alternative to layoffs as they face a temporary decline in business. Rather than lay off a percentage of workers to cut costs, an employer can use this program to reduce the hours of all or a particular group of employees. In turn, employees can receive partial unemployment insurance benefits to compensate for their lost wages. Under the Shared Work program, participating employees do not see a reduction in their health insurance, retirement, vacation pay, or other fringe benefits.

In 2008, there were 43 companies and 660 workers in the Shared Work program in the Hudson Valley region. Statewide, 462 companies and 14,775 workers participated in the program during that year. From January through May 2009, there were 104 companies and 1,846 workers participating in the program in the Hudson Valley region. During this same time period, 1,317 companies and 31,446 workers participated in the program statewide.

Businesses interested in applying for the Shared Work program can call (518) 457-5807.

To find out more about the Department of Labor and its services for businesses and workers, please visit www.labor.ny.gov.

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