



Colorado FIRST and Existing Industry Customized Training Programs

The Colorado FIRST Customized Job Training Program was legislatively created in 1984 to encourage quality economic development by providing incentives for companies to create new jobs and train new employees in Colorado. The Colorado FIRST program focuses on providing job training assistance to new companies that locate in Colorado and to existing companies that expand their operations within the state. The Existing Industries Job Training Program was legislatively created in 1989 to provide (re)training assistance to companies with existing employees affected by major technological changes or for retention efforts. The program's priority is to address situations in which imminent dislocation of existing employees represents a threat to the community's economic well-being.

- During fiscal year 2004, 61 companies received training grants to train (or retrain) 4,525 employees.
- Since program inception, over 105,300 trainees have upgraded their job skills, resulting in individual benefits and benefits to companies by making them more competitive.
- These training programs will receive \$2.7 million in funding for the 2005-2006 program year.

The programs are jointly administered by the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OED) and the Colorado Community College System (CCCS). OED and CCCS have raised the maximum amount per employee in an effort to be more responsive to company training needs. Companies must contribute at least 40% of training costs for the program to contribute up to \$800 per trained employee depending upon actual training costs.

The Colorado FIRST job-training program is intended for:

- Companies that utilize innovative approaches to training.
- Permanent, non-seasonal, primary jobs created by non-retail companies newly locating or undertaking a significant expansion in Colorado;
- Job-specific and short-term training, lasting until the start-up or expansion training needs of the participating company are satisfied. Training programs are not designed to assist companies with normal, on-going training requirements;
- Jobs which pay well above minimum wage and provide a health plan for their employees, to generate an adequate return on the tax dollars invested;
- Companies which coordinate their training through local community college or vocational/technical institutions. The same institutions can also administer the paperwork on behalf of the business;
- Companies willing to contribute technical expertise, machinery, training space, money and other appropriate resources to improve program effectiveness;
- Company sponsorships, in some cases requiring a percentage of the training costs of in-kind contributions to be provided by the company. Colorado FIRST funds cannot be used to pay wages or stipends to trainees during a training session;
- Companies that make conservative projections of new job and wage creation; funds may be recovered by the state if stated goals are not met.

To find a community college or area vocational school, see <http://www.cccs.edu/FindCollege.html> . To download information and application forms from the Community College Web sites, go to <http://www.cccs.edu/Workforce/TrainingFunds.html>.