

BUILDING A WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

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**by Commissioner James Neeley
Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development**

Tennessee Career Centers have helped thousands of applicants find new jobs, in most cases with salaries equal to or higher than those of their previous jobs.

Through various programs, the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development seeks to attract and retain better-paying, high-skill jobs. We are continually striving to provide better opportunities and a brighter future for all Tennesseans. Building a “workforce of the future” is essential for the state to remain competitive and to strengthen the economy.

Teamwork

We are committed to providing both employers and job seekers access to recruitment and training services through the Tennessee Career Center System. There are 14 comprehensive career centers and 54 affiliate sites administered through local partners within the state’s 13 local workforce investment areas to connect employers with the right job applicants.

Services Available to Employers and Job Seekers

Providing Opportunities

Dislocated Worker Services, available for employees who lose their jobs through no fault of their own, may include unemployment insurance, trade adjustment assistance, career center

services, and job search assistance through the Tennessee Career Center System. A team of rapid response coordinators throughout the state responds to the needs of employers and affected employees during plant closures and downsizing. Job seekers receive training in interviewing skills, assistance with resume preparation, and access to many resources such as America’s Job Bank, current labor market information, and adult basic education services. Tennessee Career Centers have helped thousands of applicants find new jobs, in most cases with salaries equal to or higher than those of their previous jobs. The Trade Adjustment Assistance program provides additional financial assistance to workers whose job loss is affected by foreign trade.

Staying Competitive

The Incumbent Worker Training program provides grant funding for training for existing businesses. Employers can receive financial assistance for skills upgrade training that will help them retain existing jobs or place workers in other jobs with higher wages. Through this program, Tennessee is able to effectively retain businesses while keeping them competitive.





professions.

Tennessee has encouraged healthcare training by providing additional statewide funds to support skills shortages training for nursing and other health-related fields. In addition, local areas have leveraged other federal funding opportunities to further develop healthcare skills. We are constantly seeking innovative ways to provide much-needed support to Tennessee's healthcare workers and continue to strengthen the workforce in the healthcare industry.

Partnerships = Success

In conjunction with the U.S. Department of Labor, the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development has formed national business partners through the Partnerships for Jobs Initiative, developed to assist businesses with their hiring needs. The partnerships allow us to

work closely with Tennessee's businesses, better serving them and connecting them with the right applicants. We work with our partners to meet their specific needs. Some of the partners have seasonal hiring needs, such as Toys "R" Us. Many of these jobs can lead to new career paths. Other national business partners include Allstate, Home Depot, Petco, Rainbow Shops, Church's Chicken, Swift Transportation, Verizon, CVS/pharmacy, Kmart, Manpower, Bank of America, and Diamond Triumph.

Job Growth

The Jobs Cabinet created by Governor Phil Bredesen combines state resources to promote job creation and business growth statewide. As a member of the Jobs Cabinet, I have participated in the recent "Hands on Tennessee" tour. The cabinet has been meeting with business and community leaders across the state to discuss the challenges we face in attracting better-paying, high-skill jobs and in encouraging successful local companies to expand. The Jobs Cabinet is evaluating Tennessee's workforce training programs and coordinating efforts to assist areas hard hit by mass layoffs and closures. Building a skilled workforce of the future through job creation and retention is essential to the state's economy. ■

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Tailored On-the-Job Training

Through on-the-job training, employers can be reimbursed for up to half of wages paid to pre-approved workers. Employers acquire workers that are trained to their own specifications. The training can be done internally or externally. On-the-job training is particularly encouraged in higher-skill occupations. We are also partnering with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development in providing financial assistance for on-the-job training to qualifying companies in areas that will strengthen the workforce and enhance economic development.

Healthcare Professions

In the past few years, a critical need has surfaced in the healthcare arena for qualified workers in virtually every service and support role. Through the development of strategic partnerships, our focus has sharpened to target employers needing qualified and available workers while ensuring that Tennessee's workforce is able to meet those needs. Tennessee has made healthcare a high priority by focusing on training programs for nursing and allied health