

Kentucky Education Cabinet

NEWS RELEASE

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Education Cabinet secretary presents \$374,000 check for training to Lincoln Trail Workforce Investment Board

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 31, 2007) — Kentucky Education Cabinet Secretary Laura E. Owens presented a \$374,000 check from Governor Ernie Fletcher to the Lincoln Trail Workforce Investment Board for advanced manufacturing training and the purchase of robotics equipment in Marion and Washington counties today at the Marion County Office of Economic Development.

The funds from Gov. Fletcher's Workforce Investment Act Statewide Reserve will expand employment and training opportunities for the Central Kentucky I-65 Corridor Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) initiative. The award is part of an ongoing initiative to address workforce and education needs and spur innovation and entrepreneurship in a 15-county area designated as the Central Kentucky I-65 Corridor including Breckinridge, Bullitt, Grayson, Hardin, Henry, Jefferson, Larue, Marion, Meade, Nelson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, Trimble and Washington counties.

Gov. Fletcher said, "This award will provide start-up money to train current and future workers in advanced manufacturing jobs. We are experiencing a dramatic shift in the area toward high-skill manufacturing jobs that require specialized training and equipment. The funds will help companies fill critical workforce gaps that have been identified in the I-65 Corridor WIRED initiative so that the region can remain competitive and take advantage of future opportunities."

Companies in the region have formed a training consortium to identify technology and advanced production methods that will require highly skilled workers. In addition to the \$374,000 from Gov. Fletcher, companies in the area have committed \$261,000 to the initiative for equipment and training. The money will be used to retrain current workers and new hires in robotics at the Marion County Area Technology Center.

"For Kentucky to prosper in an extremely competitive global marketplace, we have to prepare our people to meet challenges in education and training," Owens said. "This region of Kentucky is uniquely qualified for high-tech expansion because I-65 is one of the most heavily traveled north-to-south interstates in the United States, and the region is supported by a strong infrastructure. It is an exciting initiative that will bring job opportunities in high paying fields."

To maintain and encourage progressive industries and economic development, state and local government officials, workforce investment boards, education and training providers, and business and industry representatives are working together to prepare all areas of the I-65 Corridor for planned development. Some of those developments along the I-65 Corridor include a \$1 billion United Parcel Service (UPS) hub expansion slated for completion in 2010 and a base realignment at Fort Knox that will require a shift to technology-focused careers.

Wendell Lawrence, executive director of the Lincoln Trail Area Development District, said, "We would like to thank Governor Fletcher for his support and investment in advanced manufacturing. The I-65 Corridor WIRED project establishes advanced manufacturing as one of the keystones for economic transformation and talent development. This investment is an important first step in building a highly competitive workforce."

The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration started the WIRED initiative in 2005 to encourage the development of regional economies across the country through economic and workforce partnerships. The I-65 Corridor is one of 13 regions in the nation selected in the third generation of WIRED funding. Each region will receive \$5 million over three years.

For more information on the WIRED initiative, go to <http://www.doleta.gov/wired>.

(30)

The Education Cabinet coordinates learning programs from P-16, and manages and supports training and employment functions in the Department for Workforce Investment. For more information about our programs, visit www.educationcabinet.ky.gov or www.workforce.ky.gov, or call 502-564-6606.