

## **Acadiana leads state in workforce training grant awards**

Fifty-seven Acadiana businesses net more than \$5.6 million in funding

**Lafayette, LA**– Acadiana businesses received the most Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) awards of any region in the state during the 2010-11 fiscal year. Fifty-seven awards totaling more than \$5.6 million were issued to Acadiana businesses. Additionally, local businesses were awarded \$769,684 in Small Business Employee Training (SBET) awards, nearly a quarter of the total SBET awards approved statewide.

Administered by the Louisiana Workforce Commission and funded by state unemployment insurance taxes, IWTP was created in 1997 by the Legislature to help employers around the state provide customized training for their workers. To qualify for the program, a business must have been in operation in Louisiana for a least three years and have at least 15 employees to be trained.

"PHI has been a part of the Incumbent Workers Training Program for several years. We have trained pilots and aircraft mechanics under this program," said an official from PHI, Inc. "These disciplines are obviously very critical to transporting oil company personnel offshore to the drilling and production platforms. The IWTP program plays a vital part in providing assistance in our training efforts. As a result the IWTP is also a big part of helping the Louisiana economy."

The total allocation for IWTP awards varies year to year based on the balance of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund and currently ranges between \$20 and 30 million. Since the program's inception, Acadiana businesses have received 426 contract awards valued at more than \$80 million.

"The Incumbent Worker Training Program has provided our Louisiana Corporation adequate funding so we can provide our employees with customized training we otherwise might have found difficult to finance completely on our own," said Douglas Cochrane, President and CEO of Cochrane Technologies. "With these funds, our company can remain on the competitive edge in our technology and we are able to effectively upgrade and retain existing, full-time employees."

The SBET Program is administered by the Louisiana Workforce Commission. Businesses that have 50 or fewer employees and are in compliance with Unemployment Insurance Tax obligations may qualify for up to \$3,000 per employee, per fiscal year for standardized workforce training. Employees may be full-time, part-time or interns.

A skilled workforce is vital to maintain a strong business base in Acadiana. IWTP and SBET funds provide critical resources to allow companies to train employees; thereby, passing the benefit on to their customers.

“Education and skill development are important building blocks to the bank’s future,” said Sarah Oubre, First Vice President / Human Resources Manager with Home Bank. “Our customers see more knowledgeable employees who are better equipped to provide products and services that meet their needs. Our employees are more satisfied with their careers and feel equipped to meet the challenges of a growing organization.”

“Building and maintaining a single-minded, safety-first culture requires a tremendous investment of resources,” said OMNI President & CEO Brian Recatto. “The health and well-being of our personnel is our primary concern. We appreciate our partnership with the State of Louisiana, through the Incumbent Worker Training Program, that helps strengthen our ability to create jobs, develop skilled workers and flourish as an economic driver in the Acadiana community and around the state.”

Area business owners and human resource officers can learn about these training programs and the application process from Ryan LaGrange, Director of Workforce Development at the Lafayette Economic Development Authority (LEDA). LEDA regularly hosts a workforce seminar that is open to the public or you can request a one-on-one meeting by contacting LEDA at (337) 593-1400.

###