

Aerospace training in state gets \$20 million boost from federal grant

The \$20 million will fund a program to educate Washingtonians interested in working in aerospace.

By **Michelle Dunlop**, Herald Writer

Washingtonians interested in a career in aerospace will have more opportunities for training, thanks to a \$20 million federal grant.

The U.S. Department of Labor grant was first announced Sept. 30. On Friday, representatives of the 14 community colleges, technical schools and training organizations involved met Sens. Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray, both D-Wash., in Seattle to provide a general overview of how the \$20 million will be used.

"This program is about putting Washingtonians back to work," Cantwell said.

The senator praised the comprehensive approach that would provide training for aerospace jobs across Washington state, noting that Spokane Community College had the lead role in the grant.

Joe Dunlap, president of the Spokane college, said the group will focus on some key areas of training, such as aircraft maintenance, composites, advanced manufacturing and avionics. Different colleges will specialize in various areas.

Overall, the group will look to provide a variety of opportunities for people to gain training in aerospace including apprenticeship programs through the Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee, short-term training and two-year certificate programs.

The consortium of colleges will get the \$20 million over a three-year period, during which time the group expects to train about 2,600 people. But Dunlap said that the steps the colleges and training organizations are taking to expand capacity will last well beyond three years.

"This will build the capacity to train people into the future," he said.

Having training programs in place to build and sustain a skilled workforce will be key in the state's effort to land future work on Boeing's 737 re-engined jet, called the 737 MAX. Boeing has built its popular single-aisle 737 in Renton for decades but said it hasn't decided where the 737 MAX will be built.

Aerospace is also one of the few industries in the state that is hiring at a steady pace. Boeing alone has added more than 7,000 people to its workforce in the state since the beginning of the year.

"These programs could not have come at a more critical time for Washington," Cantwell said.

Janie Pierce, director of human resources for Precision Machine Works in Tacoma, emphasized the importance of training programs to the company. "We rely on these programs to bring in machinists," she said.

Randy Elvrom, manager for Allflight, said the lack of skilled workers in the marketplace is making it tough for the company to remain competitive. The Seattle-based repair station is looking to double its number of employees, from 50 to 100, within a year.

"This program will mean that we can get skilled employees going forward," he said.

Murray said she gets "very concerned" when aerospace employers in Washington state talk about not being able to find skilled workers. The aerospace training programs funded by this grant should help workers in the state "skill up."

"This is a \$20 million investment in Washington state workers," Murray said.

The colleges will be meeting in the next few weeks to finalize details of their programs.

Want an aerospace job?

If you're interested in enrolling in an aerospace training program, contact one of the 14 community colleges and training organizations that received grant funding or your local workforce development council for information on available programs.

The schools include: Spokane Community College, Big Bend Community College, Skagit Valley College, Clover Park Technical College, South Seattle Community College, Edmonds Community College, the Washington Aerospace Training and Research Center, Wenatchee Valley College, the Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee, Everett Community College, and the Center of Excellence for Aerospace and Advanced Materials Manufacturing.

Washington technical schools and community colleges awarded \$1.58 million for aerospace training

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Thirteen Washington two-year colleges will share \$1.58 million in Governor's Investment in Aerospace (GIA) grants to develop fast turnover training in aerospace.

A mix of Gov. Christine Gregoire's discretionary Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds and state aerospace training funds, the grants are designed to assist community and technical colleges throughout the state develop new training in aerospace industry-identified areas.

In response to the governor's direction of the discretionary WIA funds and the grant RFP, community and technical colleges in Washington collaboratively formed the Aerospace Consortium for Employment (ACE). The consortium's mission is to meet urgent workforce needs with short-term training programs in the areas of precision machining, machine maintenance, fiber optics and quality assurance/inspection. The consortium worked with The Boeing Company to identify areas of immediate need in the aerospace industry and identified two to six month training program opportunities to meet those needs.

ACE applied for and was awarded a GIA grant, which will be applied toward developing programs that retrain or enhance skilled aerospace workers in precision machining, machine maintenance, fiber optics and quality assurance/inspection. Fund allocation and usage vary between the schools. On a whole, the monies will go toward equipment purchase, additional faculty and program development

Below is a listing of the ACE colleges and their portions of the grant:

- Bates Technical College (Tacoma) \$91,229
- Bellingham Technical College (Bellingham) \$112,944
- Columbia Basin College (Pasco) \$111,232
- Everett Community College (Everett) \$114,466
- Green River Community College (Auburn) \$167,234
- Lake Washington Institute of Technology (Kirkland) \$172,431
- Olympic College (Bremerton) \$101,677
- Shoreline Community College (Shoreline) \$80,856
- South Puget Sound Community College (Olympia) \$53,188
- South Seattle Community College (Seattle) \$3,432
- Yakima Valley Community College (Yakima) \$38,600

Two additional colleges received GIA grants:

- Clover Park Technical College (Lakewood) \$356,000
- Spokane Community College (Spokane) \$176,887