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-News Release-

Christie Administration Unveils $26 Million for Three-Prong Recovery Plan: Recovery4Jersey, Skills4Jersey & Opportunity4Jersey Launched to Aid Business and Workers

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TRENTON, N.J., DECEMBER 11, 2012 - **Governor Chris Christie today announced the release of $26 million to support three economic recovery initiatives designed to assist businesses and workers in the wake of Hurricane Sandy and to additionally invest in New Jersey's future growth.**

The three initiatives, Recovery4Jersey, Skills4Jersey and Opportunity4Jersey, involve the investment of training dollars by the state Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) into New Jersey businesses and the state's workforce with the **goal of connecting the unemployed to job opportunities in the Sandy recovery effort while also building the skills of existing workers for jobs in the state's key industry clusters**. The $26 million, to be offered to New Jersey employers as grants, is coming from a restructuring of long-standing LWD training programs to focus not only on the Sandy clean-up, but also to ensure that all future programs designed to enhance the skills of the state's workforce are driven by the needs of the Garden State's businesses.

"These initiatives embody another step in New Jersey's journey to recovery from the devastation of Sandy, but also represent a transformation of how New Jersey prepares its workforce," said Governor Christie. "We know the industries that offer the most promise for moving our economy forward, and it only makes sense for us to train our job seekers for professions in those industries."

"As we spend public funds training unemployed residents for new jobs and enhancing the skills of our existing workforce, we should also give each job seeker the knowledge and tools that are most valued by our industries," said Labor Commissioner Harold J. Wirths. "This approach ensures we are offering our unemployed residents opportunities for meaningful careers and at the same time invest in the industries that are building New Jersey's future."

The three initiatives include:

Recovery4Jersey

This involves a two-prong approach.

The LWD will provide $4 million to support private sector recovery and rebuilding efforts required in the wake of Hurricane Sandy by offering funds through which businesses can train newly hired workers. Grants will be available to companies involved in recovery and rebuilding efforts, including utilities, construction companies and other clean-up related businesses. This funding program serves as a private-sector complement to the federally-funded $15.6 million National Emergency Grant under which local government agencies are being able to hire unemployed people to help clean up the debris left behind by the storm.

The LWD will make $7 million in funds available for local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to provide for on-the-job training (OJT) for unemployed individuals hired in recovery related industries and occupations, as well as in occupations where there is an increased demand due to the recovery effort. Focusing on OJT ensures that training funds are directly connected to employment. The funds will provide a hiring incentive to employers and will defray the costs of providing training to new employees. Grants will be a capped at $4,000 per individual trained. Local WIBs are well positioned to identify local companies interested in participating.

Skills4Jersey

Under this initiative, $11 million in training funds will be made available in grants to help New Jersey employers upgrade the occupational, literacy and safety skills of their current employees and/or train new employees for purposes of retaining highly skilled and high wage jobs in New Jersey. The grants will be made available to individual employers, labor organizations and a consortium of two or more employers organized by industry associations, educational institutions or other groups. The training may consist of OJT and/or classroom training. Training may be provided by the employer or by a training provider selected by the employer. Each employer who receives a grant must contribute a minimum of 50 percent of the total cost of the training services received. Any wages paid to employees during the training period may be utilized to fulfill that requirement.

Opportunity4Jersey

This initiative is intended to fill a "skills gap" reported by New Jersey employers, who indicate that they have difficulty finding qualified workers with the specific skills needed for their industries. LWD will provide $4 million for this initiative, which is designed to address such gaps through training programs that are directly connected to the hiring needs of multiple employers. The initiative is based on a pilot training program conducted earlier this year in which all 10 graduates of a fabricated metal product training class were successfully placed into jobs. Training grants will be made available to colleges and approved training institutions working in conjunction with pre-identified New Jersey employers or a consortia of employers from one of the New Jersey state's targeted industry clusters.

The targeted industry clusters on which the training funds are focused were the basis of LWD's "Talent Networks," which were established last year to help employers in those industries better identify the skills they seek in prospective employees. The Talent Networks also have served to identify ways the state can improve the business climate and enable companies to hire more of New Jersey's unemployed residents.

To find out more about the Talent Networks, go to:
lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lwdhome/content/TalentNetworkNJ_Index.html
To learn more about the grant opportunities made available through the economic recovery initiatives, please go to:
lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/employer/training/FY13_NGO_Skills.html

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