



405 First St. SE | Little Falls, MN 56345
320.632.9255 | www.ifound.org

For Immediate Release

Kathy Gaalswyk, President
Initiative Foundation
kgaalswyk@ifound.org
320-632-9255

Initiative Foundation's Largest Grant Funds Workforce Training Program

With its largest grant in 2010, the Initiative Foundation will fund an online training program to develop job seekers' core skills and help area employers find the workers they need.

The \$50,000 grant will be shared by three central Minnesota workforce agencies—Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council (SBETC) in St. Cloud; Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program (RMCEP) in Detroit Lakes; and Central Minnesota Jobs & Training Services (CMJTS) in Monticello. Together, the agencies cover the foundation's 14-county service area.

Using the National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC), selected Minnesota Workforce Centers will document job seekers' skill levels in three essential areas—reading for information, applied mathematics, and the ability to locate information.

These skills are important to more than 85 percent of all occupations profiled by ACT, the developer of the certification.

“With unemployment still in double digits, many displaced workers are facing the reality that their old jobs aren't coming back,” said Kathy Gaalswyk, Initiative Foundation president. “When this project gets up and running, anyone with access to a computer will be able to brush up on the basics and prove to employers that they have marketable skills.”

Workers can earn nationally recognized certificates that allow employers to identify the best candidates for their companies, taking some of the guesswork out of hiring decisions. The program may also help participants avoid taking remedial courses if they decide to pursue higher education.

“There's a definite benefit for economic development,” said Kathy Zavala, SBETC executive director. “If employers are interested in expanding or relocating, this system offers very good information related to workforce skills in the area.”

In Stearns and Benton Counties, Zavala plans to make the program available to individuals who may not normally qualify for SBETC services. Her goal is to document the number of individuals who attain bronze, silver, gold and platinum certifications, to make the region more attractive to employers.

For more information, contact Kathy Zavala at (320) 308-5702 or kzavala@sbetc.org.

Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program Director Daniel Wenner plans to make the NCRC available to individuals who may not qualify for eligibility based services, at centers in Brainerd, Little Falls and Wadena. His goal is to document the number of individuals who attain bronze, silver, gold and platinum certifications, to make the region more attractive to employers.

For more information, contact Wenner at 1-800-492-4804.

Central Minnesota Jobs & Training Services Director Barbara Chaffee plans to make the NCRC available to individuals who may not qualify for eligibility based services, at centers in Monticello, Cambridge, Mora and Milaca. Her goal is to work directly with businesses, documenting the number of individuals who attain bronze, silver, gold and platinum certifications to make the region more attractive to employers.

For more information, contact Barbara Chaffee at (763) 271-3711 or bchaffee@cmjts.org.

Based in Little Falls and serving central Minnesota's 14 counties, the Initiative Foundation offers loans to businesses, grants to nonprofits, and a variety of leadership programs that enable citizens to build stronger communities.

(END)