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Connecticut Labor Department wins Gold Connecticut Innovation Prize

A Connecticut Department of Labor incumbent worker training program that helps small to mid-size manufacturers in this state address their training needs more efficiently and cost-effectively has earned the Agency a Gold Innovation Prize.

The Connecticut Department of Labor -- the first state agency to implement and formally practice a statewide Multiple Employer concept for incumbent workers -- has been singled out for this honor by the Connecticut Quality Improvement Award Partnership. This year, the Partnership received 110 Connecticut Innovation Prize applications, and 22 Gold and Silver designations were awarded.

It is the fourth time that the Connecticut Department of Labor has won a Connecticut Quality Improvement Award. All four, ranging from Silver to Platinum, have been awarded to innovations made within the Agency's Customized Job Training Unit.

"Approximately two-thirds of all the small and mid-size businesses registered with the Agency's Customized Job Training Program are now served through the Multiple Employer concept, meaning that one master contract is written with a Department of Labor partner or lead company," explains State Labor Commissioner Shaun B. Cashman. "Working this way, employers are able to work better and cut costs by sending small groups of employees to centrally located training."

By reducing the number of contracts written, the Connecticut Department of Labor has been able to provide training to

more companies, but with lower administrative costs, Cashman notes. As a result of this innovation, the number of businesses served jumped from 125 to 450 - an increase of 360 percent - while the amount of instructional time made available to the state's incumbent workers increased by an additional 2,000 hours.

"This has also resulted in an added bonus of our Customized Job Training staff being able to spend more time with our customers," he said.

The key to this successful project, Cashman added, is the collaboration between partners, including industry clusters, state community and four-year colleges, the Institute for Industrial & Engineering Technology (IET) in New Britain, the Connecticut State Technical Extension Program (CONN-STEP), and local chambers of commerce and labor organizations.

The Gold Innovation Prize will be presented to the Connecticut Department of Labor during the CQIA Partnership's 15th Annual Conference on Quality and Innovation, to be held Oct. 17 at the Southbury Hilton.

The Connecticut Quality Improvement Award Partnership is a not-for-profit Stamford-based group that annually recognizes organizations in this state that have excelled in managing quality improvement for business success and growth. Founded in 1987, the Partnership is a growing group of business people, educators, health care executives and government officials concerned with improving the economic vitality of Connecticut through its awards.