

Bi-State Workforce Boards Receive Department of Labor Grant To Launch Gateway Registered Apprenticeship Programs Hub

by Madison County Administrator's Office
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EDWARDSVILLE – The U.S. Department of Labor awarded Madison County and the St. Louis region workforce innovation areas a four-year, \$5.8 million grant to be a part of the Apprenticeship Building America program.

“We are thrilled with this announcement from the Department of Labor to be able to launch the Gateway Registered Apprenticeship Programs Hub,” Employment and Training Director Tony Fuhrmann said.

Fuhrmann said the Gateway Hub, which includes six local workforce innovation areas —Madison County Employment and Training, St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department, City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, St. Charles County and the Jefferson/Franklin Consortium in Missouri — received \$5,819,104 in ABA grant funding.

The project aims to register at least 750 new apprentices across the region and represents the first joint initiative between Illinois and Missouri workforce areas, Fuhrmann said

“These Local Workforce Innovation Areas serve more than 13 counties and 2.4 million residents across the St. Louis metropolitan region,” Fuhrmann said. “In addition to building capacity and awareness for apprenticeships as an ‘earn-as-you-learn’ model for workforce development, the Gateway Hub will emphasize the inclusion of underserved populations in apprenticeship opportunities.”

He said the target industries are education, healthcare and social assistance and bioscience manufacturing research and development were selected due to alignment with regional comprehensive economic development strategies, strong employment demand and quality of jobs and previous success in collaborating with regional employers in these fields.

“We are particularly excited by the opportunity for our bi-state regional workforce development boards to work together to implement a unified local workforce strategy,” St. Louis County Workforce Development Director Gregory Laposa said. “While our workforce areas have regularly collaborated through our Regional Workforce Directors Board to establish collaborative goals and strategies, this represents our first joint grant proposal led by local boards and we are thrilled that Department of Labor recognized the strong potential of our region to serve as a model for apprenticeship expansion.”

In addition to workforce and employer partners, the Gateway Hub includes BioSTL, the non-profit innovation hub driving the bioscience sector across the St. Louis region. BioSTL will leverage the BioSTL Coalition, comprised of top business, science, academic, philanthropic, and public sector leaders, to advance registered apprenticeships across the bioscience cluster.

“This project is a testament to the St. Louis region’s unique position to build a robust, inclusive talent pipeline to fuel future pandemic response and recovery, while creating

new economic opportunity, diversifying the local economy, and advancing health and economic equity,” BioSTL Director of Regional Workforce Strategy Justin Raymundo said. “We look forward to leveraging the local, national, and international expertise of the BioSTL Coalition to support the impact of the Gateway Hub by convening industry, aligning workforce needs, and delivering on an inclusive strategy for St. Louis’ bioscience workforce.”

Local institutions of higher education, including Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Southwestern Illinois College, Lewis and Clark Community College, St. Louis Community College, Jefferson College, and Kaskaskia Community College also will play a vital role in the project by connecting apprentices to quality education and training programs.

“SIUE is a leader in online degree completion and corporate partnerships, supporting employee advancement through specialized post-secondary opportunities at the bachelor’s, post-baccalaureate, and master’s levels,” SIUE Chancellor James T. Minor, PhD, said. “We are proud to collaborate with numerous members of the Gateway Hub. Together, we are building partnerships that provide transformative experiences for individuals who seek something greater through high-quality academic development and hands-on skills training.”

In addition to the workforce partners, the Gateway Hub will bring together industry and employer groups, educational institutions, and community organizations designed to support the creation and expansion of Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

Some of the partners include: BJC HealthCare, Cortex Innovation Community, Gateway Regional Medical Center, Hospital Sisters Health System, Jersey County Hospital, MilliporeSigma, OSF Healthcare, Alton, Belleville, Collinsville, and Madison School Districts, and community organizations such as Rung for Women, the Urban League of Metro St. Louis and the YWCA of Metro St. Louis.

The project is supported by regional economic development organizations such as the Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois and multiple regional chambers of commerce and municipalities.

“We are proud to collaborate with the Gateway Hub consortium to expand registered apprenticeship opportunities for the betterment of our workforce and our region,” BJC HealthCare President and CEO Richard J. Liekweg said. “We look forward to the impact this effort will have on the health and well-being of the region.”