

Workforce Investment Board of Columbia & Greene Counties
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GRANTS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLANS AVAILABLE

The Workforce Investment Board of Columbia & Greene Counties learned at its Quarterly Meeting, held October 7, that the New York State Department of Labor has awarded its Accelerate New York grants and that local businesses in our area will be able to be served by this initiative. The Accelerate New York grant is designed to provide small to medium sized local companies with the services of a consultant to help them develop strategic business plans.

According to Mary-Alane Wiltse, the Director of the Workforce Investment Office at Columbia-Greene Community College, "The New York State Department of Labor was allotting approximately \$150,000 to various regions of the state for this project. We decided that if we were going to have any kind of control over getting our fair share we needed to collaborate with the other workforce areas in our region." The other two areas being served by this grant include the Workforce Investment Boards from Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer and Saratoga, Warren, Washington.

This grant is targeting three different industry sectors: Professional, Scientific, Technical; Information Technology; and Leisure and Hospitality. The two organizations that will be providing the consulting services are the Center for Economic Growth and MDI Associates. Ms. Wiltse stated, "Businesses in our two counties will be eligible to apply through our office for the consultant services. We will be able to serve three businesses in the professional sector, one business in the information technology sector and four businesses in the hospitality sector".

Karen Diffley, Chairperson of the Board added, "The Strategic Business Planning grants are supposed to target those companies that anticipate growth over the coming year, and a part of the plan will focus on the potential training needs of the company's employees." Businesses that participate in this project will then be able to apply for another NYS Department of Labor grant to help pay for the training of their workers. These grants can be up to \$100,000.

In other business the Board welcomed two new members, Diane Franzman from the Columbia County Health Care Consortium and Susan Hollister from the Hudson River Bank & Trust Co.

The Board also got a virtual tour of its newly redesigned website: columbiagreetworks.org. The website provides useful information to both businesses and jobseekers. It includes access to the New York State Job Bank where, free of charge, businesses can post their job openings and job seekers can find leads. There is also a wide range of local labor market data available on the site, as well as career planning assistance and labor law information.