

## **EMPLOYERS CAN ACCESS £65M TO DEVELOP SKILLED WORKFORCE**

- Government earmarks £65million to science, engineering and manufacturing technologies sectors
- Skills shortages are estimated to be costing England £700 million a year

Semta, the sector skills council for the science, engineering and manufacturing technologies sector, has today announced details of a new £65m partnership with government to deliver urgently required skills training for employees in these sectors.

Through Semta, companies can access grants of between £500 and £1800 per employee depending on what qualifications and training is needed. Support will be geared mainly towards development of lean manufacturing skills to make small and medium sized companies more competitive.

A lack of skilled workers is costing the country around £700 million a year in lost productivity, according to recent Semta research. In the pharmaceutical and bio science sector there are skills gaps of 29% and in engineering this is 18%.

The companies who should benefit most will be those with under 250 employees who may struggle to determine how skills investment can improve their business. Semta advisors will help them identify where their business needs improved staff skills, set improvement targets and measure the impact. Unlike larger companies, they will also be eligible for grants to develop Management and Leadership.

The new agreement will allow participating employers in England to train through programmes including Train to Gain and Apprenticeships. In addition, existing workers, of all ages, will be able to learn new or more advanced skills, which will allow them to progress their careers and improve productivity and competitiveness.

Philip Whiteman, Chief Executive of Semta, said: "Our partnership with government will deliver real economic benefits to science, engineering and manufacturing. To overcome significant skills gaps and make businesses more competitive, employers need access to funding for innovative programmes like Business Improvement Techniques. These not only upskill workers in a sustainable way, they also put employees on the qualifications ladder and provide measurable bottom line profits from quality, cost and delivery."

Semta's trial activities have found significant benefits. For example Kettering based Cooney Marine which employs 70 people producing stainless steel parts and fittings for yacht building, trained staff in Business Improvement Techniques. This resulted in a 123% improvement in delivery and a 139% rise in valued added per person. And Jackson and Keay which employs 70 people at sites in the East Midlands and North West testing low and high pressure receptacles was supported by Semta in developing lean techniques and tools such as continuous improvement and kanbans. Their staff not only gained NVQ Level 2 qualifications, they also improved delivery lead times by 200%, productivity by 48% (man hours per unit), and attendance by 30%.

The £65m will be available from the Train to Gain budget; up to 30% of the budget for level 2 and level 3 learning will now be available to train employees who already hold GCSE or A-level equivalents but who need more specific, or more up-to-date, business qualifications.

Government investment in Train to Gain will rise to over £1 billion by 2010-11, supporting over 800,000 learners to improve their skills and gain new qualifications.

MetSkill now has access to this funding. Please register your interest with [j.eason@metskill.co.uk](mailto:j.eason@metskill.co.uk) who will get a representative local to your area to contact you and discuss.