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Job training aims at specific industries

By Jane Prendergast
jprendergast@enquirer.com

With a \$2.25 million grant, an unprecedented network of Greater Cincinnati officials, businesses and social service agencies promises more job training and education targeted at specific growing industries Cincinnati is trying to attract.

The GO (Growth and Opportunities) Cincinnati study in January listed nine industries in which the city could see significant growth.

Among them: aerospace technology, hospitals, life sciences and insurance/banking. Now, the new Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network - which includes representatives from the United Way and Cincinnati Public Schools to hospitals, all local colleges, Mayor Mark Mallory and the city manager's office - won a grant to start what officials say will be a more clear pathway for people to get decent paying jobs in these key areas.

"People have got to be able to see a pathway toward what they can do," Mallory said.

"And now it's going to be my job to go out and talk about it."

He envisions new classes in city schools that better prepare students to graduate and get jobs as well as new college degree programs that teach the skills needed by the nine chosen businesses.

His hope, also, is that employers train some of their lower-skilled workers to move up into better-paying positions, thereby opening up new entry-level jobs.

The workforce network, run through the Greater Cincinnati Foundation charity clearinghouse, is starting first with the health care industry, where hospitals still face an acute need for registered nurses, said Ross Meyer, who's in his third month as network executive director.

A lot of job training programs exist now, he said - some are successful, some aren't and some don't lead to jobs.

Historically, he said, they haven't all worked together, given that they compete for employees.

The United Way and other social service agencies will help educators and employers find the people who need the training and work.

This local effort coincides with a shift nationally in workforce development toward a focus on training people, rather than seeing it only from the business perspective, said Councilman Chris Bortz, who was co-chairman of GO Cincinnati.

"Everyone's at the table - and that's the strategic thinking that's the difference," he said.

"So now, in the fields we choose, we're going to go out and say, 'What do we need to make this happen?'"