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BERKSHIRE BUSINESS

\$197K in training grants awarded

Four Berkshire companies will share funds from state program; Big Y supermarket receives \$217K to train 183 workers

By Tony Dobrowolski

tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com
[@TonyDobrow](https://twitter.com/TonyDobrow) on Twitter

PITTSFIELD » Four Berkshire companies have received grants from a state training program that will help their employees stay competitive in their respective marketplaces.

This quartet, T&M Auto Sales and TOG Manufacturing of North

Adams, and Interprint and Modern Mold and Tool of Pittsfield, have received a combined total of \$197,475 from the state Workforce Training Fund grant program.

Big Y Foods of Springfield, which operates five Berkshire County supermarkets, received \$217,123 to train 183 workers.

The funding will be used to train a combined total of 212 current and newly hired employees

at the four local establishments and add a total of seven new jobs within the next two years.

The Berkshire companies are among the 101 Massachusetts firms that received a total of \$8.5 million from the state program in the current round of funding.

Established in 1999, the Workforce Training Fund provides grants of up to \$250,000 to state companies of any size to pay for

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For information on the Workforce Training Fund grant program, visit www.mass.gov/wtffp.

workforce training over a two-year period. Grants are awarded to projects intended to upgrade workers' skills, and increase productivity. The grants are matched dollar-for-dollar by the award recipients.

The program helps participating companies upgrade their employees' job skills, which enables them to stay competitive, said Heather Boulger, the executive di-

rector of the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, which helps local companies apply for the grants.

"It continues to give them the skills," Boulger said. "Having highly skilled workers helps them meet the needs of their businesses, be more efficient and sell more products."

The individual company awards range from \$33,850 for T&M to \$83,445 for TOG Manufacturing. Interprint received \$38,900 and Modern Mold and Tool \$41,280.

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Interprint will train the highest number of employees (132), while T&M will train the least (10). TOG intends to train 39 workers and Modern Mold and Tool, 31.

Interprint is expected to add three additional jobs, Modern Mold, two, and both T&M and TOG will each add one job by 2018.

"Our administration is focused on meeting the needs of employers in Massachusetts by aligning workforce training, economic development and education," said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito in a statement. "These grants offer a unique opportunity for local businesses not only to improve their workers' skills, but also to boost their bottom line as a result of the training."

Interprint previously received funding from the program in 1999 and 2001, while TOG also received the funding in 2004, Boulger said. Modern Mold and T&M are first time recipients.

Since the program started 17 years ago, 114 Berkshire County companies have received \$8.5 million to train 7,200 local employees, Boulger said.

Companies can apply for the program at any time, Boulger said. The applications are reviewed on a monthly basis.