

THE DAILY TIMES

FARMINGTON NEW MEXICO

A growing operation: Local company receives help to train new hires

By James Monteleone The Daily Times

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FARMINGTON — A Farmington-based company this month received more than \$112,000 in state money to help hire and train 14 new workers and promote six employees through a program designed to support the local economy.

Wood Group Generator Services employs nearly 250 people in Farmington to fabricate new generator coils and service damaged or broken generators from across the country. The company also does some global work.

Company officials said the state money provided through the state Job Training Incentive Program allows it to hire relatively unskilled local workers and train them for high-paying jobs within the company doing a range of duties, including building coils, learning how to repair generators, or specializing educated engineers.

"There's only a handful of companies in this country that do what we do," said Wood Group Generator Services Senior Accountant P.J. Gurney. "Most everybody we hire, we have to train them, and we train them with hopes of keeping them."

Under the rules of the state program, new hires must have lived in New Mexico for at least one year to qualify for the job.

Program officials, in turn, hope the soon-to-be-hired workers will reinvest their better paychecks in the Four Corners economy.

"We want those high wage job companies to increase employment," said Margaret McDaniel, director of the nonprofit San Juan Economic Development Service. "It's adding new jobs, it's adding to the tax base, and (employees) turn around and buy in their local community."

The state program pays more than half of the employees' wages for up to six months while they are being trained for their new job. The newly hired entry level jobs at Wood Group range in pay from \$7.50 per hour to \$13.50 per hour. Engineering jobs pay as much as \$19 per hour.

To qualify for the Job Training Incentive Program and ensure the money paid to employees is "new" to the area, rather than recirculated, a New Mexico company must draw more than half of its income from outside the state.

Wood Group brings "millions and millions of dollars" into the community from both out of state and outside of the country, Gurney said.

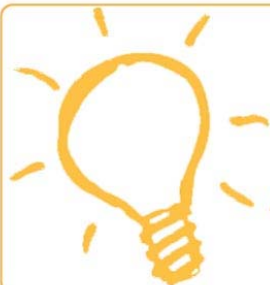
"When you've got millions of dollars, and most of it comes from outside and it goes back into Farmington, that's pretty nice," she said.

New job training money is awarded to different companies on a monthly basis.

Wood Group, which has more than doubled the size of its Farmington workforce in the last four years, was previously awarded training for six other new jobs in August 2007.

"Over the past several years we've helped bring in \$1.1 million of training money into San Juan County (through the state program)," McDaniel said. "Since 2000, 354 employees have been trained in high-wage jobs ... They're going in entry level."

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Wood Group Generator Services' capital investments in its own growth also qualified it for a separate state-subsidized training program designed to upgrade skill training for current employees and promoting workers from within.

"We're becoming a very good employer here in town," Gurney said. "We have very competitive wages and great benefits ... If we want to double revenue, we have to double the number of people."

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