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## Local companies will benefit from grant

Money will help alleviate some of the difficulty of filling high-tech jobs.

January 10, 2004

By Rick Moriarty  
Staff writer

The O'Brien & Gere engineering firm in DeWitt is no stranger to environmental science. It has a staff of engineers, chemists, toxicologists, ecologists and industrial health and safety specialists to serve its clients.

That's why the company was pleased to hear that a \$1.2 million federal grant to the

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Manufacturers Association of Central New York will create four high-technology worker training programs in Syracuse.

O'Brien & Gere is involved in all four fields that the programs will focus on: biotechnology; engineering design tools; renewable energy design

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and construction; and indoor environmental quality.

Finding people with the skills and education necessary to work in such specialized fields is not always easy. So the new training programs could help O'Brien & Gere fill its staffing needs, giving it an edge over companies in areas of the country that do not have such training programs, said Terry Brown, the company's chairman and chief executive officer.

"It really hits the mark for us," said Brown. "This is a real strength that we don't see in other areas of the country. It gives us a leg up."

The U.S. Department of

Labor's Employment & Training Administration awarded the grant this week to MACNY, which represents about 300 companies in a 19-county region.

MACNY will work in partnership with the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry and the New York Indoor Environmental Quality Center, both in Syracuse, to operate the training programs.

The money will be used to offset the cost of starting the programs and to subsidize the tuitions of 120 students. Sixty of the 120 students must come from the ranks of the unemployed.

Those who complete the training will receive professional certification in the areas they studied.

The participants will already have a bachelor's or associate degree in scientific fields, such as engineering and chemistry. A certificate issued by a college demonstrates that a person has received additional training in a specific part of their field.

Graduates of the programs will not be guaranteed jobs. But Cornelius B. Murphy Jr., president of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, said there is a high probability they will find employment in Central New York.

MACNY and the college will work with local businesses to develop the programs' curriculum over the next few months.

Murphy said the first classes likely will start in the fall. They could be held not only at the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, but also Syracuse University, Le Moyne College, SUNY Upstate Medical University and Onondaga Community College, he said.

Orrin MacMurray, president and chief executive officer of C&S Engineers Inc. in North Syracuse, said the training programs will make it easier to find local residents with the specialized skills his company requires.

C&S sometimes recruits people from outside the area, but it would rather hire people who live here, MacMurray said. It is less expensive to hire local people, because there are no relocation costs, and an employee who comes from Central New York is more likely to stay with the company, he said.

"I think it has the potential to be of real value to a company like ours," he said. "We're constantly looking for local individuals with high-tech skills."

Pam Brunet, speaking for Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. in DeWitt, said it is too early to judge the programs, because its curriculum has yet to be

developed. But the pharmaceutical company will look to them to fill some of its personnel needs, she said.

"It's a great sign for our community," she said. "We look forward to hearing more."

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