

Department of Small Business Services giving grants to train, hire workers

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Maisel/News

Workers prepare Asian foods at TMI Food Group in East Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Now that it's tax season, most small businesses might be thinking about what they owe - but a handful are on the receiving end, getting grants to help hire and train workers.

The city [Department of Small Business Services](#) handed out more than \$800,000 this month to seven businesses to train employees in sales, computer skills and English.

One of the companies, TMI Food Group of [East Williamsburg](#), Brooklyn, got \$80,000. Its money will go toward training 52 workers, with many rising to supervisory levels and receiving pay raises.

"Since the company is expanding, we need to set up a structure and make sure there's supervising in every level," said [Flora Liu](#), an exec at TMI, which manufactures, imports and distributes Asian foods.

The seven companies picked in the [NYC](#) Business Solutions Training Funds program will use the cash to boost the skills of 448 workers, and hire 33 more.

The winners, like [White Coffee Corp.](#), a family-owned coffee supply company in [Astoria, Queens](#), were chosen based on their ability to open up new positions, foster career advancement and raise wages.

The idea is to help companies grow or become more profitable, and to teach or improve the abilities of workers in the city, which can boost their careers.

"NYC Business Solutions Training Funds are making local businesses more competitive by helping them build the skills of their employees," said Small Business Services Commissioner Rob Walsh. "At the same time, the program is helping New Yorkers achieve wage increases and gain skills which will benefit them throughout their careers."

Another recipient, [Ellanef Manufacturing](#), an aerospace components manufacturer in [Corona, Queens](#), will use its award of \$93,000 to help hone the computer, manufacturing and management skills of about 60 staffers. As a result, they'll be able to hire 10 new workers and increase wages about 5% for most current employees.

For Ellanef, which built the legs for an Apollo lunar module and now deals with giants like [Boeing](#) and [Northrop Grumman](#), it's a matter of staying afloat in the ultra-competitive manufacturing sector.

"Manufacturing here in the state of [New York](#) is dwindling," said [Phil Dissinger](#), director of human resources for health and safety at Ellanef, which has 365 workers on its payroll. Grants like the one his company won help give it an edge, Dissinger said.

The NYC Business Solutions Training Funds program reimburses companies like Ellanef up to 70% of eligible training costs. The awards, first doled out in 2006, have totaled \$4.7 million and gone to 45 companies. More than 3,000 workers have received training. Seven firms ranging from aerospace to coffee supply get grants to train, hire workers. Companies will use the money to boost the skills of 448 workers.

What they'll do with their grants?

1199SEIU/League [Grant Corp.](#)

The health care labor union 1199SEIU's Training and Employment Fund will use its \$137,000 award toward a program to train 20 city hospital employees to be certified pharmacy technicians, a growing field.

Allied Plastics

A plastic manufacturer based in [Long Island City, Queens](#), Allied plans to train 47 employees in English as a second language, more efficient manufacturing and quality assurance procedures. As a result, it will take on nine new workers and increase wages an average of 25% for all of its trainees.

Ellanef Manufacturing

The Corona, Queens-based aerospace components manufacturer will use its \$93,000 award to train 60 employees in computer, management and manufacturing skills. The

company, which was founded in 1960 and employs about 365 people, plans to hire 10 new workers as a result and give a 5% raise to most of its current workforce.

Mana Products

A cosmetics maker in Long Island City, Queens, Mana plans to use its award to train 130 employees in English as a second language and other job skills, and for pay raises.

SOLCO Plumbing Supply

The [East New York, Brooklyn](#)-based company plans to use its award to train 113 employees in more efficient manufacturing, inventory accuracy and management skills. They'll take on 11 new hires and increase wages an average of 7% for 46 current trainees, with raises possible for the rest of the trainees, as well.

TMI Food Group

The East Williamsburg, Brooklyn, food business will use its \$80,000 award to train 52 workers in supervisory development, customer service and more efficient manufacturing. The company will hire three new workers and give an average 14% raise to current employees.

White Coffee Corp.

The Astoria, Queens, coffee company plans to use its award of nearly \$12,000 to improve the skills of 26 of its 115 employees. The training will focus on sales, improved communication, customer service and computer skills. Pay raises are planned for trainees.