

# Quick Start Funded for Existing Industry

While Georgia has long enjoyed a reputation for being helpful in assisting businesses locate and/or expand in the state, the time has come for us to step up to the plate and help our existing companies upgrade their employees' skills to keep them competitive in the world market. Our state leadership has realized that we need to turn our attention to a higher standard of competitive investment, one that will benefit our companies who may not necessarily be adding new jobs, but who need to retrain their incumbent workers to stay competitive.

Our public policy no longer has to be focused exclusively on "job creating" strategies. Due to the last decade of prosperity and the diversity of our economic base, we can look to job enhancement—ways to help employees produce more, better, and quicker through higher skills.

In his recent speech at Manufacturing Appreciation Week, Gov. Roy Barnes noted that, without exception, employers he talks to around the country and the world want to locate where they can find qualified workers—not just warm bodies who can fill positions, but workers who have access to training and education that can help them stay abreast of changing job requirements as time goes on.

Labor force demographics also have changed dramatically in the last decade. The best firms that pay the highest wages can no longer just be satisfied to locate where they think they can find workers. They must locate where they see evidence of education and workforce development programs that can train and retrain workers and are funded to continue to do so on a long-term basis.

Thanks to the recent allocation of \$1 million from the Georgia State Legislature, Georgians will begin to see the effects of this new focus. Lt. Gov. Mark Taylor, serving as chairman of the Georgia Rural Development Council, has led the charge for this funding. Until now, the state has worked through Georgia's technical colleges on a cost-recovery basis to train incumbent employees in companies that were not necessarily expanding.

Now, thanks to the leadership of the governor, lieutenant governor, state legislature, and GRDC, Quick Start will be able to deliver retraining services to established

businesses (many of them small businesses), as well as those newly locating here or expanding. This is the first time actual funding has allowed the 1992 change to the "Quick Start Law" to take effect and will help greatly with employee retention.

Now Quick Start can energize its efforts to serve employers who are not necessarily adding new jobs, but who are in serious need of upgrading employees' skills to meet the demands of new technology. This will have profound benefits for Georgia's rural communities that

may be dependent on one or two employers, who are in turn dependent on the workers' ability to improve their skills. Quick Start is willing and able to face this new challenge that will be of such great benefit to our state's rural areas and smaller communities. **QS**



"Now Quick Start can energize its efforts to serve employers who are not necessarily adding new jobs, but who are in serious need of upgrading employees' skills to meet the demands of new technology."

BEN WALTON  
DIRECTOR, MARKETING & PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT  
QUICK START