

FOX

12.05.17



my

The Guardian

Province launches employee training fund



Innovation Minister Allen Roach, left, and DiscoveryGarden CEO John Eden were on hand at UPEI Wednesday for the announcement of the Workforce Development Fund.

Guardian photo by Ryan Ross

Island businesses looking for help to train employees have another option thanks to the Workforce Development Fund announced Wednesday in Charlottetown.

Innovation Minister Allen Roach said the province is budgeting \$2.3 million annually for the fund designed to help businesses grow and develop employees' skills.

Roach was at the University of P.E.I. to announce the fund, which will operate through Skills P.E.I. from the Canada-P.E.I. Labour Market Development Agreement or the Labour Market Agreement.

Both of those agreements were designed to help people find employment.

The fund's three components are workforce learning, workforce innovation and workforce exposure.

Through the three components, businesses can access funding to help with several aspects of training employees, such as skill assessments, training costs and employee certification.

Roach said the money comes from existing programs through Skills P.E.I.

"It is existing programs but we're packaging it together so that it's going to have a direct impact on the business and the employee," he said.

Businesses, industry associations and sector councils operating in P.E.I. are eligible for the fund if they propose activities that support the fund's objectives and have defined start and finish dates.

John Eden, CEO of Charlottetown-based software firm DiscoveryGarden, was also at the announcement and said he likes the fund's flexibility.

"What I like with this is they keep refining their programs and looking at the employee and employer point of view," he said.

Although it's a small company, DiscoveryGarden grew from nine to 24 employees in the last 18 months.

Eden said everybody knows businesses need to train employees but cash is sometimes an issue and it's something that many companies put off because of the costs.

"Being able to provide assistance to allow a company to do things right will in the long term help that company so it's a smart move," he said.

DiscoveryGarden is an example of a company that benefitted from government funding for training, which Eden said was responsible for four permanent positions.

"I wouldn't have added them without that level of assistance that I had that allowed me to take a risk on them," he said.

Eden said he hopes to access further funding through the Workforce Development Fund and add seven or more employees this year.

"I'm just a business that's trying to grow," he said.

rross@theguardian.pe.ca (mailto:rross@theguardian.pe.ca)

twitter.com/ryanrross (http://www.Twitter.com/ryanrross)

(http://tctranscontinental.com/)

Transcontinental Media G.P. 1100 Rene-Levesque Blvd. West, Montreal, QC H3B 4X9 (514) 392-9000