

Grants offer new opportunities

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With layoffs almost everywhere one looks, it's hard to imagine what the people who are unable to find jobs will do.

However, a new opportunity to take advantage of free training is being funded by the region's \$5 million WIRED grant.

The Southeastern Virginia Partnership for Regional Transformation (SEVA-PORT), made up of more than 50 community partners, is offering students, dislocated workers and career switchers with comprehensive assessments, information and tuition assistance related to the logistics and modeling and simulation fields, as well as offering assistance to small businesses and entrepreneurs in those fields.

The WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) grant, given through the U.S. Department of Labor, integrates economic and workforce development activities, demonstrating that talent development can drive economic transformation, according to a press release.

Megan Robinson, a spokeswoman for Opportunity, Inc., which administrates the grant, said the logistics and modeling and simulation focus came from regional assets such as the ports, warehouses and the modeling and simulation facilities in North Suffolk.

Through WIRED and other grants, up to \$4 million is available for workforce development in the region, and \$2 million is available for youth employment programs, which Suffolk is beginning to implement now.

Now is the time to take advantage of programs such as these, said Rick Sciallo, who also works with the grant money.

"A sizable number of people are out of work," he said. "A lot of people would like nothing better than to return to work, but hiring has slowed down also. It may be the best time for a lot of people to consider retooling themselves."

People can increase their chances of finding employment if they gain new skills that qualify them for new areas of work, Sciallo added.

"This may be the ideal time, when jobs aren't readily available, to take the time and invest the time into improving your long-term future."

Suffolk residents can get more information about the opportunities the grant offers by visiting the Suffolk Workforce Development Center, 157 N. Main St.