



Florida's Great Northwest
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FLORIDA'S GREAT NORTHWEST AWARDS PENSACOLA'S GE ENERGY \$120,000 GRANT

Destin, Florida (May 29, 2008) – In support of GE Energy's employment expansion, Florida's Great Northwest, Inc. has awarded the Pensacola GE Energy manufacturing facility an employee skills training grant of \$120,000. The grant award is funded by Florida's Great Northwest's WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) Northwest Florida Initiative.

GE is a Fortune 100 Company and a global leader in power generation. GE Energy's Pensacola facility, part of GE Infrastructure which is one of GE's six separate business divisions, was established in 2000 and is the largest producer of wind turbines in the United States. Wind energy is the fastest growing sector in the renewable energy market and, to date, GE's installed base of wind turbines provides the same amount of electricity as is needed to annually power approximately 1.5 million U.S. households.

GE Energy in Pensacola employs a workforce of 250 and 50 additional positions will be added before the end of 2008. The company's local workforce has grown by over 100 employees in the last seven years and its plans call for adding more employees over the next year. The WIRED Northwest Florida Initiative grant will enable the Pensacola facility to recruit and train 80 new employees, allowing GE Energy to extend capacity in order to meet the growing demand in the wind turbine market.

"Wind is currently the most commercially viable renewable energy technology," said Blair Simmons, Plant Operations Manager. "Support such as we're receiving from Florida's Great Northwest will help the U.S. to become the global leader in new wind power installations. We can only do it with trained workers skilled in this new manufacturing technology. As the U.S. strives to stimulate the economy, investing in jobs here will certainly help. The U.S. wind industry would also be helped by Congress extending the wind tax incentive. Europe and China are strengthening their wind policies and our country must also position itself to allow for growth in wind."

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“With current world circumstances being what they are and the cost of oil continuing to rise, there will continue to be increasing emphasis placed on the utilization of alternative, renewable forms of energy, such as wind power. Florida's Great Northwest is pleased to be able to support a company such as GE Energy in the creation of skilled technical jobs in the renewable energy industry,” said Fred Leopold, Chairman of Florida's Great Northwest.

Florida's Great Northwest, Inc. is the administrator and facilitating organization for the U.S. Department of Labor WIRED Grant. Florida's Great Northwest WIRED Northwest Florida Initiative is designed to create high-wage, high-skill jobs within the region in the target industries of Aviation, Aerospace, Defense, and National Security; Life Sciences (Human Performance Enhancement, Medical Device Manufacturing, Medical Technologies, Health Services, and Biotechnology); Information Technology; Engineering; Renewable Energy and Environment; Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution; and Construction Products Manufacturing.

Florida's Great Northwest provides regional leadership in economic and workforce development, serving 16 counties in Northwest Florida from Pensacola through Tallahassee. Its primary mission is the creation of high-wage, high-skill jobs, branding and marketing, as well as supporting the local economic and workforce development organizations in the region.

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