The Guam Department of Labor is now accepting applications from businesses interested in receiving funding to train new apprentices.

The funding was secured through an ApprenticeshipUSA State Expansion Grant that was announced in June 2016. According to Guam DOL Special Projects Coordinator Lisa Hammond, Guam submitted an application and was one of 37 states and territories that was funded. Guam was awarded $800,000, of which $700,000 is allotted for apprenticeship training instruction and support services throughout the island.

"This funding is to help eligible Guam businesses effectively train and retain 100 new apprentices. This seed money is strictly for the first year of related training costs for identified in-demand occupations in Allied Health, Construction, Hospitality, and Telecommunications," said Hammond.

This is the first time Guam has been awarded the ApprenticeshipUSA State Expansion Grant, according to Hammond. It is anticipated that the funding will be allocated for up to three years, depending on the U.S. Senate. Grantees will not have to apply for the second and third years; funding is dependent on the success of the first year, said Hammond.

Occupations that qualify to receive funding under the ApprenticeshipUSA Expansion Grant include: certified nursing assistants, medical assistants, carpenters, construction craft laborers, electricians, hospitality facilities maintenance, hotel associates, network and computer system administrators, computer systems analysts and telecommunications technicians.

James Martinez, Guam Contractors Association President, says the grant will provide additional funding for Guam's Registered Apprenticeship Program, which has been exclusively funded through H-2B visa program fees. In light of the increase in demands of H-2B visas, the program's revenue source is "nearly, if not all depleted."

"Anytime we receive federal grants that would improve our economy or assist in developing our infrastructure and human resource development, it is a good thing," said Martinez. "This Guam Expansion Grant will open up more opportunities for financial assistance to those wanting industry credentials to position themselves for higher paying careers in the trades."

There are about 500 people employed in the local construction industry, representing 9.6 percent of the total workforce in Guam.

The deadline for businesses to apply for funding has been extended to May 31. The funding and training period is for one year, from June 1 through May 31, 2018. All training must be completed by June 30, 2018.

The ApprenticeshipUSA Expansion Grant application and program guidelines are available online at http://ddl.guam.gov/employment-and-training/apprenticeship/.