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Rooted in Safety, Powered by Training

Kappen Tree Service (KTS) is a woman-owned business located in the rural Thumb Area of Michigan. They provide line clearance services to keep the power on, working with clients such as DTE Energy, ITC (International Transmission Company), and TEC (Thumb Electric Cooperative). Fun fact: On average, KTS clears 3,000 miles of line per year!

As with many businesses, KTS faces the ongoing challenge of training both current and new apprentice employees. The cost of training can drain employer resources, but with the release of the Going Pro Talent Fund (GPTF) grant application approaching, KTS saw an opportunity. Through discussions and a fact-finding session, it became clear that the GPTF could help cover a portion of their training costs.

After working together on the paperwork, numbers, and timelines, KTS was awarded the GPTF grant. This allowed the company to continue apprenticeship training for 101 current employees and hire 16 new apprentices, totaling 117 trainees. Once all required documents were obtained and submitted, the grant reimbursed KTS a total of $409,500.00 for successful Tree Trimmer/Line Clearance apprentice on-the-job training.

Jason, Owner/Partner of KTS, shared, “With the help of the grant, we were able to teach our employees the proper techniques for staying safe and efficient. All of our tree trimmers go through an apprenticeship with IBEW Local 17, and they are evaluated before moving up through their 5-step apprenticeship. With each step, there’s a pay increase. Thanks to the extra training, our apprentices have been able to pass their evaluations more easily, ensuring they stay on track and receive the proper wage increases.”

As a highlight of their accomplishments through GPTF training, Jason added, “The additional training has not only increased safety but also efficiency. When you improve safety and efficiency, the natural result is increased production. Having a safe and efficient workforce makes it easier for a company like ours to secure and retain work!”

Jason also emphasized, “Getting this grant has been a game changer for KTS. It has allowed us to accomplish things we had only talked about. Now we’ve made it happen. The proof is in the field: our employees are doing one of the most dangerous jobs every day, and we all feel confident that they have the tools and training to do it safely and efficiently.”

While projecting the number of employees who may meet the grant requirements can be subjective, Jason encourages others not to shy away from applying. “Go for it! You may not know exactly how it will turn out, but the potential payoff is worth it.”