



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

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GOVERNOR BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES \$200,000 IN *OPPORTUNITY RETURNS* FUNDING TO HELP SMALL MANUFACTURERS MARKET THEIR BUSINESSES AND INCREASE COMPETITIVENESS

CHICAGO – In an aggressive effort to strengthen the competitiveness of small manufacturers throughout the Northeast region, Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced **\$200,000** in funding to the Tooling and Manufacturing Association (TMA) that will assist small to medium sized Illinois manufacturers across Chicago and its outlying suburbs to individually and collaboratively market their businesses. The initiative was announced by Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin at Atlas Tool and Die Works in Lyons - one of the several small manufacturers receiving training from the TMA. This grant is a part of the Governor's *Opportunity Returns* program for the Northeast region, his comprehensive, pro-active plan for restoring economic opportunity to the area, which he will announce in the coming months.

“Over a relatively short period of time the playing field for many small manufacturers has changed dramatically, making the challenge to retain a valued customer base, much less grow a business, seem quite daunting. Yet knowing the personal investment these small business owners have in their companies, the jobs that are at stake, and the tremendous importance of their productivity to the strength and vitality of the economy, the only thing to do is simply dig in our heels and rise to the challenge. By targeting our resources to customized efforts such as this one with the TMA, we are helping these businesses find innovative ways to become more dynamic and competitive over the near and long term. One small company at a time, we can expand opportunity and increase manufacturing competitiveness across the region,” Governor Blagojevich said.

Key objectives and outcomes of the marketing training include: developing more effective marketing plans, publication of technical articles and public relation pieces in trade journals, an increase in public speaking engagements for company leadership, an increase in sales calls, new collaborative and cross marketing relationships and new core competencies.

An owner with a technical, not a marketing, background typically operates a special tooling or component part manufacturer. The increasingly competitive global environment makes the aggressive marketing of small business services more essential than ever before. The Tooling and Manufacturing Association is designed to act as a chief advocate for these small manufacturers and communicate effective strategies for retaining their business and remaining competitive. The \$200,000 *Opportunity Returns* grant will vastly increase TMA's capacity to design and deliver customized marketing strategies for these businesses that can make a tangible impact.

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“Governor Blagojevich understands that many of our businesses offer years of expertise and an exceptional reputation in their industries, yet are relatively green in marketing their businesses to new clients. This grant is a marvelous way to help these small manufacturers gain the tools and savvy they need to build new relationships and improve their bottom line,” State Senator Louis Viverito (D-Burbank) said.

“I’m so pleased that Governor Blagojevich has provided this grant to help small manufacturers across Chicago and the near suburbs. The one-on-one assistance these companies are receiving allows them to develop effective marketing strategies that will really give their businesses a shot in the arm. This is a great example of how a grassroots approach to economic development is the only one to take,” State Representative Robert Molaro (D-Chicago) said.

The majority of the TMA membership is composed of companies that make molds or dies or produce component parts that are turned, machined, stamped, or molded. There are estimated to be more than 2,000 such companies in the greater Chicago area, employing 61,000 and producing a payroll of more than \$2 billion. Combined, their manufacturing processes add \$4.5 billion in value, purchase \$3.1 billion in material and ship \$7.7 billion worth of product.

“Thanks to this marketing grant, TMA members will receive a wide variety of training, all designed to ultimately enhance their ability to promote their products and services to a targeted customer base and increase their sales. By using a ‘teach them how to fish’ approach, we can help position small manufacturers to stay in demand in an increasingly competitive global market. This is a tremendous investment in the vitality of manufacturing, as well as small business in our area,” said Kent Gladish, Director of the Tooling and Manufacturing Association (TMA).

More than 20 companies will benefit from the TMA marketing initiative and span across Chicagoland and many suburbs, including Elk Grove Village, Northbrook, Elmhurst, Arlington Heights, Palatine, Addison, and Wauconda.

“Atlas Tool & Die is a custom sheet metal fabricator that has been in business for three generations. Through this initiative, the TMA has already begun working with Atlas to develop a detailed marketing strategy that will help it effectively segment a target market and establish a reliable demand for its product. We don’t want to reinvent these companies, but we do want to reinvent the way in which they do business in the global economy. Doing so will mean these companies will not only be able to stay afloat, but become more productive, competitive and prosperous, so that they can exist for many more generations,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

The *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois’ history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn’t work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business.

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