



Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Department
Office of Housing and Economic Development
Press Release
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SECRETARY BIALECKI, MASS TECH COLLABORATIVE ANNOUNCE \$150,000 TO SUPPORT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION IN STATE'S MANUFACTURING SECTOR

CHICOPEE – Wednesday, October 12, 2011 – Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Greg Bialecki and officials from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC) today announced that the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County (REB-HC) has been awarded a \$150,000 grant from the MTC to support the Precision Manufacturing Regional Alliance Project (PMRAP) in strengthening the precision manufacturing industry. The funds will help launch a new pilot Associate's degree pathway program at Springfield Technical Community College and other activities that support the development of a qualified workforce for the precision manufacturing sector. Officials announced the award at Hoppe Technologies, which supplies precision machine components for aerospace, defense, optics, power generation and commercial industries.

"Making investments to help grow our innovation economy is a key part of Governor Patrick's strategy to foster long-term growth and drive job creation in this region and across the Commonwealth," said Secretary Bialecki. "This investment will energize the manufacturing sector and ensure the development of a sustainable workforce, which is critical to the Commonwealth's economic success."

"The precision manufacturing industry is vital to the state's innovation economy," said Pamela Goldberg, CEO of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. "Supporting new technology skills will enhance the industry's competitiveness, leading to economic expansion and job growth for Massachusetts."

The award was made through the Innovation Institute Fund of MTC's John Adams Innovation Institute ('Innovation Institute'), the economic development arm of MTC focused on enhancing conditions for innovation and industry cluster growth in the Commonwealth. The award builds on the Patrick-Murray Administration's previous efforts to strengthen the growing precision manufacturing sector through PMRAP. The award supports three objectives: 1) Utilize surveys and focus groups to identify the technical requirements and standards needed by the precision machining workforce. 2) Pilot an accelerated Associate's degree pathway program at Springfield Technical Community College, developed under the PMRAP program, to respond to the technical and work flow needs of the regional precision machining companies. 3) Expand the membership and focus of the Regional Precision Manufacturing Technology Advisory Council to develop strategies to ensure the sustainability of a qualified, employable workforce.

This funding builds upon the Patrick-Murray Administration's total investment of \$650,000 in PMRAP made previously through the MTC Innovation Institute's Regional Priority and Project award programs. Funds have helped precision machining companies achieve substantial

growth in both employment and revenue. These awards have leveraged over \$900,000 in funding from public and private entities.

“Since the inception of this incumbent worker training program, our initiative has increased the skill level of our region’s precision machinists thereby increasing the competitiveness of area companies. This enhanced skill level brands our region on a national and global basis,” said Eric Hagopian, President of Hoppe Technologies and Chair of the PRMAP Steering Committee. “Precision machining companies in Western Massachusetts invest heavily in new technology and require advanced worker skills in order to best utilize these new tools. This grant and the public/private collaboration that continues to take place should be duplicated in other regions of the country seeking to sustain and grow their regional core competency.”

"The faculty and staff at Springfield Technical Community College are excited about Phase II of our collaboration with the precision manufacturing industry in Western Massachusetts," said Ira Rubenzahl, President of Springfield Technical Community College. "Springfield is the 'City of Firsts' and played an important role in this country's history as a center for manufacturing innovation. We hope that our efforts will continue that tradition. We are grateful to Bill Ward and his staff at the Regional Employment Board for their creativity and hard work in forming this partnership between the region's manufacturers and the college. Precision manufacturing is an extremely important part of the economic landscape in Western Massachusetts and the college hopes to support efforts to grow this sector in every way it can."

PMRAP, a public-private initiative, was launched in 2008 with the support of MTC and the Patrick-Murray Administration, is led by the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County. There are more than 1,100 precision manufacturing companies in the Pioneer Valley, employing 28,000 employees. PMRAP addresses the needs of the precision manufacturing companies that represent a growing, globally competitive subset of this cluster.

"Over the past several years, precision manufacturers and the Regional Employment Board in the Connecticut River valley have developed to a team approach to workforce development," said Senator Michael Knapik offered. "I am pleased the Patrick Administration and the MTC have committed to providing innovative solutions to ensuring the strength of this industry cluster in our region."

“Western Massachusetts has had a long and storied history with the manufacturing industry,” said Senator James Welch. “To see a new and innovated precision manufacturing technology come to the area brings us back to our roots and encourages growth across our communities.”

“An outstanding manufacturing industry has long been a trademark of Western Massachusetts, and this funding will help our region maintain that competitive edge,” said Representative Joseph F. Wagner of Chicopee, House Chairman of the legislature’s Economic Development Committee. “A vibrant precision manufacturing sector will help to promote growth and create jobs here and across the Commonwealth.”

“Job training is essential in ensuring the region remains a leader in precision manufacturing, this grant will allow us to achieve the goal of a well trained sustainable workforce,” said Representative Michael Finn.

Between 2005 and 2009, employment in the 29 manufacturing companies that are part of PMRAP grew by 33.5% and sales by 106%. PMRAP is focusing on workforce development needs to support growth, as well as technology transfer research projects that focus on

technologies such as cryogenic machining and polymer-metallic interfaces. Over the past five years, PMRAP has produced over 200 graduates from the Machine Tool Technology programs at seven vocational-technical and comprehensive high schools and achieved over 1,200 completions in skills enhancement courses for incumbent employees. The Associate's degree program at Springfield Technical Community College is scheduled to begin in August 2012.

"This next phase of the Precision Manufacturing Regional Alliance Project will continue to strengthen the pipeline and incumbent worker training for precision manufacturing jobs in the Pioneer Valley," said Bill Ward, President and CEO of the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County.