

News Release

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Funding Available to Help Northwest Michigan Small Manufacturers Adopt Industry 4.0 Technologies

NORTHWEST LOWER, MI –Small manufacturers in northwest Lower Michigan looking to adopt Industry 4.0 technologies can apply for grants of up to \$25,000 as part of Michigan’s \$3 million Industry 4.0 Technology Implementation Grant program. Networks Northwest will award grants to a minimum of four businesses in northwest Lower Michigan. Grants will be reimbursement-based and will cover up to 50 percent of eligible technologies, including additive manufacturing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, robotics and automation, and more.

“In order to remain competitive, Michigan will help prepare manufacturers to adopt new and innovative technologies for the future through programs like the Industry 4.0 initiative,” said Quentin L. Messer, Jr., CEO of MEDC and President and Chair of the MSF Board. “By supporting local partners and communities through these regional grants, we are strengthening our state’s leadership in advanced manufacturing and the entrepreneurship and jobs this innovative sector supports for years to come.”

“Industry 4.0 represents a continued opportunity for advanced manufacturing jobs in northwest Michigan,” said Matt McCauley, CEO of Networks Northwest. “These are high-skill, high-wage jobs that have and will continue to be the economic backbone of many of the region’s communities. Manufacturing continues to represent a tremendous opportunity for rural Michigan to build upon and better diversify its economic relevance.”

In April, the Michigan Strategic Fund approved a total of \$3 million in awards for Networks Northwest and five other nonprofit organizations to administer the implementation grants statewide. The organizations will also be tasked with promoting existing statewide resources to support Michigan small manufacturers with Industry 4.0 awareness and preparedness. The funding is part of an MEDC-

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Networks Northwest and Northwest Michigan Works! are supported by the State of Michigan and are proud partners of the American Job Center Network. Projects may be funded with the authorized and appropriate use of federal funds. Contact Networks Northwest for additional information. Equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and service are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Individuals with speech or hearing impairments may call the Michigan Relay Center by dialing 711.

led effort to ensure that 50 percent of Michigan manufacturers – or 6,200 businesses – are prepared to adopt Industry 4.0 technologies by 2025.

These grants build on the overall Industry 4.0 initiative that MEDC launched in 2020 in partnership with Automation Alley and Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center to help small and mid-sized manufacturers prepare for the future of manufacturing. The initiative includes efforts to drive awareness statewide on the importance of Industry 4.0 readiness and technical support to help small-to medium-sized manufacturers. Industry 4.0 is defined as the convergence of digital and physical technologies, including artificial intelligence, 3D printing, robotics, augmented and virtual reality, the Cloud and cybersecurity.

In the first year of the state's Industry 4.0 initiative, the program exceeded initial goals by reaching more than 1,400 businesses through programming, events, training, and technology assessments.

“Based on first-year feedback we received from our statewide and regional services providers, cost remained the biggest barrier for small manufacturers to adopt new technologies,” said MEDC Vice President of Small Business Solutions Natalie Chmiko. “Through these grants, we can provide the much-needed financial assistance to support small manufacturers in every corner of the state. We’re confident that by implementing these solutions manufacturers can transform their culture for the future of manufacturing while also making positive impacts to operational processes, labor utilization or energy consumption.”

The Industry 4.0 initiative aligns with MEDC’s strategic focus area of advanced manufacturing and extends Michigan’s rich manufacturing heritage and technological know-how to develop the innovative, high-tech products of the future. With the fifth-largest advanced manufacturing workforce in the country and more than 13,000 workers employed in industries related to Industry 4.0 and automation – the most in the nation – this effort also secures continued opportunity and stability for Michigan’s manufacturing workforce for years to come.

Grant applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until all funds are allocated. To learn more about the requirements of the program and to view the grant application, visit: michiganbusiness.org/industry4-0/grant.

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by emailing Dan Boss at dan.boss@networksnorthwest.org and stating preferences for resolution, file format, and file size. Or phone (231) 929-5047. Check our online Media Room at: networksnorthwest.org/media

Founded in 1974, Networks Northwest facilitates and manages various programs and services for the 10-county region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works!, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, various business services, and many different regional planning initiatives in response to our communities' requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business and community services Networks Northwest offers if you visit our website, networksnorthwest.org.

Networks Northwest's member counties are: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.