

Media Advisory

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Governor Announces Native American Manufacturing Initiative

AUGUSTA – Governor John Baldacci and the five Native American Tribes in Maine today unveiled a new initiative that could result in long-term economic opportunities for Maine’s Native Americans and numerous small-and medium-sized manufacturers throughout the state. This initiative is made possible through the successful award of a \$200,000 Cluster Enhancement Grant from the Maine Technology Institute. Key to the initiative is a partnership between the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), the Aroostook Band of Micmacs, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Penobscot Nation, the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township and the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point.

“The Native American Manufacturing Initiative is a unique opportunity to strengthen Maine’s manufacturing cluster and build Native American manufacturing capabilities and capacities as a sustainable economic development strategy,” Governor Baldacci said. “The manufacturing cluster strategy we plan to develop has already been successful in enhancing economic opportunities for entrepreneurial Native American tribes in several other states. This project represents a chance to take full advantage of emerging economic opportunities and enhance the overall self-sufficiency of our Native American communities.”

“Our goal,” DECD Commissioner Jack Cashman said, “is to identify and capitalize on Maine’s tribal manufacturing capacities to fulfill procurement opportunities in government and private sectors. This will further position Maine’s Native American tribes as contributing players in the growth of the state’s emerging technology clusters, while creating high skill/wage employment.”

Opportunities include developing effective business partnerships and expanding and adapting the tribes’ economic infrastructure to address global challenges. One particular target will be the Department of Defense (DoD), which annually solicits about \$50 billion in federal research and development and manufacturing contract opportunities. The DoD has established a policy to purchase products and services from small, disadvantaged and women-owned businesses, with specific set-asides for Native American corporations.

“This is one of the most exciting and potentially far-reaching programs the Maine MEP has ever been involved in,” said Rod Rodrigue, Director of the Maine MEP. “There are tremendous business opportunities for both Maine’s Native Americans and numerous small and medium sized manufacturers throughout the state. We are pleased to be involved in this effort and I believe this has the potential to give a shot in the arm to Maine’s declining manufacturing sector.”

“The realization of a sustainable economic development strategy for Maine’s Native American communities has always been a priority and a critical element of my administration’s overall economic development strategy,” Governor Baldacci said. “I am delighted to announce this initiative.”

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