



Midwest consortium gets \$2 million to develop computing for manufacturers

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By **Sabrina Eaton, The Plain Dealer**

The Obama administration is awarding \$2 million to create a new public-private partnership that will help institutions in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan develop high-tech computing for manufacturers.

The award will go to the Council on Competitiveness, whose Ohio partners include the Ohio Supercomputing Center, the Ohio Board of Regents and Cincinnati-based Procter & Gamble, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown's office announced.

The money, to be matched by \$2.5 million from the private sector, will be used to develop a Midwest Project for Modeling and Simulation, which will help small and medium sized companies enhance their productivity through the use of technology that allows designers to realistically simulate what finished products will look like.

Large companies already use the technology, but smaller companies can't afford it. In a conference call with reporters, Commerce Secretary Gary Locke predicted its use would help small and medium-sized manufacturers speed up their design cycles by about six months, enabling them to be more competitive in the global marketplace.

"Bringing advanced computing to more small- and medium-sized manufacturers will help revitalize American manufacturing," Brown said in a press release.

Council on Competitiveness President and CEO Deborah Wince-Smith said the Midwest was chosen for the



Associated Press file photo

President Barack Obama waves as he walks to Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington Friday, Jan. 22, 2010. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

project because of its business and educational assets, including Cleveland's NASA Glenn Research Center.

"There's a lot of infrastructure that exists there that makes this the optimal place to create this test bed," said Wince-Smith. "We see this as having tremendous potential to be leveraged across the country, but incubated first in the Midwest."

Obama manufacturing advisor Ron Bloom described the effort as a pilot project that will require greater resources after it "ramps up."

"The private partners are still exploring and developing this idea," said Bloom. "What we can do is use this modest amount of money to start this thing off, to make some important progress developing this software and as this thing gains momentum, we would expect it to grow in size."

The announcement comes as Obama strives to highlight his small business growth and job creation efforts after a backlash over his policies cost Democrats congressional seats in November's elections.

Last week, Obama hosted a forum on small business growth in Cleveland, where he sought input from local entrepreneurs as he touted small business tax cuts his administration has adopted, and its efforts to eliminate unnecessary regulations that keep businesses from creating jobs.

"You guys are leading the way, and we know there are some things government can do to help clear the way for your success," Obama told the Cleveland group. "We can make sure America remains the best place on Earth to do business by knocking down barriers that stand in the way of your growth."

On Tuesday, White House Chief-of-Staff William Daley published an **opinion piece** in the Financial Times newspaper that responded to 3M chairman George Buckley's description of Obama as "anti-business" in a prior **article**.

"As a government our responsibility is to lay the foundations for the private sector to thrive; indeed, that is at the heart of our strategy for growth," Daley said in the piece.

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