

Main Street Montana – Manufacturing KIN
Group B – Attract, retain and grow business and nurture emerging industries
Conference Call
January 27, 2015 – 10:00 a.m.
Minutes

PARTICIPANTS:

Neal Blossom – American Chemet
Gary Byers – Creative Sales
Ken Green – Timberline Tool
James Haider - GTUIT
Larry Hall – S&K Electronics
Bruce Jensen – Anderson Steel
Ken Johnson – CM MFG
Karl Moritz – Lattice Materials
Paddy Flemming – MMEC

Tom Kaiserski (Main Street liaison) introduced the conference call participants followed by explaining the mission of today which is to identify what is one specific action(s) that should be taken, who needs to be involved, how should this action(s) be accomplished and when is it feasible to expect the action(s) will be completed. This will then be presented to the full Manufacturing KIN group at their next meeting. Jim Haider led the call and started off mentioning that he has had a long history with MMEC both as a customer and an employee. He is also in the middle of raising capital for GTUIT.

Tasks for Consideration:

1. Expand and Promote MMEC;
2. Increase Access to Capital;
3. Increase and improve access to Entrepreneurship classes;

Discussion:

MMEC

Jim asked Paddy Flemming to report on efforts during this legislature to fund MMEC. Paddy noted that there are similar manufacturing organizations to MMEC in every state; the model for funding them is fed, state grants along with customer fees. The federal government provides \$512,000 in grants funds; Montana has provided \$200,000 historically; the Governor's proposed budget would up it to \$300,000 while the legislative subcommittee is asking for \$200,000 additional. Wyoming and North Dakota both provide \$512,000 fully matching the federal grant. Eastern Montana is currently underserved by MMEC due to budget constraints. Suggestions for increasing funding and better marketing MMEC:

- Urge KIN to contact legislative subcommittee and Eastern Montana legislators in general during this session urging their support for and expansion of MMEC - Paddy can

provide sample a support letter containing talking points that can be e-mailed out to KIN members.

- Circulate a joint support letter signed by Montana manufacturers and submit to legislature – the group also discussed the idea that this letter might come from the KIN and possibly have the Main Street Montana letter head if possible. Jim Haider will send this idea up the ladder to the KIN co-chairs for discussion.
- Bruce Jensen of Anderson Steel noted from his experience in Wisconsin that Counties contributed grant funding to that state’s manufacturing extension service center - from that a suggestion was made to target County Commissioners of the seven largest Montana communities for MMEC assistance.
- MMEC is researching other grant sources and has applied to some
- Perception among manufacturers is they know who MMEC is but not necessarily what they do.
- Increase marketing of MMEC to the Montana manufacturers through various means:
 - MMEC conduct lunch and learn sessions throughout the state
 - MMEC conduct regular 1 hour webinars that manufacturers can participate in

Increasing access to capital

- Haider mentioned manufacturers need a better understanding on what funding programs currently are available from the state – a follow-on suggestion was to incorporate [State Finance Information Center](#) representatives to participate in a concerted education webinar effort with MMEC, Department of Commerce, etc., to provide regular information webinars to manufacturers and others concerning services available.
- Some Montana companies are growing into a void, i.e., they are not big enough to attract the attention of New York investment groups but they are too big for the relatively small angel groups that invest in Montana – Tom K mentioned that the Energy KIN (Craig Wilkins is spearheading a strategy effort) is also working on increasing access to capital and that the manufacturing KIN should coordinate with them .

Entrepreneurship training

- Work to get to increase the availability of on-line business / entrepreneur courses through Montana University system – there are some excellent classes available now at a reasonable price but more availability is needed.
- Montana manufactures need to be better acquainted with the [Blackstone Launch Pad](#), a partnership between Montana State University, the University of Montana and Headwaters RC&D that fosters entrepreneurship.
- Manufacturing KIN Groups A and B need to coordinate on entrepreneur training recommendations for Main Street – Neil Blossom offered to draft a position paper on entrepreneurship for the group.

Conclusion – Group B identified several issue of importance but its first priority is urging the KIN co-chairs to contact the Joint Subcommittee on General Government Chaired by Rep. Ryan Osmundsen urging the committee’s support for and expansion of MMEC in the Governor’s budget.