

# Kinexus receives \$181,000 skilled trades grant

## Funding to be used to boost manufacturing

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**BENTON HARBOR** — Kinexus announced Wednesday it secured a nearly \$181,000 grant from Michigan's Skilled Trades Training Fund.

The grant will be used to help nine manufacturers enhance their work force through training grants.

Funding will further supplement the costs for work-

ers to upgrade their skills in machining, mold making, computer programming, welding and other apprenticeship programs.

Kinexus is working with manufacturers to address the lack of training, which includes ICM Products, Hanson Mold, Kelm Acubar, Mach Mold, Kay Manufacturing, Lakeshore Mold and Die, Albermarle, Kruger Plastics and Vickers Engineering.

"The STTF grant allows us to further invest in our work force to improve the skills, knowledge, and value of all our employees," said Ken Kemerer, vice president of Global

Operations at ICM Products. "This is an important part of our continuous improvement efforts to drive innovation, which ensures continued growth and stability at ICM Products."

Kinexus is a nonprofit that works with businesses and their staffs, while promoting economic vitality in Southwest Michigan.

Kinexus made a survey of manufacturers in July and found there was a lack of technical skill competencies in the labor pool and 33 percent of manufacturers place emphasis on lack of soft skills as challenges in filling open positions.

Survey results revealed

that 70 percent of manufacturers reported providing more training and development for new and existing talent. The Skilled Trades Training Fund was sought after by Kinexus in order to help Southwest Michigan employers fill the skills gap and provide more training for future needs.

"The Michigan Skilled Trade Training grant is a great resource to help Michigan-based businesses enhance their employee skills and support new hire trainings," Alex Grumbine, director of Business and Industry at Kinexus, said in a news release. "This grant will better prepare South-

west Michigan's \$2.1 billion manufacturing industry for the future and supply local employers with the talent they need to succeed."

The manufacturing sector drives the regional economy, Grumbine said. About 17,000 jobs – or 18 percent – of all the jobs in Southwest Michigan are in manufacturing.

Kinexus has additional resources to help existing companies develop trainings, support growth and retain employees. Additional grants might become available throughout the year, Grumbine said.

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