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Deere suppliers on ground floor with manufacturing-supercomputer pilot program

By: [Paul Merrion](#) March 02, 2011

(Crain's) — Small and mid-sized suppliers of Moline-based Deere & Co. will be among the Midwest manufacturers getting first crack at using supercomputers to speed up the design of components, under a White House initiative announced Wednesday.

Deere, Lockheed Martin Corp. and General Electric Co. are helping to fund a pilot program in the Midwest to develop new software, pay for the use of supercomputers at the University of Illinois, Argonne National Laboratory and elsewhere, and train smaller manufacturers on how to use those tools to develop new manufacturing processes and products.

Obama administration officials described it as a “watershed” and “milestone” event, despite initial funding of only \$4.5 million, including \$2 million from the Commerce Department’s Economic Development Administration and \$2.5 million from private-sector partners. Grants will go to firms in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.

“This is going to change the game in how third-millennium manufacturing is done,” said Deborah Wince-Smith, president and CEO of the Council on Competitiveness, a non-profit Washington, D.C.-based coalition of CEOs, university presidents and labor leaders, which is organizing the effort, called the National Digital Engineering and Manufacturing Consortium. The council’s current chairman is Samuel Allen, Deere’s chairman and CEO.
