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Feds commit \$2M toward manufacturing research program

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Washington — The White House has committed \$2 million toward a \$4.5 million grant fund that will partner research universities with small and medium-sized manufacturers in hopes of cutting average product development times to eight months from 14 months.

While no specific Michigan companies or institutions are partnering directly in the new program announced Wednesday, the Great Lakes State is one of four Midwest states taking part in what the Obama administration is hoping will be an expanded program in the future.

Ron Bloom, President Barack Obama's manufacturing czar, called the program "a pilot project" but noted "if this ramps up, this will need greater resources ... the private partners are still exploring and developing this idea."

Among those partners are Purdue University, General Electric, John Deere, Lockheed Martin, Procter and Gamble and the state of Ohio. Together, they'll form The National Digital Engineering and Manufacturing Consortium, which will be coordinated under the auspices of the Council on Competitiveness, an already-existing public-private partnership.

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