



## Program links small manufacturers with supercomputers

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About \$4.5 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Commerce and private companies will create a program to link small manufacturers in the U.S. Midwest with supercomputing resources, U.S. officials said Wednesday.

The goal of the new National Digital Engineering and Manufacturing Consortium is to shorten the development cycle for new products at small and medium-size manufacturers, said Gary Locke, U.S. secretary of commerce. The consortium will use the funding to develop software, purchase time for small manufacturers on supercomputers and train employees there on the technology, Locke and other U.S. officials said.

The pilot program will target small and medium-size manufacturers in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan, officials said during a press conference. About \$2 million of the money will come from the DOC's Economic Development Administration, and \$2.5 million from private companies and other sources, including Purdue University, General Electric, John Deere, Lockheed Martin, Procter & Gamble and the state of Ohio.

It's important to support small U.S. manufacturers, instead of sending manufacturing work overseas, said Ron Bloom, assistant to President Barack Obama for manufacturing policy. Obama's focus on building U.S. innovation depends on manufacturing, Bloom said.

"For too long, we've relied on an invent-it-here, manufacture-it-there approach," he added.

The grants went to the Council on Competitiveness, a group of U.S. CEOs, university presidents and labor leaders, and the council will form the new consortium. The consortium will help large U.S. OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) share their high-performance computing expertise with the small manufacturers that supply the larger companies, officials said.

The average time to market for a new product at a small manufacturer in the U.S. is now about 14



months, Locke said. Using the high-performance computing resources for modeling and simulation could cut that time to eight months, he said. The supercomputing resources will make the U.S. companies "more efficient and more competitive in the global marketplace," he said.

The project has the potential for a huge impact on U.S. manufacturing, added Council on Competitiveness President and CEO Deborah Wince-Smith. "This is going to change the game in how third-millennium manufacturing is done," she said.

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