

Grants available for companies entering, expanding in export markets

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In November 2015, the Milwaukee 7 Regional Economic Development Partnership launched the Export Development Grant Program presented by JPMorgan Chase. The program provides financial assistance to small and medium enterprises, both those new to exporting and experienced exporters, to enter new markets by accessing resources, overcoming obstacles and seizing on opportunities internationally.

The program provides matching funds of up to \$5,000 per company. The funding can be used for a multitude of export-related purposes and may also be combined with grants offered by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. Companies are asked to provide a narrative explaining how the funding will help grow their exports. Any and all uses of the funds will be considered, including: attending foreign trade shows, attaining foreign approvals, translating marketing material and websites, utilizing the U.S. Commercial Service and attending ExporTech, to name a few.

To date, the M7 Export Development Grant Program has provided just more than \$243,000 to 61 companies to assist them in growing their export business. To date, 17 companies have completed their various projects and have submitted economic impact and milestones. In addition to half of the companies reporting having entered new international markets for the first time, export sales growth figures resulting from these efforts total \$9.1 million.

Two companies that traveled to new markets in 2016 are American Exchanger Services Inc., with locations in West Allis and Hartford, and TLX Technologies LLC of Pewaukee. TLX Technologies was founded in 1996 to bring to market several patented, high-speed digital valves for controlling the force of a vehicle airbag inflation event during a crash. In the years that followed, TLX went on to strategically cultivate other opportunities utilizing these patented solenoid features. Currently, TLX is producing custom solenoid and valve components for a variety of markets that include automotive, transportation, industrial and fire protection.



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TLX leverages funds to exhibit in Dubai

TLX Technologies utilized the M7 Chase grant to exhibit at an international trade show for fire protection in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Having a presence at this show gave TLX greater visibility to potential customers from both the Middle East and Asia. As a small, Wisconsin-based manufacturer, the M7 grant has helped TLX Technologies to become a strategic global leader in the fire protection market.

American Exchanger Services specializes in innovative engineering, quality manufacturing, aftermarket and turnkey field services for the power generation, pulp and paper, and process industries. As an active Heat Exchange Institute member company and American Society of Mechanical Engineers certified code shop, AM-EX is uniquely capable of providing the most reliable and efficient heat transfer equipment, such as feedwater heaters, main steam surface condensers and balance-of-plant heat exchangers, to meet the most stringent specifications. AM-EX's dedicated field service division and experience in condenser retubing allow the company to offer diverse solutions for any heat transfer requirements.



A horizontal high pressure feedwater heater manufactured by American Exchanger Services.



A rectangular steam condenser manufactured by American Exchanger Services.

AM-EX applies grant to business development in Asia

AM-EX utilized the grant funds from the M7 Export Development Grant Program to travel to several Asian countries for the purpose of business development. In addition, the M7 grant also subsidized the cost of ExporTech, a Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership program. Particular focus was given to locating various channel partners in strategic locations, generating leads for both aftermarket service and new fabrication projects.

With excess capacity and volatility in the domestic power generation market, exporting has provided an opportunity to minimize local fluctuations by accessing a larger total market with expanding trends in emerging markets. For this year, AM-EX export sales account for more than 50 percent of total bookings, and if trends continue as expected, are forecast to increase further in the coming years. Along with the various projects, the M7 grant helped AM-EX solidify a multimillion-dollar contract within the focused power generation markets.

For more information or to apply for the M7 Export Development Grant Program presented by JP Morgan Chase, please visit choosemilwaukee.com.

Chad Hoffman is the export development director for the Milwaukee 7.