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DEWINE PRAISES LOCAL COALITION



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Gov. Mike DeWine talks with Toledo Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz during a news conference to announce details of Ohio's first Innovation Hub at O-I Glass in Perrysburg.

Region wins 1st of state's funds for Innovation Hub

\$31M will create center to develop glass tech

By JAMES TRUMM
BLADE BUSINESS WRITER

Surrounded by the leadership team from the Northwest Ohio Innovation Consortium, Gov. Mike DeWine and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted announced Monday morning that northwest Ohio will be the first recipient of funding from Ohio's Innovation Hub program.

The \$31.3 million grant will be used by the area's glass and solar industries, the University of Toledo, and Bowling Green State University to create the Glass Center of Excellence, which will be headquartered at O-I Glass in Perrysburg and will develop new technologies for manufacturing glass.

The consortium's corporate partners include O-I, Owens Corning, Libbey Glass, Pilkington, and First Solar. The project aims to develop sustainable manufacturing processes that result in lighter, stronger glass. As a condition of the grant, the two universities and participating glassmakers will contribute an additional \$10.5



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Rodney Rogers, Bowling Green State University president, right, and Matt Schroeder, interim president of the University of Toledo, shake hands at O-I Glass.

million to the project.

"Ohio has historically been a great manufacturing state, and we remain so," said Mr. DeWine. "People, expertise, and innovation: Those things come together here. This is a collaboration that will build on Toledo's legacy and propel it to the forefront of the glass and solar industries worldwide."

The governor stated north-

west Ohio was chosen because of its unusually close collaboration among businesses and academic institutions. "It's a tribute to the people here," he said. "They got it together very, very quickly."

Mr. Husted echoed that comment.

"UT and BGSU

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collaborating together," he said. "That's essential for us to be world-class academically. They can't do it alone. And they need [Owens Community College] and Penta. This is leaning in with investment to make northwest Ohio number one in the world in its sector."

He also said the Innovation Hub would create 1,600 jobs and have a \$284 million impact on the local economy.

"Let's face it," Mr. Husted said. "In China, they're picking this industry to dethrone companies like First Solar. In Europe, they're picking industries there as well. This industry picked Toledo. This industry picked northwest Ohio because of its unique advantages. All we're doing is helping them

have the resources to continue to do the innovation that's been here since the late 1800s."

Funding for the project was announced at O-I Glass headquarters in Perrysburg.

State Rep. Michele Grim (D, Toledo) said she was pleased by the announcement.

"This is a big win for Toledo that will strengthen our glass and solar sectors and help create new, high-wage jobs," she said. "I'm proud to have worked with colleagues on the House Finance Committee to pass Innovation Hub funding in the state budget and have strongly advocated for the Northwest Ohio Innovation Consortium."

Roger Smith, a retired O-I executive and president of the Northwest Ohio Innovation Consortium, was tasked with getting the region's industrial and academic leaders to work together on the application.

"I was really expecting that some of them would look around the meeting room, spot one of the other people, and say, 'We don't need you,'" he said. "But that's not what happened. Instead, everyone acknowledged that we would be stronger together. You won't get very far in life unless you can get people of dissimilar interests to work together. But if we do things together, we can do them at a lower cost and faster."

Owens College was a key player in the shaping of the Innovation Hub application.

"Owens has been involved with the Northwest Ohio Innovation Consortium from the beginning," said college President Dione Dorsey Somerville. "A project like this feeds right into our mission. When you look at how transformational this grant is, you'll see that it will really reposition northwest

Ohio as the glass capital of the world. The industry is going to need people with associate's and bachelor's degrees. And that's part of our mission. We will be developing curricula, apprenticeships, and co-ops to support this initiative. Owens will do what it's always done: training and educating people for our work force and for the economic development of northwest Ohio."

The Innovation Hub program is administered by the Ohio Department of Development and is similar to the state's Innovation District initiative, which has awarded grants to consortia of businesses and academic institutions in Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati. Innovation Hubs, by contrast, are focused on legacy industries in the state's smaller cities.

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Roger Smith, president of the Northwest Ohio Innovation Consortium, says that during the application process, people in disparate sectors pulled together to get what was needed.



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Lt. Gov. Jon Husted said during Monday's news conference that all northwest Ohio needed was the money to 'continue to do the innovation that's been here since the late 1800s.'