

# THE BLADE

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## Editorial: State grant wise

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The state has finally broken its habit of putting every spare dime it can find into programs restricted to the 3C's of Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati.

The DeWine administration was wise to create a small — compared to the 3C program — Innovation Hub program, and even smarter to start the new economic development initiative with a \$31.3 million grant to Toledo. (["Region wins 1st of state's funds for Innovation Hub," Tuesday](#))

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The Northwest Ohio Innovation Consortium comprised of O-I Glass, Owens Corning, Libbey Glass, Pilkington, First Solar, the University of Toledo, Bowling Green State University, Owens Community College, and local governments and labor organizations will add another \$10.5 million to the project.

The money will create the Northwest Ohio Glass Innovation Hub on the grounds of O-I headquarters devoted to research on reduction of weight and addition of strength to glass used in solar panels.

The integrated nature of the Toledo economy is shown by the use of locally produced cadmium telluride thin glass by First Solar. The cheapest, fastest, and most energy efficient system in the industry is likely to become even more so just as the demand for utility grade solar skyrockets.

By 2035 solar is expected to produce 40 percent of U.S. electricity. Thanks to the close collaboration of Toledo glass and solar industries, northwest Ohio currently leads the the nation in solar panel production.

First Solar has three factories and a \$370 million Research & Development Center in northwest Ohio and the combined R&D spending by the consortium members tops \$270 million a year.

The Ohio Department of Development is assisting a fast growth industry in solar and the legacy glass industry while the DeWine administration is connecting the Center for Advanced Manufacturing at BGSU and the Center of Photovoltaics Innovation & Commercialization at the University of Toledo to big economic impact.

The state estimates the grant will create 1,600 jobs and \$284 million in local economic impact.

Big round numbers almost never happen but the measure of success for both the local consortium and the state Innovation Hub grant is maintaining national leadership in the

production of utility grade solar panels.

Solar is going to grow globally much faster than other uses for glass. The synergy between the two industries gives Toledo two engines of growth. Moreover, the Northwest Ohio Innovation Consortium becomes a high performance partner to draw more resources in the future.

It was an unsuccessful effort for an Innovation Hub grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce that paved the way for the team which won dollars from Ohio. Lack of a track record was the stumbling block for federal funds.

Soon that won't be a problem.

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