

# **Regional Exporting Strategies Project Helps Michigan Small Businesses Reach Foreign Markets**

## *Next Phase Expands New Export Market Opportunities for Targeted Michigan Communities*

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### ***For Immediate Release***

LANSING, Mich. – The MSU Center for Community and Economic Development (MSU CCED) has launched the next phase of its Regional Exporting Strategies Project to expand foreign markets for small and medium size businesses in three distressed Michigan regions, including:

- The East Michigan region, consisting of 14 counties in the Thumb and around Saginaw Bay;
- The I-69 International Trade Corridor (including St. Clair, Lapeer, Genesee, and Shiawassee counties; and
- The Eastern Upper Peninsula (Chippewa, Luce, and Mackinac counties).

The project, funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration and scheduled to run through 2013, is designed to amp up efforts to help small businesses reach foreign markets.

MSU CCED is collaborating with the St. Clair County Economic Development Alliance and the other three I-69 International Trade Corridor counties; the East Michigan Council of Governments (EMCOG); and the Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development Commission (EUPRPDC) to identify innovative new ways to increase small business exporting. Exporting represents a key market to help small and medium-size companies in these regions outpace the sluggish local economy and create new jobs.

The MSU team and its three regional partners are collaborating to expand new export market opportunities with a five-pronged approach, including:

- Bi-national regional collaboration with Ontario public agencies and

companies;

- Creating and implementing regional exporting strategies focused on small businesses;
- Identification and strategic leveraging of local exporting infrastructure assets in each region;
- Expanding the network of commercial lenders offering SBA export financing to small companies; and
- Conducting targeted outreach and site visits with Michigan Economic Development Corporation’s State Trade and Exporting Program (STEP) staff to small companies, highlighting export opportunities and assistance resources.

“Collaborating with the MSU Center for Community and Economic Development will allow us to augment our efforts to help local businesses reach foreign markets,” said Dan Casey, CEO of the Economic Development Alliance of St. Clair County. “The partnerships we create during this project will deploy resources and strategies to help area businesses for many years to come.”

In Phase I of the project, which concluded December 31, 2012, the MSU project team collaborated with two regional planning agencies (EUPRPDC and EMCOG) to develop two of the first six regional exporting strategies in the U.S. for small and medium size businesses. A major finding of the project’s survey research was that businesses want to start or expand exporting, but many lack knowledge about the extensive state and federal resources to help them do so.

“From 2010 to 2011, exports accounted for 46% of U.S. economic growth with the majority of U.S. exports shipped by small and medium size businesses,” said J. D. Snyder, director of the MSU Regional Exporting Strategies Project.

The project’s new research analysis and findings will be presented at two bi-national conferences in the Blue Water Region and the Twin Saults Region at the end 2013. Each conference will bring together economic developers in Michigan and Ontario with researchers from the U.S. and Canada.

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The CCED mission is to advance MSU's land-grant mission by creating, applying, and disseminating valued knowledge through responsive engagement, strategic partnerships, and collaborative learning. CCED is dedicated to the empowerment of communities in creating sustainable prosperity and an equitable global knowledge economy.

Established in downtown Lansing, Michigan in 1969, CCED, in partnership with public and private organizations, has developed and conducted numerous innovative programs to address local issues while building the capacity of students, scholars, and communities to address future challenges. The CCED focuses its resources on the unique challenges of distressed communities throughout the state of Michigan.

Michigan State University has been advancing knowledge and transforming lives through innovative teaching, research and outreach for more than 150 years. MSU is known internationally as a major public university with global reach and extraordinary impact. Its 17 degree-granting colleges attract scholars worldwide who are interested in combining education with practical problem solving.