



Ohio Manufacturing Smart Technologies Assistance Program (STAP)

Ohio manufacturers must invest in equipment to modernize and innovate their production processes. Establishing an Ohio Manufacturing Smart Technologies Assistance Program (STAP). will enhance productivity, efficiency and competitiveness for Ohio's largest industry.

This program would help small to mid-sized Ohio manufacturers invest in the adoption and integration of smart technologies through the purchase of machinery and equipment to improve operations. While funding would be housed in the Ohio Department of Development Services, a strong assessment tool and technical expertise is imperative to the success of such an initiative.

OMA recommends that Industry Sector Partnerships (ISPs) and Manufacturing Extension Partnerships (MEPs) lead the assessment and technical aspects of this program. These groups must be involved in decisions about appropriate investments and selection criteria used for STAP. While a statewide resource will be needed to help mobilize the ISPs and MEPs along with training on how to use the assessment, these efforts will help build the capacity of emerging partnerships for the betterment of the manufacturing sector. All of these activities will ensure that investments in technology innovation go toward the strength and quality of the entire workforce system. Even if companies do not qualify for the grant, they will still benefit from the assessments by better understanding what technologies can be incorporated into those businesses to address upcoming challenges.

STAP is a natural extension of the work being done across the country to support Manufacturing 4.0 initiatives, which were developed to ensure manufacturers continue to remain globally competitive through the fourth industrial revolution of automation and smart technology. Manufacturing 4.0 technologies can include cybersecurity, augmented and virtual reality, big data, robotics and automation, additive manufacturing/3D Printing, simulation, system integration cloud computing and the Internet of Things (IoT).

This model has worked well in the neighboring states of Iowa and Indiana. Earlier this month, Iowa dedicated another \$2 million to their Technology Investment Program using funding derived from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). OMA recommends using this same approach given that one-time dollars are ideal to fund this type of investment and the State of Ohio still has ARPA funds for use in this budget cycle.

STAP will help businesses grow and compete amid a quickly changing business landscape. These grants will enable Ohio's manufacturers to increase their productivity and profitability, improve safety and ensure they remain nimble and successful into the next century.