

EXHIBIT 7  
DATE 2/8/07  
HB 371



An affiliate of the NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership

## Helping Manufacturers

The Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) is a statewide outreach center offering engineering and business management assistance and workforce training. MMEC is part of a nationwide network, the NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), where it can tap additional expertise to assist small and mid-size manufacturers in becoming more competitive and profitable.

MMEC can help with **systems and practices for managing equipment, building space, processes and people**. MMEC can help design and implement plans that **yield lower costs, greater production, and increased product quality** to meet customer demands quickly and staying focused on doing the things that add value.

Key to MMEC success is

Clear understanding of available and needed equipment and processes in Montana facilities from working on-site with manufacturers.

Ability to tie training directly to best practices implementations, ensuring successful outcome of time and money invested.

Access to a vast network of resources in Montana and nationwide.

### MMEC ECONOMIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

Manufacturing firms that receive direct MMEC services report retaining and hiring new workers as a result of projects; show increased and retained sales and making both capital and workforce investment. These impacts add dollars to the state coffers.

### MMEC IMPACT DATA

MMEC has assisted more than 540 Montana manufacturing firms since it was founded in 1996, with an average 92% satisfaction rating by its clients.

The MMEC program's job impacts over 10 years: 466 manufacturing jobs retained and 309 new jobs through June of 2006 as a result of direct MMEC services, reported in independent survey of completed client projects. Every manufacturing job creates as many as 2.58 additional jobs in the Montana economy, according to the Department of Labor and Industry IMPLAN model.

Growing manufacturing is good for the state as this sector's wages average nearly 26% higher than the average for all workers in the state. (\$36,857 compared to \$29,129). [UM Bureau of Business and Economic Research data]

MMEC direct services have resulted in \$64 million in increased sales and nearly \$58 million in retained sales, according to independent client survey of completed projects.

MMEC provides more than point solutions to keep manufacturers moving forward, often coaching Montana companies that have limited in-house resources for continuous improvement.

MMEC provides relevant workforce development to ensure successful project implementations.

With field staff working directly on the plant floor of Montana companies, referrals to complementary business resources are a natural outcome for continued growth of Montana companies.



## Montana's Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development

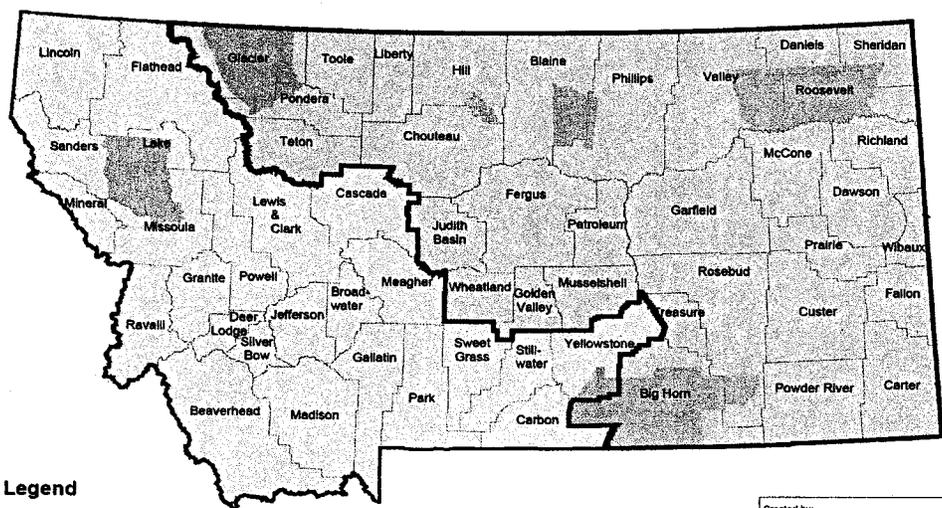
Businesses that are principally engaged in the production of bio-products in the WIRED region (32 counties & six Indian reservations) are eligible to apply for job training grants for new and incumbent workers to expand their operations.

**What Is WIRED:** A national initiative that is a regional, integrated approach to workforce and economic development and education with the goal of expanding employment and advancement of opportunities for workers and catalyzing the creation of high-skill and high-wage opportunities. WIRED focuses on talent development to drive regional economic competitiveness & job growth. Montana received a grant award.

**Purpose:** The purpose of WIRED in Montana is to establish a globally competitive bio-energy and bio-products cluster in central and eastern Montana by utilizing existing cohesive partnerships and developing new partnerships with business and industry, education, community development organizations, state and tribal governments and philanthropic foundations.

### "New Homestead Act" for Montana

"...nearly 89,000 square miles of some of the greatest energy reserves in the nation, be it the wind blowing across the prairies, the crops growing from the ground, or the coal underneath. With advances in bio-fuels and renewables, the region is well positioned to revitalize the economy with energy development."



**Legend**

- WIRED Region
- Balance of the State
- Indian Reservation



Created by:  
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"Shifting the region's agricultural base from being a predominately cash crop economy to one that is boosted by agricultural processing [*manufacturing*] will enable the region to become economically viable and to compete in global markets."

- Governor Brian Schweitzer

The **Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC)** was chosen as one of the first recipients of the Montana WIRED grant funds based on its track record of providing technical expertise and training in advanced manufacturing to manufacturing employees. (Aug. 2006)

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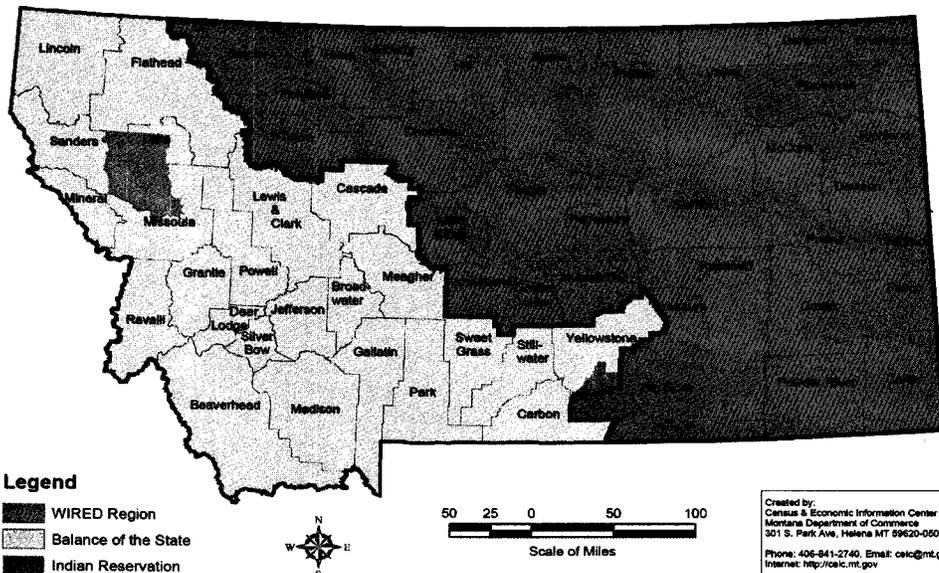
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