



Federal Program helps Manufacturers Beat Import Competition

By Scott Jacobs, Director, GLTAAC (as published in MiMfg Magazine, 7/2015)

International competition is stronger than ever. US manufacturing imports are on pace to hit \$2 trillion this year, which will make 2015 another record year. And import competition is extremely widespread. Over 80% of the manufacturing base in Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio is in industries currently facing rising imports. While the severity of foreign competition is somewhat masked at present by strong domestic markets, many small and mid-sized manufacturers are still struggling in this environment.

Fortunately, there is help available for trade-injured companies. Manufacturers that are adversely affected by import competition may qualify for Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms (TAAF) -- a little-known federal program specifically designed to help smaller, struggling firms stabilize and recover. For manufacturers in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana, the program is managed by the Great Lakes Trade Adjustment Assistance Center (GLTAAC or Great Lakes TAAC).

GLTAAC partners with affected firms to identify, plan, develop, prioritize, and implement a series of business improvement projects targeted at strengthening their overall global competitiveness. Projects are implemented using 3rd party service providers (consultants, trainers, etc.), which insures the best fit for every project. And the TAAF program provides up to \$75,000 in matching funds to help pay for the projects. Simply put, *GLTAAC helps trade-injured companies bring in outside expertise to accomplish targeted projects that strengthen their capabilities and build their internal capacity.*

Who Qualifies?

To qualify for the TAAF Program, a company must be losing both sales and employment due to imports. There is no cost to apply, and GLTAAC handles all of the paperwork. A 5 minute phone call is usually all it takes to determine if a company can qualify for TAAF. We will also help you determine if the program is a good fit for your firm's needs.

How GLTAAC Helps

The Great Lakes TAAC has worked with hundreds of import-injured manufacturers throughout Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana to connect them with the help they need. Here's how the process works:



- Each client works with a GLTAAC Project Manager who is an ally in the effort to turn the firm's business around. We first work with the client to create an action plan, which includes a comprehensive assessment of the firm and also identifies projects to improve its competitiveness. This plan, called an Adjustment Plan, acts as a roadmap for recovery.
- The TAAF program then provides up to \$75,000 in co-funding assistance to implement the projects in the plan. GLTAAC helps client companies identify and secure the best provider for each project, and handles the contracting for each. Most client companies complete 4-6 projects through the program, typically in 3-5 years.

Projects the TAAF Program Co-Funds

The TAAF program is extremely flexible – companies can use it to undertake whatever business improvements they need. Here are *just a few* examples of projects our clients have recently undertaken.

- **Financial management / Cost Accounting consulting & training** – variable cost analysis; bank relationship development; cost accounting (developed new cost standards); management coaching; succession planning; and valuation.
- **Marketing and sales support** – website development; re-branding; market research to support diversification; and product testing. Additionally, lead development; sales rep search; sales management training; sales plan development & implementation; and online product configuration tools.
- **Systems** – ERP selection, implementation, and training; CRM implementation and training; phase-gate system implementation; project management system implementation; LIMS; and strategic IT plan development.
- **Training** – CAD; CAM; safety; leadership development; machine skills; computer skills; and supervisor training.
- **Operations** – value stream mapping; lean tools; plant layout; ISO / AS / TS training; lean office; NADCAP certification prep; machine coolant system design; Six Sigma training; barcode implementation; and ToC training.

Call us to Learn More

If your sales have slipped due to import competition, give GLTAAC a call to learn more about the TAAF program and whether your firm qualifies for TAAF assistance. Contact John Antos, Project Manager at the Great Lakes TAAF (734-998-6227, gltaac@umich.edu), or visit www.gltaac.org.