

Business

Aerospace industry sets sights on Michigan

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The aerospace industry represents a promising target for Michigan manufacturing companies that are looking to diversify.

"Michigan manufacturers are unmatched in their ability, quality and skill," Gavin Brown, co-founder Michigan Aerospace Manufacturers Association of Grand Rapids, said Monday as he opened a conference dedicated to helping local companies find new business in aerospace.

"We already have some companies that are recognized as leaders" in their specialties, said MAMA's Craig Wolff during the Opportunities In Aerospace Manufacturing conference at the Oakland County Executive Conference Center in Waterford Township.

Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson said, "Manufacturing has long been a cornerstone of our state's economy, and we are committed to helping these important businesses grow."

"Despite our current challenges, I'm confident our manufacturers can excel in any new market, including aerospace," said Patterson, who noted that aerospace was one of 10-sectors experts he recruited identified earlier in the decade as having the potential to help rejuvenate Oakland County's economy.

The key speaker, however, was Geneva Taylor, a material procurement executive from Rolls-Royce plc, one of the world's largest aerospace companies.

Taylor, who is based in Indianapolis, said Rolls-Royce is actively looking to broaden its supplier base. Roll-Royce is looking for new suppliers in North America and Asia as it continues to grow.

The opportunities for suppliers are immense, she added. Rolls-Royce is expecting growth of 10-24 percent per year.

With nearly \$15 billion in revenue in 2008, Rolls-Royce, designs and builds integrated power systems for use on land, at sea and in the air.

Sandy Pierce, president of Charter One, Michigan, said credit is available for qualified companies.

Since it was founded in 2007, MAMA has grown to 50 members and has helped line up more than \$32 million in new business from the aerospace industry.

It serves as a conduit for manufacturers seeking new suppliers and offers members training and has access to experts that can ensure they're able to fulfill aerospace customers' orders.

Aerospace is a \$203 billion industry, with a nearly \$400 billion backlog of orders at the end of 2008, according to the Aerospace Industries Association. In Michigan, nearly 7,500 jobs and more than \$430 million in revenue already is tied to the sector.

Activity aerospace industry, particularly the general aviation component, has slowed because of the recession but it has not stopped thanks to the substantial back log of orders, MAMA officials said.

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