



News Release

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For Immediate Release
November 2, 2007

Virginia Tobacco Commission Awards Grant for Rural Virginia Advanced Manufacturing Skills Project

RICHMOND, VA – The Virginia Manufacturers Association (VMA) and its 501(c) 3 educational non-profit, the Virginia Industry Foundation (VIF), were awarded \$270,000 by the Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission (Virginia Tobacco Commission).

The Tobacco Commission's Executive Director, Neal Noyes, presented the Commission's check to the VMA Board of Directors, Executive Director of the Virginia Biotechnology Association (VaBIO) and Director of Virginia Council on Advanced Technology Skills (VCATS) on October 28 at the kick-off reception to the annual [Virginia Industry Leadership Forum](#). The Rural Virginia Advanced Manufacturing Skills Project was unanimously approved by the Tobacco Commission's Education Committee - Chaired by Senator Frank Ruff. It was also unanimously supported by the full Commission - Chaired by Senator Charles Hawkins and Vice Chairman Delegate Terry Kilgore.

The VMA and VIF will use the resources to train and retrain Manufacturing Technicians and World-Class Manufacturing Auditors/Examiners in the tobacco-dependent localities of Southside and Southwest Virginia in partnership with the Virginia Council on Advanced Technology Skills (VCATS). [VCATS](#) is a creation of VMA, [VaBIO](#) and private employers in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor to establish solutions to the upcoming shortage of advanced manufacturing workers in Virginia. VCATS offers a statewide system of competency-based and employer-validated skill standards for three levels of technical certification in advanced manufacturing. For more information on the VCATS certification, see its certification career ladder at <http://www.vacats.org/training.php>.

The Tobacco Commission's Executive Director Neal Noyes stated in his award letter, "I look forward to working with you to ensure that the funds awarded by the Commission will bring new jobs and new opportunities to the citizens in your region."

In a newly published study, *Virginia's Skilled Trades Gap Analysis Report*, it was reported that there will be an estimated 46,870 skilled trade jobs available in Virginia from 2007 through 2010, with nearly a quarter of these job openings driven by retirements. Manufacturing Technicians are expected to experience the largest number of openings, accounting for 22,606 of the available jobs. The study also found that manufacturing jobs pay wages 36.3% above the regional average in Southside Virginia and 26.9% above the regional average in Southwest Virginia.

"Thousands of advanced manufacturing jobs are opening in Virginia, and they will require significant skills training and certification to maintain our industry's competitiveness," said Brett Vassey, President & CEO, Virginia Manufacturers Association.

The Rural Virginia Advanced Manufacturing Skills Project will deliver 300 certifications by December 31, 2008. The project will also involve the region's economic development, community college and allied organization community. Those interested in enrolling in Manufacturing Technician or World-Class Manufacturing Auditor/Examiner training & certification, may register now at <http://www.dreamit-doit.com/Virginia/development/trainingregistration.html>.

The Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission is a 31-member body created by the 1999 General Assembly. Its purpose is to make payments to farmers to compensate for the decline of tobacco quotas and to promote economic growth and development in tobacco-dependent communities. The Commission's service area includes 41 tobacco-dependent localities in Southwest and Southside Virginia. For a detailed list of localities, go to <http://www.tic.virginia.gov/tobmapupdated.shtml>.

