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Small Business Administration announces Great Plains Technology and Manufacturing Cluster initiative at Kansas State University

MANHATTAN — The U.S. Small Business Administration has announced the addition of the Great Plains Technology and Manufacturing Cluster, or Great Plains TMC, initiative to the programs it supports through the nationwide Regional Innovation Clusters initiative. The program has been awarded \$500,000 for the first year with a four-year option for a total award of up to \$2.5 million over five years.

The Great Plains Technology and Manufacturing Cluster, led by the Kansas State University Technology Development Institute, serves the entire state of Kansas and western Missouri and joins a portfolio of programs supported through the SBA's Regional Innovation Cluster program, which is designed to support geographically concentrated groups of interconnected businesses, suppliers, service providers and related institutions in a particular industry or field. The goal of this new initiative is to assist manufacturers and technology entrepreneurs, particularly in rural regions, in making the critical connections to innovation resources required to protect, develop, launch and grow new products and businesses in the service region.

The Great Plains TMC is partnering with a wide range of economic development entities, including the Kansas Department of Commerce, NetWork Kansas, the Kansas Small Business Development Centers and a number of rural regional development offices across the service region to increase awareness, connectivity to resources and collaboration across the Great Plains.

Jeff Tucker, executive director of the university's Technology Development Institute said, "We are extremely pleased that the Small Business Administration has chosen to support our efforts to expand the connectivity of technology and manufacturing entrepreneurs and other small business across the state to the technical resources needed to be competitive in today's global economy. Whether it be education, engineering, business planning or a combination of all these, our mission is to ensure that individuals and organizations are aware of and have access to the resources available to assist them."

"We are pleased about the collaborative effort and economic impact this cluster initiative will have, including opportunities for Kansas businesses to develop new products, expand their businesses and increase the size of their skilled workforce," said Patty Clark, deputy secretary of the Kansas Department of Commerce. "The collaboration between our agency and the Great Plains Technology and Manufacturing Cluster initiative will help to continue the modernization and growth of businesses in Kansas."

Additional information about the Great Plains Technology and Manufacturing Cluster initiative can be found at www.GreatPlainsTMC.org .