March 16, 2012

Ms. Sherri Sullivan  
State Purchasing Officer  
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380  
Illinois State Board of Education  
100 N. First St.  
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

Dear Ms. Sullivan:


We are also enclosing a number of letters of support received from a wide array of business and educational interests for your review. At a recent meeting to discuss formation of a Manufacturing STEM Learning Exchange, the IMA Education Foundation was unanimously recommended to pursue the leader/fiscal agent designation.

We look forward to working with the State Board and all our partners as we move forward to implement a meaningful Pathway of Study to prepare students and other at-risk populations for rewarding careers in manufacturing. In advance, thank you for your review and consideration.

Yours truly,

Gregory W. Baise  
President & CEO

cc:  Ron Bullock  
Mark Denzler  
Phil McCall  
Jim Nelson
This is in response to the RFI issued February 7, 2012

1. The Illinois Manufacturers’ Association (IMA) through the IMA Education Foundation will apply for an implementation grant to implement the Manufacturing STEM Learning Exchange for the State of Illinois. The IMA Education Foundation has been endorsed to lead the Exchange by a coalition of manufacturers, professional associations, educators and others (see attached letters of support). The Association has already recruited nearly 40 entities and is already engaged in preliminary organizational discussions to determine the best methods to meet the goals of the Exchange.

2. Jim Nelson, Vice President – External Affairs for the IMA will serve as primary contact for this initiative. Mr. Nelson may be reached as follows
   a. James Nelson, Vice President
      Illinois Manufacturers’ Association
      220 East Adams St.
      Springfield, IL 62701
      800-875-4462, ext. 3023
      jnelson@ima-net.org

3. The Illinois Manufacturers’ Association is the nation’s oldest and largest association representing the interests of manufacturers. Founded in 1893, the IMA represents more than 4,000 member manufacturers and advocates, without exception, for all manufacturing verticals. The IMA is widely respected in Illinois and beyond for its leadership on issues and focused advocacy for manufacturing.

4. The IMA is a 501(c)6 organization; The IMA Education Foundation is a 501(c)3 and its tax ID number is 36-3686904.

5. The IMA and its Education Foundation is uniquely positioned to lead the Manufacturing STEM Learning Exchange. The IMA is the only statewide organization representing all manufacturing verticals without exception or bias. Moreover, the association has a long and remarkable history of leadership on a wide variety of issues and administering state grant programs. The IMA is a regular grantee for ETIP funds and has excellent relationships with training providers as well as companies for whom grant monies are expended. In recognition of the importance of the Manufacturing STEM Learning Exchange, the IMA Board of Directors has reassigned senior association staff to assure success of the Exchange and its implementation through the IMA Education Foundation. Moreover, IMA is widely respected for its ability to forge coalitions on issues and initiatives, often among competing entities and focus the efforts of
diverse groups and this reputation will greatly underscore the focus being brought by the IMA Education Foundation.

6. For the last two years, the IMA has led the efforts of a diverse group of manufacturers, educators and training providers in developing the manufacturing sector’s Pathways of Study, including the development of a specific curriculum that can be easily implemented at the high school and community college levels. This effort required developing effective working relationships with the parties, many of whom had never before worked together. The association has also begun efforts to develop and encourage locally driven relationships between manufacturers and schools to move the effort forward while the STEM Learning Exchanges are being built and finalized. As stated previously, letters of support for the IMA’s leading the STEM Exchange are attached.

7. Sub-contracts will be needed for expert services for marketing and outreach products such as short and medium length videos for use in schools, television commercials/public service announcements promoting manufacturing careers and training opportunities, brochures etc. In addition, we anticipate the possibility of needing expert services in philanthropic fundraising during the term of the grant to raise such funds as may be necessary to provide a financial foundation to sustain the Pathways of Study following the expiration of the grant (currently set to expire after three [3] years) and to continue effective fundraising efforts thereafter.

Please contact Jim Nelson if you have any questions.
The IMA Education Foundation, in partnership with Instituto del Progreso Latino’s ManufacturingWorks Business Services Sectoral Center, is responding to the IL State Board of Education’s Request for Information (RFI): STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster. Because of the role that the IMA Education Foundation plays in the development of vendor-neutral, foundational manufacturing skills certifications, it provides ample experience and qualifications to serve as the lead for an implementation entity for the Manufacturing Learning Exchange. The IMA Education Foundation and its partners bring together a strong network of stakeholders from the business, academic, and government communities, as well as an array of partners to provide resources, products and tools for the establishment of a robust Manufacturing Learning Exchange.

ManufacturingWorks, designed as the Chicago Land region’s Business Service Sector, began in 2005. The center challenged the traditional workforce development services currently being provided. The new approach is to act as production shop floor consultant to identify the specific needs of the business. Then develop customized projects that address that need, under their timeline.

Instituto Del Progreso Latino and ManufacturingWorks have been long time associates and have continued the workforce development discussion specific to the manufacturing industry. Staff has attended events provided through the IMA network. My President & CEO, Juan Salgado, has worked closely with IMA president Ron Bullock on agenda topics and various career pathway ideas. I have been directly involved in this work for close to 10 years at Instituto.

Instituto’s ManufacturingWorks Business Center intends to support the STEM Learning Exchange mission and members by serving as an advisor to the project. General support to the manufacturing cluster through information and data provided from our company partners. Supporting student organizations and their major activities, as well as working with our partners to provide internships and other work-based learning opportunities. Offer professional development resources for teachers and school administrators integrated and aligned across middle school, high school, and community college instruction. Serve as a resource providing tools to assist students and schools with implementing personalized education plans and
transitions to post-secondary academic and training programs. Review and report on performance of STEM programs of study through aggregate student data and assessments.

Instituto's ManufacturingWorks program is a proud supporter of the STEM Learning Exchange and very excited to be participating in this opportunity for the manufacturing sector. Undoubtedly, the data, services and ideas that evolve from this group will help positively impact our company partners. Companies are reaching out to my office daily, looking for ways to close the skills gap and develop internal career pathways. I believe that through working with the STEM members, issues that have been brought up by companies, now have the potential to be resolved. This group will be an important entity for years to come for the Chicago land manufacturing industry.

[Signature]

Anthony Garritano
Director – Instituto’s ManufacturingWorks Business Service Sector Center
March 12, 2012

Ms. Sherri Sullivan
State Purchasing Officer
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First St.
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

Dear Ms. Sullivan,

The Illinois Manufacturing Association (IMA) Education Foundation, in partnership with the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago is responding to the Illinois State Board of Education's Request for Information: STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster. A leader in the development of vendor-neutral, foundational manufacturing skills certifications, we applaud the lead role the IMA Education Foundation has taken on the project. If the proposal is funded, this new effort will significantly increase the Museum's ability to provide a comprehensive programming approach that aims to achieve the Museum's vision to inspire and motivate our children to achieve their full potential in the fields of science, technology, medicine and engineering.

The Museum is home to a modern, cutting-edge digital fabrication laboratory (Fab Lab), one of nearly 115 such facilities in worldwide network led by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A digital workshop in which students can create virtually anything imaginable, the Fab Lab is home to modern fabrication equipment such as computer numeric controlled (CNC) machines, laser cutters, and 3-D printers, all of which are controlled by state-of-the-art software. The Fab Lab offers extraordinary opportunities for youth considering post-secondary study or careers in STEM and the manufacturing sector, so we believe that this unique resource is well-aligned with the objectives of the STEM Learning Exchange.

Specifically, we have just completed a pilot year of an after-school program in the lab called Innovation Clubs, the primary goals of which are to: 1) facilitate the development and application of design and engineering skills and experience, 2) build partnerships between the Fab Lab and Chicago-area schools to increase access and exposure for high school students, and 3) develop cadres of youth designers, engineers and innovators. We are also exploring regional partnerships with local industries and corporations to host design and engineering challenges in which youth use the resources of the Fab Lab to create solutions to real-world problems. Finally, we are in early stages of developing an online component to the Fab Lab that will allow students to learn design skills and create projects from home, classrooms or wherever they are, regardless of ability to visit the Fab Lab in person.

We also look forward to participating in meetings and discussions with the Manufacturing Cluster as needed, including hosting meetings at our location and sending relevant staff to external meetings. Once again, let me say how pleased we are to have this opportunity to work with you and with our colleagues in Illinois.

Sincerely,

Andrea Ingram
Vice President of Education and Guest Services
March 12, 2012

Sherri Sullivan
State Purchasing Officer
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First St.
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

Ms. Sullivan,

Please accept this letter of support as the Education Foundation of the Illinois Manufacturers Association (IMA) seeks to respond to the Illinois State Board of Education’s Request for Information regarding the STEM Learning Exchange for manufacturing. The IMA Education Foundation is the perfect fit for this initiative as they are a vendor-neutral entity that supports information sharing and talent development in the manufacturing sector.

Harper College is a large comprehensive community college located in Palatine, IL. The College is engaged in offering a full complement of career and technical programs to our community as a means of strengthening the local economy. In addition, we offer transfer education, continuing education, corporate customized training, and developmental education to our constituents. I currently serve as the Executive Director of Workforce and Strategic Alliances. In that role, I have worked with Jim Nelson from the IMA to help build capacity for a talent pipeline in the advanced manufacturing sector.

Jim has provided critical support for our efforts to grow and refine training and education in manufacturing in our district. He attended and presented at a “Manufacturing Summit” that was hosted by Harper College last fall as a means of gathering specific information on workforce needs. Jim has also provided information on Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC) curricula and testing which will be integrated into our programming.

Harper College commits to being an active partner in this initiative by sharing educational programs, assessments, and other resources. We are also committed to providing support to students and developing personalized manufacturing education plans that inform career planning and decisions.

We are delighted to partner with IMA’s Education Foundation and feel that collectively we can work to enhance the manufacturing sector through the Learning Exchange initiative.

Sincerely,

Maria H. Coons
Dear Sherri,

The IMA Education Foundation, in partnership with Bison Gear & Engineering Corp., is responding to the IL State Board of Education’s Request for Information (RFI): STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster. Because of the role that the IMA Education Foundation plays in the development of vendor-neutral, foundational manufacturing skills certifications, it provides ample experience and qualifications to serve as the lead for an implementation entity for the Manufacturing Learning Exchange. The IMA Education Foundation and its partners bring together a strong network of stakeholders from the business, academic, and government communities, as well as an array of partners to provide resources, products and tools for the establishment of a robust Manufacturing Learning Exchange.

Bison Gear and Engineering began in 1960 by designing problem-solving gearboxes and gear motors for their customers. Today, the company has grown into an industry leader in electric motor, gear motor and gear reducer products by implementing innovative lean manufacturing processes, a world class engineering and support team driven by their Robusticity™ design philosophy; allowing Bison to consistently expand its product line with new motion control and power transmission solutions. For more information on Bison or their products, please visit www.bisongear.com.

I previously held the position of Vice President and Director of Business Excellence for Motorola before becoming CEO and President of Bison Gear & Engineering. I led the path to national recognition for Performance Excellence when Motorola was awarded the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 2002 and the Balanced Scorecard Hall of Fame award in 2004.

Bison’s involvement with IMA is 25 years long. Bison’s Chairman Ron Bullock has held the chair position for the IMA Board and worked diligently at Education and Skilled Workforce initiative with the IMAEF. IMA’s work in Illinois both in policy and support for manufacturing is not only valuable but necessary for manufacturing.
Bison will be supporting this project by serving as an advisor to the project, providing general support as needed and appropriate for the Manufacturing Cluster and be providing e-learning curriculum resources, including online courses, assessments and feedback systems, reference materials, databases and software tools. Bison, also, will be expanding access to classroom and laboratory space, equipment, and related educational resources necessary to support programs of study through regional partnerships and other strategies. Bison will be providing career development and outreach resources to expand awareness of cluster-related programs and careers to K-12 students. Lastly, Bison will be supporting student organizations and their major activities and providing internships and other work-based learning opportunities.

Bison supports the IMA’s leadership in this role and in the Illinois Pathway project specifically for manufacturing. Having a skilled workforce will support manufacturing in Illinois by supplying a pipeline of certified and prepared workers.

Sincerely

Martin Swarbrick
CEO & President
March 9, 2012

Sherri Sullivan  
State Purchasing Officer - Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380  
ISBE  
100 N. First Street  
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the Illinois Manufacturing Extension Center (IMEC), I am writing to offer support and resources to aid in the implementation of the STEM Learning Exchange for the manufacturing sector in Illinois.

Among the principal challenges faced by our state’s small and mid-sized manufacturers is the difficulty in attracting workers with the capabilities to succeed in an advanced manufacturing environment. Even as the economy recovers and manufacturers fill their sales funnels, our clients tell us that they are often unable to meet the demand for their products and services simply because they do not have the talent base to produce to maximum capacity.

We are encouraged that the Manufacturing STEM Learning Exchange will provide a pathway that will build more effective talent pipelines throughout the state and provide growing manufacturers with the resources they need to be globally competitive from their Illinois base of operations. As evidenced by the success of the Specialized Manufacturing Strategy group in the Peoria-Pekin Area, manufacturers know that they cannot rely on government alone to solve the workforce capability challenge. It will require leadership from the private sector to make the Manufacturing STEM Learning Exchange a powerful tool for real improvement.

We strongly believe that IMA is the most capable organization to lead this initiative. Their proven ability to build coalitions and implement practical solutions to benefit the businesses and workers in Illinois is unparalleled. IMEC has enjoyed a strong collaborative relationship with the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association (IMA) and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) for many years.

IMEC is uniquely suited to identify and facilitate opportunities for students to work in collaborative teams to get real-world manufacturing experience while enabling the companies to nurture the workforce of the future. We look forward to partnering with the IMA, DCEO and many other partners to implement this critical initiative.

Sincerely,

David Boulay, PhD  
President
March 9, 2012

Ms. Sherri Sullivan  
State Purchasing Officer  
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380  
Illinois State Board of Education  
100 North First Street  
Springfield, IL  62777-0001  

Re: STEM Learning Exchange for Manufacturing Cluster

Dear Ms. Sullivan,

The Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago are pleased to submit this letter in support of the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association’s application for the STEM Learning Exchange. The Illinois Manufacturers’ Association is uniquely qualified to serve as the lead in development of the Learning Exchange for the manufacturing cluster.

The Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago is a consortium of eight Workforce Boards covering the City of Chicago, Northern Cook County, South and West Suburban Cook County, DuPage County, Kane/DeKalb/Kendall, Lake County, McHenry County and Will County. The Workforce Boards are charged with wide-ranging policy and planning responsibilities for workforce development within their communities. As leaders in workforce development, we recognize the value of the STEM Learning Exchange in developing a pipeline of skilled workers and are in the best position to be engaged in and contribute to the planning and implementation process.

The Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago – collectively and individually – are committed to working with the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association. The Workforce Boards can assist them in making connections with local employers and other key stakeholders in the workforce development system. The eight Workforce Boards have extensive experience with regional and local sector based initiatives that have focused on disseminating career information to students and job seekers, developing education and training programs that address the need for high demand skills, and increasing the pipeline of skilled workers for high skill occupations. As a
result of this experience, the Workforce Boards have a unique perspective in terms of how the Learning Exchange can contribute to the development of skilled workers.

Sincerely,

Gary Gibson, Manager
Lake County Workforce Investment Board

Jeffery Poynter, Director
McHenry County Workforce Investment Board

Pat Fera, Manager
Workforce Investment Board of Will County

Mary Beth Marshall, Executive Director
DuPage Workforce Board

Ray Bentley, Board Liaison
Cook County Workforce Investment Board

Jennifer Stasch, Executive Director
The Workforce Board of Northern Cook County

Tracy McDonnell, Executive Director
River Valley Workforce Investment Board

Mary Beth Marshall, Executive Director
DuPage Workforce Board
March 12, 2012

Sherri,

Illinois Central College (ICC) supports the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association’s (IMA) Education Foundation’s response to the Illinois State Board of Education’s RFI: STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster. The IMA Education Foundation continues to play a role in the development of vendor-neutral, foundational manufacturing skills certifications and provides ample experience and qualifications to serve as the lead entity for the implementation and ongoing support of the Manufacturing Learning Exchange. The IMA Education Foundation and its partners bring together a strong network of stakeholders from the business, academic, and government communities, as well as an array of partners to provide resources, products and tools for the establishment of a robust Manufacturing Learning Exchange.

One of IMA Education Foundation’s partners, Illinois Central College has played a vital role in providing workforce training across the manufacturing pathways. ICC partners up and down the pipeline including area high schools, local employers, LWIAs, community-based organizations, and others with an eye towards innovation and the willingness to attempt new models if the outcomes promise improved knowledge or skills in entry-level or incumbent workers or higher numbers of trained potential employees.

ICC has been involved with Illinois’ Manufacturing Programs of Study efforts since 2007. ICC worked with local employers and high schools to understand local pathways. The makeitillinois.org website was created in 2009 to provide a portal to communicate manufacturing programs of study, faculty resources, and a place for manufacturers. ICC worked with others to organize communication between businesses and educational systems. In 2010, ICC was selected to conduct a Pathway to Results project focused on Manufacturing Programs of Study. I served on the 2011 Manufacturing Sector Partnerships on Building Illinois STEM Pathways to College and Career Readiness for Manufacturing Programs of Study. ICC is a member of a local cooperative made up employers, high school Education for Employment systems, higher education, local governmental agencies, and others who collaborate under the umbrella of the Specialized Manufacturing Group (SMG) of the Economic Development Council for Central Illinois. SMG has been meeting and growing for nearly five years. SMG has grown in
trust and learned the benefits of collaboration. During our last SMG meeting we were surprised
that principals from Deer Creek Mackinaw and Morton High Schools chose to attend for the first
time. ICC and the members of SMG recognize the power our local efforts are having on
communities interested in educating their children and adults. We have discussed the STEM
Learning Exchange are excited by the prospect of a statewide effort and are willing to support its
growth.

The idea of the learning exchange has been building for several years and the IMA Education
Foundation has played a role in building an understanding how a learning exchange may work.
Partners like the IMA Educational Foundation, SMG of Central Illinois, ICC, and many others have
demonstrated the willingness to collaborate, the fruits of innovation, and organizational skills to
lead this transformational effort.

As a community college, ICC specifically agrees to provide general support as needed and
appropriate for the Manufacturing Cluster such as serving as an advisor to the project. The
faculty and staff have agreed assist with the provision and evaluation of e-learning curriculum
resources, including online courses, assessments and feedback systems, reference materials,
databases and software tools. ICC will continue to expand access to classroom and laboratory
space, equipment, and related educational resources necessary to support programs of study
through regional partnerships and other strategies. ICC will continue to support student
organizations and their major activities such as SkillsUSA and FFA. ICC will continue to serve as
an educational leader and provide professional development resources for teachers and school
administrators integrated and aligned across middle school, high school, and community college
instruction. Through efforts such as the Central Illinois College and Career Readiness group, ICC
will continue to provide development and outreach resources to expand awareness of cluster-related
programs and careers to K-12 students. ICC faculty and staff are interested with providing tools
and resources to assist students and schools with implementing personalized education plans
and transitions to post-secondary academic and training programs. ICC agrees to review and
report on performance of STEM programs of study through aggregate student data and
assessments.

I hope that this letter of support conveys the message that Illinois’ manufacturing sector has
been mobilized and organizing for some time. We are excited about the opportunities the STEM
Learning Exchanges will provide to affect the lives of Illinois learners. The public and private
entities involved understand the importance of manufacturing to Illinois’ economic viability and
are committed create an exchange that raises the awareness and abilities of individuals who use
it. While past efforts have at times been fragmented, the public and private entities that will be
involved with creating manufacturing’s STEM Learning Exchange have worked together for
many years. The IMA Education Foundation has been a leader in the Manufacturing Programs of
Study work and they are well poised to lead the STEM Learning Exchange.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Sherri Sullivan  
State Purchasing Officer  
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380  
Illinois State Board of Education  
100 North First Street  
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

The IMA Education Foundation, in partnership with EDSI, is responding to the IL State Board of Education’s Request for Information (RFI): STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster. Because of the role that the IMA Education Foundation plays in the development of vendor-neutral, foundational manufacturing skills certifications, it provides ample experience and qualifications to serve as the lead for an implementation entity for the Manufacturing Learning Exchange. The IMA Education Foundation and its partners bring together a strong network of stakeholders from the business, academic, and government communities, as well as an array of partners to provide resources, products and tools for the establishment of a robust Manufacturing Learning Exchange. EDSI is a 32-year-old workforce consulting company with extensive experience in workforce development, operational improvement and curriculum design. We have over 40 WIA and TANF-funded programs throughout eight states, including Illinois.

EDSI is a recent member of the IMA, and has been honored to be a part of the Education Foundation with Jim Nelson. The quality and scope of his work is unparalleled. EDSI is currently partnering with the IMA on speaking engagements and articles toward the common goal of the Education Foundation and Manufacturing initiative.

EDSI fully supports this project. We will serve as an advisor to provide general support as needed for the Manufacturing Cluster; provide e-learning curriculum resources, including databases and software tools; and review and report on STEM programs of study through aggregate student data and assessments.

EDSI supports Jim Nelson and the IMA to serve as the lead for an implementation entity for the Manufacturing Learning Exchange. This work is vital to the quality of education in Illinois and to connect the labor force to the needs of manufacturers in our state.

Sincerely,

Karin Knutson  
Midwest Account Executive  
EDSI Consulting
Dear Ms. Sullivan,

The IMA Education Foundation, in partnership with the Economic Development Council for Central Illinois, is responding to the IL State Board of Education’s Request for Information (RFI): STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster. Because of the role that the IMA Education Foundation plays in the development of vendor-neutral, foundational manufacturing skills certifications, it provides ample experience and qualifications to serve as the lead for an implementation entity for the Manufacturing Learning Exchange. The IMA Education Foundation and its partners bring together a strong network of stakeholders from the business, academic, and government communities, as well as an array of partners to provide resources, products and tools for the establishment of a robust Manufacturing Learning Exchange.

I serve as the President of The Economic Development Council for Central Illinois, Inc. (EDC) which was established in 1982. Our organization is a 501(c) 6 non-profit regional public-private partnership for local business and community growth, supported by area counties, multiple municipalities and various businesses. The Economic Development Council for Central Illinois is a proactive organization created by the private sector to foster economic growth within the Central Illinois region. By capitalizing on business expertise, we enhance the local economy through targeted financial services, technical assistance, dissemination of critical economic data, and regional marketing. The EDC creates long-term solutions for our investors by cultivating strong relationships with local, state, and federal agencies. We deliver value by developing synergies that attract and retain business. To strengthen the regional economic community, we collaborate with The Heartland Partnership, the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce and other strategic partners. One of the targeted industry clusters targeted by the EDC for growth in our region is manufacturing. The greater Peoria region has a strong tradition of manufacturing excellence. While manufacturing has become a very global industry, the Midwest remains the home to many cutting edge manufacturing operations. A primary objective of the EDC’s Specialized Manufacturing Strategy Group is to address the lack of skilled labor entering the manufacturing workforce in Central Illinois.

We are familiar with the quality of work through IMA and its Education Foundation. We receive and utilize their informative correspondences on a regular basis. EDC will support the project in as many ways as possible. In particular, we offer to serve as an advisor to the project, providing general support as needed and appropriate for the Manufacturing Cluster.
EDC and its Specialized Manufacturing Strategy Group is very supportive of the IMA Education Foundation serving as the lead for an implementation entity for the Manufacturing Learning Exchange in response to the IL State Board of Education’s Request for Information (RFI): STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster. IMA is fully capable to implement the development of vendor-neutral, foundational manufacturing skills certifications, and it provides ample experience and qualifications to do so proficiently and effectively. The IMA Education Foundation and its partners bring together a strong network of stakeholders from the business, academic, and government communities, as well as an array of partners to provide resources, products and tools for the establishment of a robust Manufacturing Learning Exchange.

Thank you for your favorable consideration of the IMA Education Foundation’s Manufacturing Learning Exchange response to the IL State Board of Education’s Request for Information (RFI): STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster.

Sincerely,

Vickie L. Clark
President
March 13, 2012

Sherri Sullivan  
State Purchasing Officer  
Fiscal & Procurement Division W-380  
Illinois State Board of Education  
100 North First St.  
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

Dear Ms. Sullivan:

The IMA Education Foundation, in partnership with Advanced Technology Services, Inc., is responding to the IL State Board of Education's RFI: STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster. Advanced Technology Services is based out of Peoria, IL and was founded in 1985. We have over 3,000 employees across the United States, the United Kingdom and Mexico, with nearly 1,000 in Illinois. We are the global leader in production equipment maintenance, with a mission statement of "We Make Factories Run Better."

Over the years, we have partnered with the IMA on various initiatives and appreciate their commitment to manufacturing. We work with them both at the local level and at the state level to ensure that manufacturing issues are at the top of mind for industry leaders and government agencies.

We look forward to supporting this project by actively participating in the Manufacturing Learning Exchange through providing industry input and also through working with community colleges and high schools to design curriculum that addresses manufacturing maintenance. We currently lead a Mechatronics Explorer Post and look forward to expanding that program to reach more students across the state of Illinois. Additionally, we look to provide experts that can support the training and education of junior high and high school students.

We face the issue of a shortage of skilled labor in the state of Illinois each day. We have requisitions for Manufacturing Maintenance Technicians in Illinois that we cannot fill. This impacts our business and our customers' business. We want to continue to do business in Illinois, but people are our commodity and if we don't have the right skilled workforce, it makes it difficult to grow our business. We are looking forward to seeing this learning exchange succeed.

Please contact me at hmosack@advancedtech.com if you have any questions.

Warm regards,

Holly Mosack  
Director, Technical Training  
Advanced Technology Services
March 14, 2012

Sherri Sullivan
State Purchasing Officer
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First St.
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

Dear Ms. Sullivan,

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), in partnership with The IMA Education Foundation, is responding to the IL State Board of Education’s Request for Information (RFI): STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster. Because of the role that the IMA Education Foundation plays in the development of vendor-neutral, foundational manufacturing skills certifications, it provides ample experience and qualifications to serve as the lead for an implementation entity for the Manufacturing Learning Exchange. The IMA Education Foundation and its partners bring together a strong network of stakeholders from the business, academic, and government communities, as well as an array of partners to provide resources, products and tools for the establishment of a robust Manufacturing Learning Exchange.

Here at IDES we have three main focuses: (1) We provide resources to individuals through our unemployment insurance programs to sustain them while they look for work; (2) We work with job seekers to help find them a job through our employment services; and (3) We analyze economic, demographic and workforce data to help employers make fact based decisions on where to locate facilities through our labor market information.

The Illinois Manufacturers Association has been an active member of the IDES Advisory Board since its inception. The Association is very familiar with our programs and services and understands what we can provide to this project. We know the quality of the work that they provide their members and are strong advocates of this association. In addition, the Association is a leader in developing strategies to identify employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector.

The agency and its staff will be available to serve the Association as an advisor to the project in any way possible. In addition, we are willing to utilize our available resources, mainly from Economic Information and Analysis, with a concentration on manufacturing, to assist them. Finally, IDES will provide resources for educators and administrators that would include career development tools to increase the awareness of cluster-related programs and careers.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jay Rowell
Director
March 12, 2012

Ms. Sherri Sullivan
State Purchasing Officer
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First St.
Springfield, IL  62777-0001

RE: Illinois State Board of Education’s RFI: STEM Learning Exchanges

As a Board member for the Alliance for Illinois Manufacturing/NORBIC I am writing in support of the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association Education Foundation’s (IMA) application for designation as a STEM Leadership Exchange for the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative.

The Alliance and NORBIC have been assisting small businesses and specifically small and mid-sized manufacturers in Northeast Illinois for nearly 35 years. Recruiting skilled workers to fill the many available jobs in manufacturing continues to be a challenge for small and mid-sized manufacturers. This is a systemic problem and it is only getting worse without a re-alignment of resources and curriculum to educate and train our next generation of manufacturing workers. The Alliance and NORBIC have been working on integrated workforce recruitment, training and financial assistance to assist companies with finding and training the right people. During the past year, at the request of the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, the Alliance for Illinois Manufacturing/NORBIC has developed, implemented and are in the process of institutionalizing a “Business Bridge Program” linking workforce agencies, training organizations and manufacturers. This successful initiative will serve as an additional resource for this project. Our partners in this Business Bridge Initiative are Jane Addams Resource Corporation, CFLWAC, North Workforce Board, South Workforce Board (Cook County Works) and the City of Chicago. We believe all these partnerships will add considerable value to the STEM initiative IMA’s Education Foundation will be coordinating as the statewide representative for manufacturing.

As an Illinois bank that works closely with manufacturers, I am supportive of this effort and support the Alliance/NORBIC working with the IMA’s Education Foundation to implement the STEM/RTTT program. We have a longstanding relationship with the IMA and other economic development organizations as well as a direct and active relationship with the workforce organizations in the Cook and Collar Counties.

There are hundreds of job openings for which manufacturers find there are no qualified candidates. Many of my clients have job openings that cannot be filled because of the lack of skilled applicants. This represents lost opportunities for both the potential job seeker and for the employers. This STEM initiative has the clear directive to make this “translation” between education and business in a meaningful and strategic long term systemic way. Further, examining the manufacturing sector career potential in middle school as well as secondary and higher education is critical to a long-term solution. As the second largest and most diverse manufacturing region in the country, it is absolutely imperative that these efforts succeed so we sustain and grow our manufacturing base.

I respectfully request your support in the selection of the IMA Education Foundation’s application.

Sincerely,

Dean M. Stork – Senior Vice President
American Chartered Bank

Cc:  Jim Nelson
     IL Manufacturers’ Association
     220 East Adams
     Springfield, IL 62701
March 13, 2012

Mr. James Nelson
Vice President External Affairs
Illinois Manufacturers’ Association
220 East Adams
Springfield, IL  62701

Dear Jim:

On behalf of the members of the Illinois Business Roundtable, I am writing to express our full support for the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association response to the Request for Information for the creation of the STEM Learning Exchange for Manufacturing.

Having worked closely with the IMA over the years on a variety of issues to improve the Jobs climate in Illinois, I can personally speak to the broad and deep commitment of the IMA to workforce education and training. I can also attest to the vast statewide reach that the IMA has developed on these issues through its membership.

I am truly appreciative of the effort put forth to date to put together the team and the energy for this exchange. IBRT members stand ready to assist the IMA as the Manufacturing Exchange readies for launch.

Jeff Mays, President
Illinois Business Roundtable
March 6, 2012

Sherri Sullivan
State Purchasing Officer
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380
Illinois State Board of Education
100 N. 1st Street
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

In Support of the Illinois Manufacturer’s Association Foundation as Lead for the STEM Manufacturing Learning Exchange

As Executive Director of the Large Unit District Association (LUDA), representing the fifty-five largest unit school districts in the state of Illinois and educating more than half of the students in the state, I strongly support the Illinois Manufacturer’s Association Foundation’s role as lead of the STEM Manufacturing Learning Exchange. IMA Foundation and its member businesses have a history of partnering with local school districts in our joint venture to prepare our students for post-secondary career and college readiness.

LUDA has partnered with IMA Foundation and its members through school/business partnerships in communities such as: Elgin, Peoria, Freeport, and St. Charles. Its leader, Ron Bullock, has become a true friend of LUDA. Through the combined efforts of manufacturers and school districts, our students are graduating with advanced certificates that will enable them to become employed more readily and enter the workforce ready to work and ready to contribute to their communities. Through IMA’s efforts of developing curriculum, training staff, providing internships, and mentoring young prospective employees, our students have opportunities that otherwise would not be possible. This grant will enable the IMA Foundation to further its efforts and to expand to more schools in Illinois.

I am happy to serve as a member of the STEM Manufacturing Learning Exchange. Through that position I have become more aware of the collaboration that exists among business, P-20 education, government, and professional associations on behalf of our students. LUDA schools look forward to opening our classrooms to local manufacturers in order to offer our students a meaningful future of employment.

This grant offers the opportunity to build a model continuous framework from career awareness through internships and employment. LUDA is proud to be a part of this most important venture.

Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Diane Rutledge, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Large Unit District Association
Ms. Sherri Sullivan  
State Purchasing Officer  
Illinois State Board of Education  
100 North First St.  
Springfield, IL 62777-0001  

March 6, 2012

Dear Ms. Sullivan,

As Founder and Chairman of Fabric Images, Inc, an Elgin based manufacturer, I wish to lend my personal and corporate support to The IMA Education Foundation in its response to the Illinois State Board of Education’s RFI: STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster. The Foundation’s unique role in the development of vendor-neutral skills certification’s, provides much needed experience and qualifications to serve as the lead implementation entity for such an Exchange. It has the ability to bring together a partnership of strong stakeholders from business, academia, government, as well as those able to provide resources, products and tools for the establishment of a robust outcome.

In addition to my role within our companies, I have been closely supportive and involved in workforce development within the Elgin Community. This four year association led to a unique tie of business and industry with Elgin U-46 School District in the linkage of educational training to the real life core skills needed in the workplace, through a technically skilled workforce.

Through this involvement with education, we became aware of similar interests and support by IMA, its Education Foundation, and Chair, Mr. Ron Bullock of Bison Gear. The outcome is evidenced by our ability to combine forces on a number of common issues in an attempt to move our state forward in regaining its position in the global market place.

Having made the commitment to participate as needed in this endeavor; we would be willing to lend our support in the following ways:

1. Serve as an advisor to the project, as needed and appropriate for the Manufacturing Cluster.
2. As we have previously assisted with textile curriculum, we would be willing to further assist in the same type of planning as it relates to other sectors of our manufacturing process.
3. Support student organizations and their activities, as evidenced by our commitment within U-46.
4. Provide work based learning opportunities.
5. Act as a resource for educators as well as administrators in the alignment and integration of relative instruction.
6. Provide career development and outreach resources to expand awareness of cluster-related programs and careers to K-12 students.
7. Support students and schools with tools and resources necessary to implement education plans and transitions to continuing education.
8. Review and report on performance of STEM programs of study where relative.
Only through a joint effort of education and business/industry will we create a meaningful link of educational endeavors to real world experiences. I am certain that your approval of IMA’s request will go far to meet the stated goals.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

Patrick W. Hayes
Founder & Chairman
Fabric Images, Inc.
Ms. Sherri Sullivan
State Purchasing Officer
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First St.
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

March 13, 2012

RE: Illinois State Board of Education’s RFI: STEM Learning Exchanges

As a Board member for the Alliance for Illinois Manufacturing/NORBIC I am writing in support of the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association Education Foundation’s (IMA) application for designation as a STEM Leadership Exchange for the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative.

The Alliance and NORBIC have been assisting small businesses and specifically small and mid-sized manufacturers in Northeast Illinois for nearly 35 years. Recruiting skilled workers to fill the many available jobs in manufacturing continues to be a challenge for small and mid-sized manufacturers. This is a systemic problem and it is only getting worse without a re-alignment of resources and curriculum to educate and train our next generation of manufacturing workers. The Alliance and NORBIC have been working on integrated workforce recruitment, training and financial assistance to assist companies with finding and training the right people. During the past year, at the request of the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, the Alliance for Illinois Manufacturing/NORBIC has developed, implemented and are in the process of institutionalizing a “Business Bridge Program” linking workforce agencies, training organizations and manufacturers. This successful initiative will serve as an additional resource for this project. Our partners in this Business Bridge Initiative are Jane Addams Resource Corporation, CFLWAC, North Workforce Board, South Workforce Board (Cook County Works) and the City of Chicago. We believe all these partnerships will add considerable value to the STEM initiative IMA’s Education Foundation will be coordinating as the statewide representative for manufacturing.

As an Illinois manufacturer, I am supportive of this effort and support the Alliance/NORBIC working with the IMA’s Education Foundation to implement the STEM/RTTT program. We have a longstanding relationship with the IMA and other economic development organizations as well as a direct and active relationship with the workforce organizations in the Cook and Collar Counties.

There are hundreds of job openings for which manufacturers find there are no qualified candidates. With my company in particular, if I can find qualified skilled workers I have job openings. For example, we are having a difficult time finding qualified CNC programming and set-up personnel. This represents lost opportunities for both the potential job seeker and for the employers. This STEM initiative has the clear directive to make this “translation” between education and business in a meaningful and strategic long term systemic way. Further, examining the manufacturing sector career potential in middle school as well as secondary and higher education is critical to a long-term solution. As the second largest and most diverse manufacturing region in the country, it is absolutely imperative that these efforts succeed so we sustain and grow our manufacturing base.

I respectfully request your support in the selection of the IMA Education Foundation’s application.

Sincerely,

C&L Supreme

Thomas W. Hacker
President

Cc: Jim Nelson
IL Manufacturers’ Association
220 East Adams
Springfield, IL 62701
March 12, 2012

Ms. Sherri Sullivan
State Purchasing Officer
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First St.
Springfield, IL  62777-0001

RE: Illinois State Board of Education’s RFI: STEM Learning Exchanges

The Alliance for Illinois Manufacturing/NORBIC are writing in support of the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association Education Foundation’s (IMA) application for designation as a STEM Leadership Exchange for the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative.

As two not-for-profit business organizations that have been assisting small businesses and specifically small and mid-sized manufacturers in Northeast Illinois for nearly 35 years, we are well aware of the challenges for small companies. As the only statewide organization in Illinois, we believe that IMA is the logical entity to lead the RTTT effort for our state. The IMA meets the stated requirements for the RTTT initiative to serve as the STEM Exchange leader for Illinois because of its state and national reputation and its regular and ongoing relationships with elected and regulatory officials in government and education.

The IMA operates the IMA Education Foundation, a not-for-profit group that would provide a financial base for fundraising to sustain RTTT programs after the federal grant concludes. IMA’s support of educational initiatives is reflected in the successful creation of Austin Polytech High School in Chicago.

As a regional economic development organization focusing on manufacturing, we look forward to working with the IMA to implement the RTTT program. We have a longstanding relationship with the IMA and other economic development organizations as well as a direct and active relationship with the workforce organizations in the Cook and Collar Counties. During the past year, at the request of the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, the Alliance for Illinois Manufacturing/NORBIC has developed, implemented and are in the process of institutionalizing a “Business Bridge Program” linking workforce agencies, training organizations and manufacturers. This successful initiative will serve as an additional resource for this project. Our partners in this Business Bridge Initiative are Jane Addams Resource Corporation, CFLWAC, North Workforce Board, South Workforce Board (Cook County Works) and the City of Chicago. We believe all these partnerships will add considerable value to the STEM initiative IMA’s Education Foundation will be coordinating as the statewide representative for manufacturing.

The Alliance and NORBIC will serve as an advisor to the project, providing general support as needed and appropriate for the Manufacturing Cluster. We have participated in many meetings on this subject ranging from the ICCB’s strategic plan for clusters focused on manufacturing, serving on a panel discussing same at Harper College and participating at a meeting at Elgin Community College with many of the workforce and manufacturing stakeholders. Workforce programs and services are a key part of the business assistance offered to our client companies. We have spent the past 5 years building a workforce portfolio of services to our clients and have conducted surveys of our manufacturers in terms of what they need in their new hires and what programs work for them. We are excited to serve as a manufacturing resource to this initiative, with a specific focus on small and medium-manufacturers.
In our efforts to assist companies in finding skilled candidates for job openings we have found that there is a clear gap between skills secondary and higher education offers to students and the clear needs of the manufacturing community. There are hundreds of job openings for which we have been repeatedly told there are no qualified candidates. This represents lost opportunities for both the potential job seeker and for the employers. This STEM initiative has the clear directive to make this “translation” between education and business in a meaningful and strategic long term systemic way. As the second largest and most diverse manufacturing region in the country, it is absolutely imperative that these efforts succeed so we sustain and grow our manufacturing base.

We respectfully request your support in the selection of the IMA’s application.

Sincerely,

Pam McDonough
President/CEO

Cc: Jim Nelson
IL Manufacturers’ Association
220 East Adams
Springfield, IL 62701
March 13, 2012

Sherri Sullivan  
State Purchasing Officer  
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380  
Illinois State Board of Education  
100 North First St.  
Springfield, IL  62777-0001

The IMA Education Foundation, in partnership with the Valley Industrial Association, is responding to the IL State Board of Education’s Request for Information (RFI): STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster. Because of the role that the IMA Education Foundation plays in the development of vendor-neutral, foundational manufacturing skills certifications, it provides ample experience and qualifications to serve as the lead for an implementation entity for the Manufacturing Learning Exchange. The IMA Education Foundation and its partners bring together a strong network of stakeholders from the business, academic, and government communities, as well as an array of partners to provide resources, products and tools for the establishment of a robust Manufacturing Learning Exchange.

The Valley Industrial Association (VIA) is an established trade association for manufacturers in the Fox Valley Region, serving Kane, Kendall, DeKalb and DuPage Counties. Working in concert on many issues with the IMA, the VIA strongly supports this initiative and the leadership of the IMA Education Foundation. The VIA was established 110 years ago to champion the manufacturing industry in our area. In order to secure a vital manufacturing sector in this region and throughout the State, a strong, reliable, well-educated workforce is a necessity.

Currently, the VIA is involved in several state and national initiatives to address the skilled workforce shortage impacting manufacturing. Locally, we serve as the business partner for Indian Prairie School District 204’s extra-curricular iSTEM program for middle and high school students. The association also has a presence on the National Governor’s Association Task Force to address the skilled workforce shortage and we partner with our local Chamber of Commerce to tackle this issue at home.

The VIA is well-versed on the labor needs of the manufacturing sector and the challenges they face in finding the right people for the right job. It is through the efforts of the IMA Education Foundation and the establishment of the STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster that this issue can be tackled head on and positively impact the entire State of Illinois.
An effort of this magnitude and scope will not only benefit the manufacturing sector of the State’s economy but for every 1 new manufacturing job, 3 more are created in other industries. It is obvious the positive impact this would have on many sectors of the State’s economy.

The IMA Education Foundation is the natural leader for this cause as it touches manufacturers, regional trade associations and academic institutions at all levels; thus, providing a cohesive message and resource center to naturally serve as a learning exchange.

Please consider this letter of support from the Board of Directors, Staff and all 220 members of the Valley Industrial Association. I look forward to a successful outcome for this project.

Best Regards,

Cynthia L. Tomei
President
Valley Industrial Association
March 13, 2012

Sherri Sullivan
State Purchasing Officer
Fiscal and Procurement Division W-380
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First Street
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

Dear Ms. Sullivan:

Please accept this letter from The Boeing Company as indication of our support for the IMA Education Foundation and its response to the Illinois State Board of Education's Request for Information (RFI): STEM Learning Exchange for the Manufacturing Cluster.

The IMA Education Foundation plays an important role in the development of vendor-neutral, foundational manufacturing skills' certifications. It provides experience to serve as the lead for the Manufacturing Learning Exchange.

With its array of partners, the IMA Education Foundation comprises a strong network of stakeholders from the business, academic, and government communities, to provide resources, products and tools for the establishment of a robust Manufacturing Learning Exchange.

We believe that the Learning Exchange offers an innovative approach to addressing the critical skills' needs facing our industry and others. By partnering in this collaborative effort to bolster STEM and IT education, we hope to strengthen the pipeline for future talent to manufacturing and IT businesses.

Sincerely,

Rick Stephens
Senior Vice President, Human Resources and Administration, The Boeing Company
Chair, Illinois Business Round Table
Governor's P-20 Council