

KYTC Newsletter

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Volume 94



SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

- Estimating Training
- Building Capacity
- Mobilization Financing
- Bonding Assistance
- Marketing Plan Development
- Creating a Business Plan
- Website Building
- Plan Reading

THE 2024 STCREC SYMPOSIUM
April 23, 2024 - April 25, 2024



Gov. Beshear Announces 5 Planned Economic Development Projects in 5 Days That Could Bring Thousands of Jobs, Billions in Investments to Kentucky

Projects possible with up to \$961 million in federal funding, companies betting on Kentucky

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 25, 2024) – Today, Gov. Andy Beshear said that, thanks to as much as \$961 million in U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) funding and companies betting on Kentucky, he is able to announce five planned economic development projects over five days that could bring thousands of new jobs and billions in investment to the commonwealth. The Governor will be joined by company leaders and local officials Monday at the state Capitol to discuss the five proposed job-creating projects approved for federal funds, which include:

- Century Aluminum Co. plans to potentially build the first new U.S. primary aluminum smelter in 45 years in Northeastern Kentucky. The green aluminum smelter could be the largest investment on record in Eastern Kentucky and may bring **5,500 construction jobs and 1,000 permanent jobs**.
- Wieland North America Recycling intends to expand its U.S. recycling capacity and capabilities through significant investments into advanced, state-of-the-art copper scrap metal processing technology in Shelbyville. The project could be the largest investment in Shelby County's history and is expected to create as many as **200 permanent jobs**.
- Diageo Americas Supply Inc., would fund a project aiming to install heat batteries for deep decarbonization of the Bulleit facility in Shelbyville, which could bring construction jobs and community benefits to Kentucky.
- ISP Chemicals LLC, an Ashland Co., is engaging in conversations to build a chemical production electrification and heat storage project at their Calvert City chemical plant. The total project investment is approximately **\$70 million**.

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Vision Kwest: Presenting ABC's 2024 Contractor of the Year

Kwest Group was just supposed to be a regional player in northwestern Ohio. Twenty years, 350 full-time employees and \$130 million in annual business later, the nationally known heavy contractor is ABC's 2024 Contractor of the Year.

Kwest Group was always going to be a success. Ryan Odendahl is sure of that today—but even 20 years ago, it was always the plan. Odendahl had left a good position with a successful contractor to join his boss in running a new heavy contracting company in northwestern Ohio. He was 30 years old, a former Marine, and used to making a plan, executing on it and achieving commensurate results.

“Our revenue goal this year is \$165 million,” Odendahl says. “In 2003, would I have said that? Probably not. But to get here, it’s just been the next step, and the next step, and the next step. So, I would not have said \$165 million at the time, but I would’ve said, ‘We’re going to make this something really great,’ because otherwise we wouldn’t have done it.”

Done it they have—crowning two decades of high-performing growth by being named ABC's 2024 Contractor of the Year at ABC Convention last month. “For little old Kwest Group, in the pool of contractors that is ABC, to get Contractor of the Year is humbling,” Odendahl says. “Like, a pinch-yourself humbling experience. We are really, really proud of the team.”

RECESSION TO THE RESCUE

“Little old Kwest Group” isn’t actually all that little today, but it certainly was when Odendahl and Mark Murray started the business. Both were working at a large, family-owned heavy highway firm in northwestern Ohio—Odendahl as part of the environmental group, Murray as president of the holdings company. When Murray found an opportunity to acquire a small industrial contractor located in Port Clinton, Ohio, he organized a partnership to procure it and asked Odendahl to run the operations side.

As managing partners, the two rebranded the company Kwest Group, named for Murray’s affinity for Key West. Including Odendahl, Murray and Murray’s wife, Kelly, who served as office manager, there were a total of eight employees, all operating out of a double-wide office trailer.

“Then we just started adding some more team members along the way,” Murray says. “I always think back to some of my early mentoring, when they told me, ‘If you surround yourself with good people, they’re going to make your life easy and the company more successful.’ And I have been very blessed to do that.”

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About The KYTC

The goal of the DBE Supportive Services Program is to increase the number of DBEs participating on KYTC contracts and facilitate the opportunity for DBEs to obtain contracts. The services are designed to:

- Assist established construction firms to move them from bidding as a subcontractor to bidding as a Prime Contractor to produce sound bids.
- Provide access to training increases DBE expertise in handling of daily business operations.

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