



# GREAT PLAINS

## TECHNOLOGY & MANUFACTURING CLUSTER

### MARCH 2021 NEWSLETTER

#### Member Spotlight

**Circle B Manufacturing  
Junction City, KS**



Our member spotlight this month is Circle B Manufacturing located in Junction City, Kansas. Circle B is a manufacturing company that produces a wide range of sanitizing products, such as large capacity hand sanitizer dispensers, wall mounted dispenser and stands. The demand for their product line has increased dramatically as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led them to leverage a number of support networks to help meet this demand.

The company had been importing some of the components for their products from overseas. However, due to supply chain disruptions, this quickly became problematic and they realized the need to become more vertically integrated and reshore their supply chain to US based manufacturers. In an effort to achieve this goal, the company applied for a PPE Manufacturing Grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce to procure the needed equipment to begin injection molding and machining a number of the different parts used in the existing product line. In addition to this, they were awarded Economic Development Administration (EDA) CARES Act funds via Innovation Stimulus Program from KSU TDI to aid in the design of a new line of manual and electronic sanitizer dispensers that would be their own proprietary design.

These grants enabled Circle B to expand their manufacturing capabilities and product line at a time where competitors were struggling with supply chain delays. They are currently in the process of bringing the new manufactured equipment online and are excited about the possibility of reaching new clients

with their "Made in the USA" line of hand sanitizing products. In addition to the finished products, the company is also actively seeking to supply injection molded or other CNC machined parts to companies across the Midwest.

Circle B is continuing to manufacture and expand its line of hand sanitizer products that are designed to fit the consumer's need. For more details about their hand sanitizers or contract manufacturing opportunities, please visit [www.circlebmanufacturing.com](http://www.circlebmanufacturing.com).



#### Want to be the next Member Spotlight?

Each month we will feature a Great Plains TMC member to highlight company capabilities and needs. If you have information to share, please send us an email at [info@greatplainsmc.org](mailto:info@greatplainsmc.org) to let us know!

#### Did you Know...

...a majority of manufacturing firms in the U.S. are considered small? In fact, approximately 75% of manufacturing companies have fewer than 20 employees!

As we work and connect with small companies, our goal is to provide them with the resources and solutions they need to thrive throughout the Great Plains region. Even the smallest manufacturers make a significant impact on the U.S. economy.

Contact us at [info@greatplainsmc.org](mailto:info@greatplainsmc.org) to connect with manufacturing resources.

## Exploring Careers through HirePaths

HirePaths is a new statewide workforce initiative through the New Boston Creative Group in Manhattan, Kansas. Their mission is to inform and excite parents and guardians about options their child can pursue after high school to quickly and affordably launch a successful, well-paying career.



The Great Plains TMC is collaborating with HirePaths to compile data-driven information about the types of skills, education and details children need to be fully prepared to work in the industry they desire.

HirePaths is also seeking investor companies to be involved with the program. This will help increase the employer's visibility to current and future employees. More details can be found at [www.hirepaths.com](http://www.hirepaths.com).

**CHECK OUT OUR BLOGS IN THE MEMBERSHIP! OUR GUEST BLOG POST IS FROM HIREPATHS!**



## Upcoming Partner Events

- 3/22 Kansas SBDC - Profit Mastery Training
- 3/24 NetWork KS - Virtual Ice House for Western Kansas
- 3/26 WU BRITE - How to Work With KSU on Tech Transfer

## Website Building Workshop Registration Link Available

In partnership with the Kansas SBDC, the Great Plains TMC is hosting a Website Building Class in Dodge City, Kansas on April 24th from 9:00am-5:00pm. This day long workshop will give small business owners the opportunity to learn the basics of building and owning a website. The class will walk attendees through the process of:

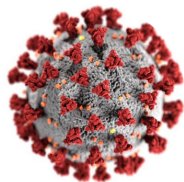
- How to build a website through GoDaddy
- How to organize sitemap information
- Designing the website
- Website Dos and Don'ts
- Launching the website live
- Domain information.



The class will include a meal and booklet of materials for the attendees to further develop and make modifications to their website. Attendees will also be responsible for bringing their own laptop/device to create their website.

There is limited seating available! Please register in advance to reserve your spot in the class. Visit <https://ksbdc.ecenterdirect.com/events/26342> to register, pay the registration fee, and view more details.

## Biden Admin Stimulus Updates



Through the Biden Administration, there have been several updates initiated through the American Rescue Plan Act, which was signed on March 11, 2021. Some of these updates include:

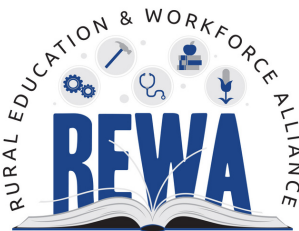
- \$10 billion towards the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) to help states support small businesses as they recover from the pandemic and re-emerge more stronger and resilient than before
- \$7.25 billion towards the PPP and expanding eligibility to additional nonprofits
- \$15 billion towards the Targeted EIDL grants, including a new \$5 billion for Supplemental Targeted EIDL Advance Payments for those hardest hit
- \$100 million to establish a Community Navigator pilot program, which provides grants to eligible organizations supporting efforts to improve access to COVID-19 assistance and resources
- Extended Unemployment Insurance to Sept 6, 2021, Paid Sick Leave to the end of Sept 2021, and ERTC to December 31, 2021.

For more details about the recent changes, guides and resources available, please [login](#) to your membership account or [sign-up to create an account](#). We will continue to update the site with new information and guides as we receive it from the SBA.

## Southwest Kansas Workforce Assessment

The Great Plains TMC is collaborating with the Rural Education and Workforce Alliance (REWA) to assist with a workforce assessment of Southwest Kansas businesses. The purpose of the assessment is to discover the needs and skills required from regional businesses to enhance workforce efforts through education, training and workshops.

A survey will be sent to southwest Kansas regional businesses to gather information about the types of soft and technical skills needed, hiring difficulties, and educational programs that businesses would like to engage with to improve workforce needs. This information will help determine what workforce programs should be initiated for the region.



For more information about the workforce assessment, or if you would like to provide any feedback about the workforce needs of southwest Kansas, please contact Kyla Keller, REWA Coordinator at [kkeller@dodgegov.org](mailto:kkeller@dodgegov.org).

## Innovation through Industry Clusters

By Gina Becker: TDI Chemical Engineer/Data Services



Innovative ideas do not spring out of nowhere into idle minds. They more often come to people who are broadly curious, who talk shop with others, or attend to others' problems.

Research and development teams typically recognize the benefits of bringing people with a "fresh perspective," but they do not always realize how their own perspectives can be freshened by encouraging their members to network. Networking can lead people to surprising insights about a problem that they would not have gained by continuing to stare at the problem through the same little knothole.

Businesses can improve innovation by helping to nurture and grow innovation clusters that provide members with ample opportunity to learn from and support each other. Companies can find they have more to trade than just a defined list of products and services; they can also trade ideas and talents. Even competitors can discover a surprising new product idea that neither have talent and resources to pursue alone, but that they might jointly pursue under a formal agreement.

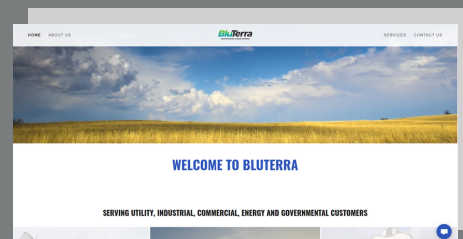
As they say, necessity is the mother of invention. For insights on what COVID-19 has helped Great Plains manufacturers discover about their needs, click [here](#). Watch for future blogs on more ways Great Plains manufacturers might leverage our strengths as an industry Cluster.

## Website Creation Success

Our website creation story this month is BluTerra from Salina, KS. BluTerra is a family owned business that provides commercial weed control services throughout the region.

BluTerra was interested in developing a new website for their company to display the types of services they can provide for utility, industrial, commercial, energy and governmental customers.

To view their site, please visit [www.bluterrachemical.com](http://www.bluterrachemical.com)



## Update Reminder

If you are experiencing issues with viewing the website through Internet Explorer, please update your Internet Explorer browser to the latest version of [Microsoft Edge](#) or use Chrome or Firefox instead.