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SKED Hosts Symposium to Help Eastern Kentucky Advanced Manufacturing Leaders Learn About Government Contracting

CORBIN, Ky. – Some of the region’s most successful advanced manufacturing and technology entrepreneurs gathered for the Eastern Kentucky Defense Contracting Symposium on November 1 to learn how they could better access contract work with the U.S. Department of the Defense (DOD) in the coming years.

Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED) spearheaded the meeting designed to help assist companies in acquiring information about the necessary certifications and



quality control requirements to be considered as either contractors or subcontractors on future federal government contracts. The event was co-sponsored by Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR).

SOAR co-founder/co-chair and Fifth District Congressman Hal Rogers spoke to symposium attendees, along with Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin.

“Through my role as Chairman of the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, I have become keenly aware of the needs of the Department of Defense and the supply chain for the defense industrial base. I think our region has an important role to play in maintaining that supply chain for our war fighters,” said Rogers, who helped launch SKED in 1986. “We’ve already proven that we can do critical work for the Department of Defense, the State Department, the Veterans Administration, and other federal agencies. We have the best workforce in the country and we want the world to know that Eastern Kentucky is open for business.”

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At the symposium, representatives and owners of Eastern Kentucky businesses already doing contract work with the DOD led the discussions and shared valuable information with the nearly 50 men and women on hand at The Corbin Center event.

Gary Dean, program manager for Progeny Systems' Kentucky location, shared his experiences with the group. Progeny Systems has 14 locations across the country and has designed products for the U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army. Dean has been seeking competent subcontractors across Southeast Kentucky for years. This event is something he believes was beneficial to everyone in attendance.

“Local manufacturers need assistance and guidance to qualify for contracting with the federal government,” Dean said. “SKED did a great job kicking off this effort and was able to pull in over 30 contractors and potential contractors.”

Phoenix Products, Inc. co-owner Tom Wilson was among the group of entrepreneurs at the symposium. His Jackson County-based business employs more than 30 people in the production of metal and composite products for the military. He gave the symposium two thumbs up.

“The conference was a valuable learning and networking experience for any of us in Eastern Kentucky who are, or want to be, defense contractors,” Wilson said. “We’re all looking for opportunities to grow our companies and provide employment opportunities for our friends, neighbors and relatives.”

At the event, entrepreneurs and business representatives were given information on applying for certifications necessary to qualify for federal contracts by some those who are already contracting with the federal government and specialists designed to ensure the qualifications are met.

Scott Broughton, Advantage Kentucky Alliance (AKA) center director, was a presenter at the symposium. He told the manufacturers in attendance that his non-profit organization offers a number of services that can help them earn certifications and meet qualifications necessary to grow their businesses.

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“It was great to see so many manufacturers interested in becoming ISO 9001 and AS9100 certified to serve the aerospace industry,” he said. “AKA stands ready to assist manufacturers in implementing quality systems in preparation for the demands from future customers, and these two certifications are the linchpins that open the doors for manufacturers to work in this highly competitive industry.”

This was also an information gathering event, in preparation for a reverse expo in early 2017. SKED will host the event at which local manufacturer and technology businesses may pitch their products to major federal contractors and defense industry offices from across the U.S.

SKED Executive Director Brett Traver says Eastern Kentucky businesses are hungry for ways to grow and develop their products and markets. Contracting with the federal government is just a natural next step, and SKED is prepared to help guide them through the process.

“Pulling together this group of entrepreneurs and advanced manufacturing experts is the first step in creating an environment of positive growth to help create new jobs across our region in the coming years,” he said. “I am very pleased with the interest at this event and look forward to working with each of these business owners and representatives to help them prepare for future growth through federal contracting.

For more information about this event or SKED’s other services, contact Traver at btraver@centertech.com or 606-677-6100.

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Formed 30 years ago by Fifth District Congressman Hal Rogers to create jobs in Southeast Kentucky, the economic development organization, based in Somerset, serves a 45-county region in Kentucky. Staff works with business owners, small and large, throughout its service area to identify financing solutions to fund their location, expansion and working capital needs.