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INTEREST INTENSIFIES AS REGISTRATION DEADLINE APPROACHES FOR LAKESHORE INDUSTRY CLUSTER INITIATIVE KICK OFF

Manitowoc, WI: Excitement is intensifying as the Lakeshore Industry Cluster Kick Off Event draws near on Tuesday, August 28. A five (5) County collaborative effort led by the Economic Development Corporation of Manitowoc County in partnership with economic development office in Manitowoc, Door, Calumet, Kewaunee, and Sheboygan Counties, along with The New North Regional Economic Development Organization, and Northeast Wisconsin and Lakeshore Technical Colleges, the Lakeshore Cluster Initiative engages businesses in Industry Cluster Networks to analyze and leverage assets and opportunities for additional business growth and development. They have **scheduled to launch the process with a half-day kick-off event on the morning of Tuesday, August 28 at Fox Hills Resort** (Mishicot), where the targeted industries of **Manufacturing, Food Processing/Agriculture, Energy and Tourism** will be on hand to learn how they can benefit their businesses from being involved. Data analysis information, regarding some of the economic trends our area is experiencing, will be presented by Vital Economies, an economic development consulting firm which specializes in industry cluster initiatives and has been hired to assist in the formation of the Cluster Initiative, as well as case study examples of how this process has worked in other regions of the country.

Lee Swindall, Vice President of Business and Industry for Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, will also be on hand to provide insight on how the Lakeshore Industry Cluster Initiative fits into the WEDC's strategic plans for economic development on a state level.

The tentative Lakeshore Industry Cluster Initiative Kick Off Event will begin at 8:00 am with Arrival and Registration and the program beginning at 8:30 AM. The agenda will include, in addition to the above information, a Lakeshore Industry Cluster Initiative Overview: General goals, objectives and expectations; Principles of an Industry Cluster Initiative - What makes it successful and why this contributes to a high-performing economic region for industry growth and development, what to consider in setting and understanding performance metrics to indicate success of the Initiative.

Relating the benefits of participating in an Industry Cluster approach to economic development Dave Pryor, owner of Quality Plus Printing,, states: *"My business experienced revenue growth just by being involved in the Industry Cluster Network in Central Wisconsin. It introduced me to new customers and markets that were not aware of my services and through involvement in the cluster networks, I created new supplier relationships with them, including completing a business expansion into a new product area*

based on their communicating their need for a specific product that they were sourcing out of the area.”

Dave Pryor, also involved in Community Progress Initiative Cluster Network- Central Wisconsin

Industry Cluster Teams will be led by key industry leaders and representatives engaged in collectively identifying, mapping and leveraging assets for additional growth and development. These activities will include:

- Industry engaged strategic analysis to identify new opportunities for expansion, diversification and collaboration; Also stimulates new business to business relationships
- Building synergistic networks within and between industry sectors;
- Identifying and working to remove barriers and impediments, including challenges with workforce issues;
- Strategic ‘think-tanks’ to resolve industry issues and explore innovation opportunities
- Creating new investment and growth opportunities.

Who should be involved? Appropriate participants to be involved in the Lakeshore Industry Cluster Initiative include both businesses that are directly involved in an industry targeted, and businesses that support or serve the targeted industries, such as banks, engineering firms and staffing agencies. Appropriate representatives from the businesses include CEOs, plant managers, operations managers, purchasing and inventory managers, engineers, human resource managers, research and development personnel, logistics managers and supervisors.

The Industry Cluster Teams will be supported by the region’s Economic Development Corporation staff members and contracted services provided by Vital Economies consulting firm, an experienced Industry Cluster Facilitator and Analyst.

August 28 marks an important date for the region and one that offers benefits for businesses to actively participate in this exciting and dynamic approach to business growth and economic development. As the EDC Board member, Tim Reis of Manitowoc Company relates: *“We are at the beginning of the next cycle upturn. The regions that work together to develop a cohesive growth plan are going to be the winners during the next cycle.”*

To learn more about how to leverage a competitive advantage in this rapidly changing marketplace and **express interest in being involved in an industry cluster, be a sponsor, or to find out more information about this engaging new business development program for the Lakeshore economy,** please go to www.lakeshoreinitiative.webs.com or contact Connie Loden at cloden@edcmc.org or 920-482-0540, or your local Economic Development Organization listed below.

Calumet County – Julie Schmelzer - (920) 849-1493 ext. 442

Door County EDC – Bill Chaudoir – (920) 743-3113

Kewaunee County EDC – Jennifer Brown - (920) 487-5233

EDC Manitowoc County – Connie Loden (920) 482-0540

Sheboygan County EDC – Randy Hopper (920) 946-9379 or Dane Checolinski (920) 452-2479

Lakeshore Technical College – Peter Thillman (920) 242-0689

Northeast Wisconsin Technical College – Lori Suddick (920) 498-5401

New North Inc – Jerry Murphy – (920) 336-3860