

# NEBRASKA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER



## 2015 ANNUAL REPORT



## DEAR FRIENDS OF NBDC



### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

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Recently, the University of Nebraska published an assessment of the contribution of the University to the statewide economy. It was an impressive document. However, since the analysis did not include economic development activity like that conducted by the Nebraska Business Development Center, we are pleased to have this opportunity to add to it.

In 2015, NBDC services contributed \$359,776,089 to the Nebraska economy.

That is a big number and one that is 69 percent greater than our 2014 result. The increase was partially enabled by \$100,000 that the Unicameral allocated to support NBDC. We used those funds to rebuild our staff, which had been reduced through recruitment. We also had an opportunity to increase funding to our regional partner institutions.

It was a good investment by the Unicameral. NBDC clients provided about \$2.7 million in sales tax. The jobs that they created resulted in approximately \$3.8 million in income tax. And, the jobs saved resulted in approximately \$5.3 million in avoided unemployment compensation. That is a return of \$8.37 for every \$1 invested by Nebraska in the Nebraska Business Development Center.

These results are determined by asking our clients, after they have received NBDC assistance, what level of investment was made in their business, what level of sales increase they attribute to our market research and the number of jobs created or saved as a result of our service. This differs from economic development calculated by business recruitment. We are not projecting jobs that will be created when a project is completed. We only count jobs actually produced.

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NBDC achieves its results only because of the performance of our clients — who come from every stage of the small business process and from every part of Nebraska, as you will see from the successful businesses profiled in this report.

Although many of our clients are just starting a business, we have expanded our services to those who are growing established businesses. These businesses—with five to 50 employees—are the best source of job growth in Nebraska. We assist them with capital access through financial analysis, loan packaging and pursuit of Small Business Innovation Research funding. We also assist them in growing their sales through market research and securing government contracts.

NBDC also serves larger businesses. The recent adjustment of its small business size standards by the U.S. Small Business Administration means that NBDC can provide direct consulting assistance to organizations with 500 or more employees. Many of these clients obtain NBDC services by contracting with our Professional and Organizational Development program for consulting and training in Lean process improvement, sustainable operations, leadership, project management and supply chain management.

And, as small business owners in Nebraska plan for retirement, NBDC is also there to provide business valuation services and exit planning.

Above: Robert Bernier, state director; Jean Waters, programs manager; Harold Sargus, client services manager



## NBDC CONSULTANTS

Our 25 professional consultants hold 19 graduate degrees and 36 professional certifications. They individually pursue continuous improvement through professional development. And, they engage in reflective practice—building on a repertoire of professional experiences to assist their clients.

NBDC is proud of the graduate assistant program that supports our professional staff. Ten NBDC graduate assistants at UNO and one at Chadron State apply what they are learning in their MBA or MS in Economics programs to assist clients through consulting. GAs do financial forecasting, market research and management assistance for businesses, while gaining important real-world experience. We are grateful to our clients for their partnership in this endeavor.

## NBDC PARTNERS

For the second consecutive year, the College of Business Administration (CBA) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, was named the best business school in the country for military veterans by *Military Times* magazine. As a department of CBA, NBDC is proud of our contribution to earning that recognition. We are also proud that NBDC was one of four programs commended by the accreditation review team of the Assembly for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business International. This year the AACSB-International reaffirmed the accreditation of the UNO College of Business Administration for its baccalaureate degrees, accounting degrees and MBA.

Our program could not provide statewide service without the partnership that we have with other post-secondary institutions in Nebraska. The NBDC business valuation and exit planning services and consulting assistance to central Nebraskan

businesses is only possible through our partnership with the University of Nebraska at Kearney. We thank Dean Tim Burkink and his staff.

In Lincoln we are fortunate to have our relationship with Southeast Community College. We thank Steve Bors and the staff at the Entrepreneurship Center.

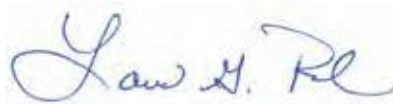
In Northeast Nebraska we have had a long relationship with Wayne State College. We honored Vaughn Benson, dean of the School of Business and Technology, with the NBDC Distinguished Service Award last year.

In North Platte we have a valued relationship

with the Mid-Plains Community College Center for Enterprise. We appreciate the support of President Ryan Purdy.

Chadron State College has been a dedicated partner in NBDC for many years. We appreciate the continued support of Joel Hyer, dean of the School of Business, Entrepreneurship, Applied, and Mathematical Sciences and Sciences.

We also appreciate the support of our stakeholders in the business community, the economic development community, the Unicameral and the University of Nebraska. We hope that you will find this report of interest and will let us know of your concerns and comments.




Louis Pol, PhD  
John Becker Dean  
College of Business Administration  
University of Nebraska at Omaha




Robert E. Bernier, PhD,  
Assistant Dean, State Director  
Nebraska Business Development  
Center, College of Business  
Administration, University of  
Nebraska at Omaha

## NBDC PARTNERS



**Business Plan Loan Packaging Capital Access Market Research**



INGRID BATTERSHELL



TODD JAMISON



SARA BENNETT



ZACK ZIMMERMAN

**Tech Commercialization Exporting**



WEI JING



JOSH NICHOL-CADDY

When businesses need experts

The NBDC approach to economic development begins with deep respect for entrepreneurs—and a belief in their right to pursue their vision as they see fit. Although we celebrate the role of mentors in supporting entrepreneurs, NBDC does not attempt to offer mentorship, but rather, provides professional services with a foundation in education.

We believe that small business owners should have access to the kind of skilled assistance that larger enterprises expect — but which may be out of reach to smaller businesses. Therefore, NBDC has built a portfolio of services around areas of great importance to small business.

It takes capital to start or expand any business. NBDC consultants work on hundreds of loan packages each year. These individuals have earned the Economic Development Finance Professional certification from the National Development Council and are members of the Risk Management Association, an association of commercial lending officers that is continuously updated on rules and procedures for SBA-guaranteed loans. For this reason, many NBDC clients are referred to our consultants by banks that are confident in their expertise.

Assisting businesses that seek any level of government agency (federal, state or local) as a customer, NBDC consultants certified by the Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers are experienced and qualified contracting specialists.

In addition to these fundamental areas of service, NBDC offers professional competencies including sustainable operations, technology commercialization, market research, business valuation, process improvement, leadership development, project management and supply chain management.

When businesses need experts, NBDC delivers.

**Succession Planning Financial Projections Business Valuation**



CHARLIE MCPHERSON



ARETHA BOEX



ODEE INGERSOLL



LOREN KUCERA

**Sustainability Training**



RICK YODER



JEAN WATERS

**Government Contracting BidMatching Subcontracting Registering Market Research**



VERONICA DOGA



MARY GRAFF



CHUCK BECK



ROGER JOHNSON



ROGER MCCULLOUGH



DICK UHING

**Process Improvement Leadership Development Project Management Supply Chain Management**



RENEE HELD



HAROLD SARGUS



BETH GIESBRECHT



KIM HARTER



LAURIE MATTHEWS



JERRY PARRIOTT  
BUSINESS MANAGER

# 2015 NEBRASKA RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**BEYOND THESE NUMBERS**, NBDC's impact can be seen in the successes of its clients all across the state. Read their stories in the pages that follow.



### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT ONE

654 Jobs  
\$15,112,449 Investment  
\$206,634,162 Impact

### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT TWO

406 Jobs  
\$21,199,834 Investment  
\$76,882,609 Impact

### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT THREE

127 Jobs  
\$29,068,890 Investment  
\$76,259,318 Impact



**Jobs created and saved** **1,187**



**Sales increases** **\$215,028,770**



**Investment by businesses** **\$65,381,173**



**Government contracts** **\$170,377,057**



**Operational savings** **\$3,404,146**



### ROI FOR NEBRASKA

Retail sales increases by NBDC clients resulted in approx. **\$2.7M in sales tax**. Jobs created resulted in approx. **\$3.8M in income tax** and savings of approx. **\$5.3M from avoided unemployment compensation**.

### 2015 KPI BY PROGRAM

	SBDC*	PTAC**	POD/P2RIC***	TOTALS
<b>Clients Served</b>	1,456	1,229	212	2,897
<b>Investments</b>	\$ 59,378,520	\$ 5,324,257	\$ 678,396	\$ 65,381,173
<b>Sales</b>	\$ 44,651,713	\$ 170,377,057		\$ 215,028,770
<b>Savings</b>	\$ 72,478	\$ 189,068	\$ 3,142,600	\$ 3,404,146
<b>Jobs</b>	812	375		1,187
<b>Impact</b>	\$165,814,711	\$ 190,140,382	\$ 3,820,996	\$ 359,776,089



**\$359.8 MILLION**

Total impact to the Nebraska economy

\*Small Business Development Center (partially funded by U.S. Small Business Administration). \*\*Procurement Technical Assistance (partially funded by Defense Logistics Agency, U.S. Department of Defense) \*\*\*Professional and Organizational Development and Pollution Prevention Resource Information Center (partially funded by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)



## CHAMPION OF SMALL BUSINESS

**K**evin and Christine Grooms purchased Olsen's Laboratory in McCook in 2007 with a commitment to build upon a reputation of quality soil analysis and fertilizer recommendations that had grown over more than 30 years. Renaming the business American Agricultural Laboratory, the couple invested time and money developing their services and products. Business became so good that by 2014 they had run out of workspace.

That is when the Grooms sought the assistance of Charlie McPherson, NBDC consultant at Mid Plains Community College's north campus in North Platte. They met through the McCook Economic Development Corporation's email promoting Building Blocks at the McCook Community College in October 2014.

"Christine and I were not available to attend, but did send our accounts manager, Ericka, as we knew we needed assistance writing a business plan," says Kevin Grooms. "After Ericka's experience at the seminar, we reached out to Charlie."

Initially, the Grooms needed the business plan to apply for a Site and Building Development Fund grant through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. "These funds significantly assisted our ability to obtain our new facility," Grooms says. "Charlie was able to create

a very eloquent business plan for us that we also used to apply for McCook Economic Development Corporation's LB840 funds, as well as funding through the Small Business Administration's 504 program and with the McCook National Bank and USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grant.

"His work was instrumental in making our project feasible."

Rather than build a new structure, the Grooms selected an existing building in McCook to remodel. The renovation took seven months.

The ability to expand their business means the potential for more jobs and additional positive economic impact upon the community.

Currently, American Agricultural Laboratory employs 15 people full time, five part time and three on a seasonal basis.

The Grooms are members of several international and national professional associations, including the National Hay Association, in which Christine serves in a leadership position; and the National Forage Testing Association, for which Kevin served as president in 2015.

They have committed to assisting other small business owners as industry advisors in the Integrated Agronomy Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. The laboratory also serves to educate young people and other businesses through an internship program, presentations to producers, cooperatives and independent agronomists — and

through their local school system's Agriculture Awareness Tours.

The Grooms' business promotes entrepreneurship through the McCook Economic Development Corporation, the McCook Chamber of Commerce and by encouraging their employees to participate in the local Young Professionals Group. "We also contribute to the Future Farmers of America (FFA), 4-H and different colleges both financially and with tours of our laboratory," Grooms says.

Christine Grooms says the services provided by McPherson and the NBDC have been an integral part of the laboratory's success. "He was able to take the core of information we gave him and develop a wonderful business plan," she says. "To be able to articulate our thoughts so well was awesome. I am confident we will be working with Charlie and NBDC for years to come."

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The **Champion of Small Business Award** has been presented annually since 1983 to a Nebraska small business owner who has triumphed in the field of business and is an empowering entrepreneur who stands up for other small business owners. For all past awards visit [nbdc.unomaha.edu/about/champions](http://nbdc.unomaha.edu/about/champions).

2011 – Kelly Newell, Scout Goods & Trade

2012 – Jim and Tim Schneider, S&S Plumbing

2013 – Douglas Garwood, Garwood Enterprises

2014 – Roger Franklin, Gary's Cleaning and Restoration

2015 – Christine and Kevin Grooms, American Agricultural Laboratory





Owners Christine and Kevin Grooms



ENVIROWORKS



Robert Remack, chief operating officer, and Marcos Mateus, owner



# From Ground Zero to Katrina ... a company responds to disasters

**K**nowing where opportunities exist is essential when it comes to bidding upon and securing federal contracts, and the Procurement Technical Assistance program consultants at NBDC serve as guides and advisors in the process.

That is the relationship government contracting specialist Mary Graff has forged with the leadership at Enviroworks, an environmental remediation and restoration firm headquartered in Omaha.

“We were introduced to the program when we received 8(a) certification in 2012,” says Robert Remack, Enviroworks Chief Operating Officer. “Mary has helped us build a three-way dialogue with her office, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Omaha district office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.”

The SBA’s 8(a) Business Development Program is a business assistance program for firms that are owned and controlled at least 51 percent by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. Participants can receive sole-source contracts, up to a ceiling of \$4 million for goods and services and \$6.5 million for manufacturing. Certified 8(a) firms also can form joint ventures and teams to bid on contracts. This enhances the ability of 8(a) firms to perform larger prime contracts and overcome the effects of contract bundling, the combining of two or more contracts together into one large contract.

“NBDC’s government contracting specialists are very influential with government contracts,” Remack says, “both in helping us secure contracts and narrowing the search for contracts that are coming

up. Because of Mary, I receive a list every day of 10 to 12 opportunities for contracts that are in our wheelhouse.”

Remack says Graff also has helped lead Enviroworks through the maze of paperwork and requirements regarding the federal government billing process. “Mary came in twice to our office to show us the Wide Area Workforce billing system, how to set it up and then help us with the billing,” he says. “We tell people she makes house calls.”

In addition to its Omaha headquarters, Enviroworks has field offices in Muskegon, Mich., and St. Louis, Mo.

In the third and fourth quarters of 2015, the company was awarded more than \$7.5 million in contracts from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Omaha and Rock Island districts, as well as EPA Region 7. Enviroworks has served the U.S. Department of the Interior (Bureau of Reclamation and National Park Service), the Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Air Force at Offutt and the General Services Administration.

Owned by Marcos Mateus, Enviroworks and its predecessor, Environmental Resources Group, have performed environmental disaster response at Ground Zero in New York City and after hurricanes Katrina, Ivan, Mitch and Sandy; cleanup at the Omaha Lead Superfund site; work on levee flood control projects in Omaha and North Platte; and anthrax cleanup on the East Coast.

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In the third and fourth quarters of 2015, the company was awarded more than \$7.5 million in contracts from the USACE and EPA.



## WINDCALL MANUFACTURING

The **Innovation Business of the Year** is awarded to a Nebraska business that advances technological innovation, partners with a Nebraska university to meet federal research and development needs, or increases commercialization of federal research.

2011 – MultiMech Research & Development

2012 – SectorNow

2013 – LNKChemsolutions

2014 – LI-COR Biosciences

2015 – Windcall Manufacturing (GrainGoat)







## INNOVATION BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

**W**ith a start-up business and a unique product, Martin and Patricia Bremmer knew they were “sailing some uncharted waters,” so they turned to the consultants at NBDC for guidance.

The Bremmers are the creators of the GrainGoat, a hand-held harvesting and moisture content measuring device that replaces the need to use full-sized harvesting equipment to acquire small amounts of grain for testing.

“Our relationship with NBDC began with the inception of the corporation,” Martin Bremmer says. “Odee Ingersoll at the NBDC office in Kearney was instrumental in providing us guidelines, pointers and milestones we needed to meet.

“Since then, Odee has always been there for us. The expanse of his background is pretty phenomenal. We have never thrown a salvo of questions at him that he couldn’t answer.”

The Bremmers began work on the GrainGoat in 2011 and founded their company, Windcall Manufacturing, two years later. They have received two rounds of private investment funding and one round of state funding.

The Bremmers are assembling GrainGoats and are working with students at the University of Nebraska at Kearney’s College of Business and Technology to develop a broad marketing and advertising plan.

The GrainGoat is a one-of-a-kind product. It is rooted in the fact that agriculture producers worldwide must know when the time is right to harvest

their grain for maximum value. The moisture content of the grain must be within a required range so buyers will accept the seeds, and not so dry to where the seed has begun to shrivel and lose valuable mass. A 2,000-acre wheat crop can lose \$2,600 in value a day if the grain is not harvested at optimal moisture.

To determine the proper harvest time, seeds must be gathered from small sections of multiple plots and taken to an elevator or buyer for moisture content testing. This commonly requires the use of full-sized harvest equipment that must be driven to various fields. The distances between these fields may be many miles, and combines move very slowly. Six hours of harvesting for testing costs approximately \$800 in equipment value and fuel. Eighteen hours of testing could cost a grower \$2,400 or more.

That is why the portable, hand-held GrainGoat shows such incredible potential, Bremmer says.

“We’ve had interactions with several people at the NBDC because there are things we need to know that are right up their alley,” he says. “The organization is tailor-made to answer our questions, and they can reach out to corporate America and cross into government agencies when they need to.”

“It’s a fantastic organization because it has such fantastic people who are always willing to help.”

The Bremmers continue to work with Ingersoll on a regular basis. “He’s the best sounding board we’ve got,” Bremmer says.



Owner Martin Bremmer

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“NBDC is tailor-made to answer our questions, and they can reach out to corporate America and cross into government agencies when they need to.”



## LITTLE MISS FASHION



Owner Yolanda Diaz (right) with NBDC consultant Aretha Boex



# Entrepreneur prepares her brand to go global

“Every time I ask, everyone at NBDC is ready to help. Without them this would not be possible for me.”

**A**n Omaha entrepreneur with an eye for girls’ fashion is finding the experts at NBDC to be a perfect fit as she works to expand her business and sell her brand across the globe.

Yolanda Diaz is a clothing designer and owner of Little Miss Fashion, a manufacturer and wholesaler of clothing and accessories for girls size 1 to 16. Since July 2015, Diaz has been receiving management consulting as well as export assistance through the NBDC.

“When she first came, she was seeking assistance with operational issues such as hiring employees and inventory management,” recalls Aretha Boex, director at the NBDC at the University of Nebraska at Omaha College of Business Administration. “She was also interested in exporting her products.”

Boex and her team of consultants assisted with developing a job description, using e-verify, and determining avenues for recruiting new employees. “We also provided Yolanda with detailed market research on the German market for her existing product line,” Boex says.

NBDC international trade consultant Josh Nichol-Caddy also is working with Diaz on the logistics, insurance and financing of her first major shipment to Germany. “Once this big shipment is done,” Boex says, “we will go back to focusing on improving her operational efficiency so she can continue to scale up.”



Diaz began Little Miss Fashion in 2011, sharing commercial office space with another company. She rented a 100-square-foot space, had one sewing machine and one cutting table. In 2013, she moved her company into a 700-square-foot location and, one year later, developed a website and an Etsy online store.

Today, Diaz employs nine other people and owns 15 commercial sewing machines, one cutting machine and two cutting tables. She primarily sells wholesale to Zulily, an online company that then sells directly to consumers. Through Zulily, Little Miss Fashion products have been sold in all 50 states.

“I want to export to Germany and they’re helping me with information on how to start the process,” Diaz says of the consultants at NBDC. “They are also

telling me how to contact companies for shipping to Germany to make it affordable for me.”

Diaz also fulfills custom orders. Last year, she received an order with a limited deadline from a mother in Texas. “The customer needed a special outfit for her daughter, who was a participant in a local competition,” Boex says. “The order was filled in time and the little girl ended up winning the Little Miss Texas pageant.”

Diaz is active in the community as a volunteer and as a member of the board of directors of the Midlands Latino Community Development Corporation.

She has partnered with an area correctional facility in a program where she taught inmates to sew and develop marketable job skills.

“Every time I ask, everyone at NBDC is ready to help,” Diaz says. “Without them, this would not be possible for me.”



# CARQUEST/SUTHERLAND FARM & AUTO SUPPLY



From left — Owner Galen Smith holding son Darcy; Dan Hying, filter representative; and employees Ken Pfeiff and Dick Gibbons





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“I would like to specialize in what the community wants and can sustain.”

## Business that fits its community

**G**alen Smith knew a thing or two about auto parts but had never before written a business plan. That is when a banker put him in touch with Charlie McPherson, an NBDC consultant at Mid Plains Community College’s north campus in North Platte.

“I had to have a business plan but I had no clue where to head into it,” Smith recalls. “Charlie did an amazing job helping me. We did a business plan that covered everything, all the way from street access to what I sell and the financial information.”

Smith needed the comprehensive business plan as he sought financing to purchase the CARQUEST auto parts store in Sutherland.

“I grew up on a farm, and I had been the owner/operator of a single truck trucking business,” Smith

explains. “I moved to Nebraska from Texas about eight years ago. I was renting farmland, growing corn and soybeans, but I was getting frustrated with the high cost of rent and the instability of the ag industry.

“Gus Becker, the former owner of the CARQUEST store, had told me, ‘One day, you should buy this place.’ Well, I started thinking I might enjoy that.”

Smith was referred to McPherson in early 2015.

“I listened to his ideas and goals, and helped put together a business plan and financial projections to take back to the lenders,” McPherson says. “Because this involves a process that can’t be done overnight, we spent about two months working on the project together. It was a long, tedious process for him, but ultimately he received approval.”

McPherson says part of his job is to provide reassurance to overcome the aggravations of the often lengthy steps involved in starting or purchasing a business.

“We’re part counselor and part cheerleader,” McPherson says of the roles he and other NBDC consultants play. “It takes a lot of time to get the results you want, and that means being patient. We’re willing to put in the time and effort because we want them to be successful.”

Smith received approval for his loan in September 2015.

“I started working here October 15 and took ownership December 1,” he says. “Gus stayed on and worked here up until January 15. So we each had six weeks where we worked for each other.”

Being an independently-owned CARQUEST store means Smith can utilize the company’s computer and cataloging systems as well as carry whatever products he chooses. “I’d say half of my floor space right now is hardware because that’s what my customers need,” he says. “I would like to specialize in what the community wants and can sustain.”

Smith appreciates all that McPherson and the NBDC did to help him purchase his business. “I would use their services again,” he says. “I’d recommend to anyone who was going to start up a business that NBDC should be one of their first stops.”



## FARRIS ENGINEERING



**ABOVE** (left to right) — Front Row: Jeni Merryweather, marketing manager; Michelle McCarthy, chief financial officer/controller; Marc Behrens, information systems and technology manager. Back Row: Dave Benscoter, revit manager; Tom Svoboda, president/CEO; Greg Kronaizl, executive vice president





## GOVERNMENT CONTRACTOR OF THE YEAR

**T**wo decades of service in the U.S. Air Force in facilities engineering taught Farris Engineering President and CEO Tom Svoboda the value of teamwork and experience.

That is why he has built a solid relationship with the government contracting consultants at NBDC's Omaha office.

"Farris Engineering has worked with the government for 40 years, but we needed to know more," Svoboda says. "We wanted to find out how to broaden our reach, influence and knowledge."

Over the past three years, Farris has collaborated with Mary Graff, Roger Johnson and several other Procurement Technical Assistance consultants.

"Mary helped us set up job searches and refine Federal Business Opportunity (FBO) searches in order to show us how to find design projects that were being contracted out by different government agencies," Svoboda says. "She showed us how to see who else is doing government contracting and how to work as a team with them. Roger also has been helping us over the last year with recommendations on possible team partners and assisted us in updating our System for Award Management (SAM) registration.

"Overall, the consultants have been a great resource for us," he says.

Farris Engineering is an employee-owned provider of mechanical, electrical and fire protection

consulting engineering services. Established in 1967 in Omaha, the firm employs 65 people and has additional offices in Lincoln, Des Moines, and Colorado Springs.

Over the years, the firm has diversified to include technology, commissioning and lighting design. "We are often involved in engineering systems for buildings being built for the government that are expected to last 50 years or longer," Svoboda says. "Energy efficiency and maintenance are key considerations for all our clients, and we like working on buildings that we know will be around for a very long time."

In the federal government sector, Farris Engineering has teamed with architects to secure indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts at Minot (N.D.) Air Force Base, Grand Forks (N.D.) Air Force Base, the Air Force Academy and the Omaha Corps of Engineers. Farris Engineering is also part of a team selected to provide designs for several U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers.

"Many of these federal opportunities have been identified through the FBO website and the NBDC's Bid Match program," Svoboda says. "Additionally, we have done a number of projects for Nebraska state agencies, the Nebraska National Guard, the Nebraska Department of Corrections and the four University of Nebraska campuses."

The company supports economically disadvantaged small businesses and has a vibrant internship program for area college students. "Farris



Engineering provides a judge and mentor for the Society of American Military Engineer Student Mentoring Program and hosted students from two area high schools on visits to our office," Svoboda says.

"Our employees are passionate about their designs and love to share their knowledge with students as we strive to encourage our next generation of engineers."

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The **Government Contractor of the Year** is awarded to a Nebraska business that is successful in selling and delivering products or services to federal, state or local government.

- 2011 – Dyna-Tech Aviation Services
- 2012 – Issues Management Solutions
- 2013 – Calvin L. Hinz Architects PC
- 2014 – Mark VII Enterprises
- 2015 – Farris Engineering



# RUNCIE'S CATERING



Owner Doug Runcie





**M**embers of the Nebraska National Guard need regular training to stay physically and mentally prepared for duty. And when they train at the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings, they also need to eat.

The opportunity to provide full-service food operations to the soldiers who trained at the site from June 6 through June 27, 2015 — that's three weeks and more than 5,000 meals — was accepted by Runcie's Catering in Hastings.

But before owner Doug Runcie could bid on the government contract, he first enlisted the assistance of Chuck Beck, a government contracting specialist, at the NBDC office at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

"Runcie's Catering had been registered in the old Central Contractor Registry (CCR), however, that system was no longer being used for registering contractors with the federal government," Beck says.

## Satisfying customers—from wedding guests to National Guardsmen

In September 2014, Runcie began working with the NBDC procurement program to migrate his Legacy Account from CCR to the new System for Award management (SAM) in order to update and activate the registration for his business.

"Requests for SAM assistance are a fairly common occurrence for us," Beck says.

In May 2015, Beck informed Runcie that the Nebraska National Guard had released a solicitation for bids for the food service operations at the Greenleaf Training Site. Runcie subsequently bid on the opportunity and was awarded the contract. In June, his business furnished three meals a day for the National Guard members completing their annual training.

"I wouldn't have gotten the government job without the help of the program and Chuck Beck," Runcie says.

Runcie continued to work with Beck and the Procurement Technical Assistance Program to ensure the caterer's invoicing was completed correctly in the Department of Defense's Wide-Area WorkFlow (WAWF) eBusiness Suite.

"The paperwork that comes with one of these government contracts is overwhelming," Runcie says.

Beck says there are a variety of challenges that businesses might face when entering the government market. "Navigating through the registration process is often the initial and most requested

assistance," he says. "After a company is registered, however, there is still work to do. Developing a strategy and the tools to market within the government market can be challenging and time consuming.

"For small companies, it can be difficult to dedicate resources to complete the work to expand government sales."

Runcie opened his catering business in 2006. He says Beck is an ally when it comes to navigating complicated federal government rules and regulations. "Chuck is always available if I have any questions," Runcie says, "and can be a big help making sure I have all the right paperwork."

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"For small companies, it can be difficult to dedicate resources to complete the work to expand government sales."



## SAND CREEK POST & BEAM

The **Sustainability Business of the Year** is awarded to a Nebraska business that has demonstrated leadership incorporating environmental sustainability as a strategic business value that has resulted in improved business performance.

2011 – Signs and Shapes

2012 – ServiceMaster

2013 – The Grey Plume

2014 – Greenhouse in the Snow

2014 – Sand Creek Post & Beam

Owners Len Dickinson and Jule Goeller





## SUSTAINABILITY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

"You need to be replacing what you're taking to be certain it is there for generations to come."

**W**hen an EF 4 tornado leveled the production facility of Sand Creek Post & Beam in Wayne, Jule Goeller and Len Dickinson initially saw the incident as a devastating setback.

Soon they came to see it as an opportunity to rebuild with a renewed emphasis on efficiency and sustainability. "It was a chance to look at planning our new building better to suit our needs and to implement lean manufacturing techniques," says Goeller.

She and Dickinson — partners in business and marriage — have worked with Loren Kucera, director of NBDC's office in Wayne, many times since founding Sand Creek in 2005. After the October 4, 2013, tornado, the couple again turned to the NBDC for advice on lean processes and principles.

"I grew up on a farm, and I saw early on how important it is to be good stewards of the countryside," Goeller says. "We moved from the city to an acreage because of our love of nature."

After relocating from Lincoln to Wisner to live in and renovate an old family home, the couple began to contemplate what they'd do to earn a living. Dickinson's interest in timber framing led the couple to research kit barns — the kind once marketed by

Sears and Montgomery Ward. Their company is named for a creek that runs behind their home, and for a creek by the same name near Dickinson's childhood home in Wahoo.

"We use no harsh chemicals and only wood from replenishable sources," she says. "You need to be replacing what you're taking to be certain it is there for generations to come."

In addition to the Wayne operations, the couple own a timber-frame business in Texas. Company-wide, they employ approximately 80 people.

Because of lean techniques, labor hours at the Wayne facility have been cut by 20 percent, while production increased by 14 percent. Employees now work four 10-hour shifts per week, which allows for lower energy usage at the plant, reduced transportation costs and emissions as employees travel to and from work, and longer weekends for personal or family time.

Sand Creek uses about 3 million board feet of lumber annually, says Jean Waters, energy and environmental engineer with the NBDC office in Omaha. Small pieces of wood that cannot be used in production — the cutoffs — are sold for energy recovery, while the 2.4 cubic feet of sawdust produced each workday is used for animal bedding.

"It is clear that Sand Creek Post & Beam is committed to producing a sustainable product in a sustainable manner," Waters says. "They even donate 10 lodgepole pines or Douglas fir trees with every kit they sell."

Emphasizing sustainability is the right thing to do, Goeller says. "We want everything to be here after we're long gone," she says, "not only the countryside, but also our barns."



## Growing family and growing business



**I**n August 2009, one year before opening Platte Valley Ag Products (PVAP), Eric McManaman was introduced by a banker to Ingrid Battershell, center director of in Scottsbluff.

McManaman met with Battershell several times over the next 12 months, and in August 2010, two SBA loans — one for the business entity and one for the purchase of the real estate and milling equipment — were approved. PVAP was able to open for business.

“My wife will tell you that I am one of the most plan-happy people you will ever meet,” says McManaman, who co-owns the business with his wife, Jackie. “The financial projections Ingrid provided really gave us the road map we needed.”

The McManamans purchased the former Hergert Milling, which had been closed since 2008, from David Hergert. The Scottsbluff operation consists of 150,000 bushel grain and ingredient storage, inside hay grinder, covered hay storage, five finished products bins capable of holding more than 360 tons, a pellet mill, covered load-out and truck scale, and associated feed manufacturing facilities including bagging capabilities.

“I had worked about eight years



**ABOVE** — Owners Jackie and Eric McManaman. **CENTER** (from left)— McManamans with their daughter Jessica, who works part-time in the business; Tyler Phelps, PVAP general manager, and daughter Caty Phelps, PVAP office and bookkeeping assistant, with their children.





with the previous owner, so I knew some of the potential and how much of an opportunity it was," McManaman says.

The business has grown considerably since its relaunch as PVAP.

In 2011, McManaman built a 4,000-square-foot feed warehouse. In 2013, a 1,200-square-foot mechanical and welding shop was added. During 2015, a 1,500-square-foot modular home was purchased to serve as an office for the business, and a 5,000-square-foot bagged-feed warehouse was constructed.

Today, PVAP provides high-quality feed supplements to a diverse customer base situated primarily in five states: Nebraska, Colorado, South Dakota, Wyoming and Texas.

A family-owned business rooted in strong Christian principles, PVAP purchases locally grown alfalfa hay and grains and combines them with ingredients purchased from other vendors throughout the Midwest and Intermountain area. This has had a strong economic impact on area farmers who benefit through the purchase of their products. Additionally, the company offers onsite evaluations of producer's herds and facilities to best recommend products and services that will help achieve long-term goals.

"Since I first met Eric in 2009," Battershell says, "he has continued to impress me with his knowledge of the industry, financial budgeting, his work ethic, his community responsibilities and his love of family."

In October 2015, McManaman wanted to consolidate existing short-term debt, purchase additional bins and equipment, and construct a storage



building. He again turned to Battershell who assisted with the cash flow projections, pro forma financial statements and assumptions. The loan was approved.

"With our most recent project, Ingrid brought everything in our plan up to date and helped us formulate new projections," McManaman says. "As an outsider looking in, her experience and opinions give us another viewpoint that's proved very valuable. She's a good resource for us and other businesses in the area."



## PRECISION COMPONENTS MIDWEST

# Business partners leverage experience to open their own shop

**D**ave Cerny has decades of experience in the machine tool and die industry, but when it came to starting a business of his own, he and co-owner Dan Mize turned to the NBDC offices in Omaha and Wayne.

Cerny and Mize are the owners of Precision Components Midwest, a machine shop for high precision work in Norfolk. They moved into their building



NEBRASKA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER





“We need do all we can to keep these jobs in the U.S. and allow local industry to grow ...”

March 3, 2012, and began production the following month. Before they could do either, they needed a strong business plan and financial projections in order to secure funding.

“I started at a medical manufacturing company in Norfolk and worked there for 20 years, eventually becoming the machine tooling supervisor,” Cerny says. “Dan was at Mize and Associates, and he was working with machine shops all over the country. We had the idea to bring that business into Nebraska by starting our own machine shop.”

Cerny visited the NBDC office at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and met with Director Aretha Boex. “Aretha helped us with an outline for setting up a business plan,” he recalls, “then we met with Loren Kucera,” director of the NDBC office at Wayne State College. “He helped us refine our business plan and develop the financial projections we needed, and put us in touch with financiers.”

“Loren’s experience is really helpful,” Cerny says. “He knows things some people might overlook.”

Cerny says Kucera is “good at filling in the blanks . . . how important it is in a business plan to tell your story to the financiers, not just list the numbers. He told us to say who we are, what we want to do and how we’re going to do it.”

In business almost four years, Cerny and Mize still rely upon Kucera, Dick Uhing and others at NBDC. “When it comes to government contracts and other opportunities, they’re always looking for ways to help,” Cerny says of Uhing’s work as a procurement consultant.

Being a fairly new company means there is a lack of historical data to use when judging progress or for planning purposes. “Loren makes himself available to help us determine where we are sitting compared to where we want to be.”

Since opening, Precision Components has grown to a staff of five workers on the machine shop floor, including one just added in January. “We are fortunate we came into business when the economy was



Co-owners Dave Cerny (left) and Dan Mize with NBDC consultant Loren Kucera (center)

recovering. The fact that our customers are enjoying success has allowed us to come along with them.”

Cerny says he’d like to convince young people that a career in manufacturing is not the same as it was 20 years ago.

“Shops today are full of sophisticated machinery, computers and electronics. It takes a person who can problem solve and act quickly,” he says. “We need do all we can to keep these jobs in the U.S. and allow local industry to grow, and NBDC is helping us do that.”



## BLUE BLOOD BREWING



Brian Podwinski, owner of Blue Blood Brewing, and Sam Manzitto, partner and general contractor, in Robber's Cave. Photo: Eric Gregory/Lincoln Journal Star



# Brewing company sees opportunity in unusual place

**D**eveloping a business plan narrative to secure funding for a project that combines a brewery, a restaurant and an abandoned cave is a challenge that can benefit tremendously from the expertise of the consultants at NBDC.

That was the case in February 2015 when Brian Podwinski, owner of Blue Blood Brewing, became a client of Zack Zimmerman, associate director of Lincoln's NBDC office at Southeast Community College.

Podwinski needed a business plan for relocating his current brewery and constructing a restaurant and taproom on property he purchased just south of 10th and High streets in Lincoln. That property is adjacent to Robber's Cave, a cavern that nearly 150 years ago was used to store beer and which also reportedly served as a hideout for the notorious Jesse James.

"Brian and I worked together on providing a clear picture of his vision and allowing this vision to take shape in terms a funder could understand," Zimmerman says. "Many lenders view projects such as this through risk, and allowing them to understand the risk associated with this venture allows them to make a decision on moving forward."

The cave was first put to use by a Lincoln brewery in 1869. Brewery workers spent three years expanding the Dakota sandstone cavern into a 5,600-square-foot warehouse. A tourist attraction after the brewery closed, Robber's Cave fell victim to vandalism. Its entrance was bulldozed and sealed shut in 2000.

Podwinski is building a 12,000-square-foot building on the site. The Blue Blood brewery operation would take up 9,000 square feet, while the other 3,000 square feet would house a 100-seat taproom and restaurant with a full kitchen.

He also wants to reopen the cave to the public for tours and special events, and to use the space and its constant 55-degree temperature to store barrel-aged beers. He says the Jesse James legend, while never proved, is a natural tie-in to Blue Blood's "Outlaw" brand of small-batch beers.

"It was great to work with an entrepreneur who has such a fresh idea and vision," Zimmerman says. "Brian's vision would also revitalize an area that has a lot of history in Lincoln. Entrepreneurs like Brian see things that not everyone sees."

Podwinski opened Blue Blood in 2011 and utilized the services of the NBDC at that time for assistance on his business plan. He aims to open the new operation in April, and credits Zimmerman with helping to further the project.

"Even though we'd been in business for four years, this is a different animal, going into a brand new building and opening a restaurant," Podwinski says. "Our bank said we should go to Zack and make sure we understood all the details. We've been fortunate to be able to utilize his experience."

"NBDC has a lot of clout. I have recommended their services and I will again."



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"It was great to work with an entrepreneur who has such a fresh idea and vision. Entrepreneurs like Brian see things that not everyone sees."





## MANUFACTURING BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

**T**hroughout its 60-year history, Brand Hydraulics has achieved consistent growth by striving to actively engage each employee at every level throughout the corporation.

That vision has become even more focused since the company partnered with NBDC to establish a culture of continuous improvement through the implementation of lean manufacturing concepts.

"NBDC has been with us ever since we started down our lean journey in 2013," says Brand's Executive Vice President, Charlie Klahn. "Rachel Baxter came in and conducted a lean workshop and got the whole production side involved."

Scott White, Brand's production manager, says the company had been building valves the same way for decades. "Now, with what we've learned, our whole production area has changed," he says. "We've moved out nearly half the tables we had in our production area, and instead of straight lines and batch processing, we are now utilizing one piece flow. We've configured cells that enable us to streamline the process."

For example, previously it took 421 square feet of

floor space and 507 walking steps to construct one particular valve. With lean techniques and a cellular work station, it takes 120 square feet of floor space and only 10 walking steps.

Changing a corporate culture requires active participation, Klahn says. "We involve the people who actually make the products," she says. "We empower them. It isn't management coming down and saying, 'You're going to build it this way.' We have given them a voice."

Brand has hosted NBDC workshops and Kaizen (continuous improvement) events on a variety of topics including set-up reduction, value stream mapping, on-time delivery and customer relations.

Additionally, the company has installed an Idea Board where employees are invited to share their suggestions for improvement in any area. The ideas are tracked from proposal to completion, and employees are encouraged to take ownership of their ideas and make the improvements themselves.

"Being able to express their ideas has a snowball effect," Klahn says. "They gain pride in seeing their ideas implemented. Because they are engaged and





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The **Manufacturing Business of the Year** is awarded to a Nebraska business that demonstrates leadership in employee involvement, continual process improvement, customer and supplier relations, innovation and new product development, sales growth, and sustainability.

- 2011 – Overhead Door
- 2012 – Tri-V Tool & Manufacturing
- 2013 – Certified Transmission
- 2014 – KZCO
- 2015 – Brand Hydraulics

empowered, turnover and training have improved.”

Brand Hydraulics is also working to make production processes more sustainable. Improvements have ranged from energy-efficient lighting and motion sensors to recyclable packaging and biodegradable shipping materials.

“Waste and material management are part of every employee’s job,” Klahn says. “Safety and quality remain top priorities and waste reduction comes next. Our people have come up with some great ideas to increase efficiency and we involve them in the effort.”

White has earned Lean Manufacturing Certification through the NBDC and is looking



Charlie Klahn, executive vice president; Ed Rennolds, 41 years of service

forward to Next Level Lean training this year.

“We are all benefitting because our relationship with the people at NBDC is a true partnership,” he says. “Between workshops, they’ll contact us just to check in and see how our journey is going.”

Klahn says NBDC consultants have made it clear they are always available for guidance and support. “They’re truly invested in the companies they help.”



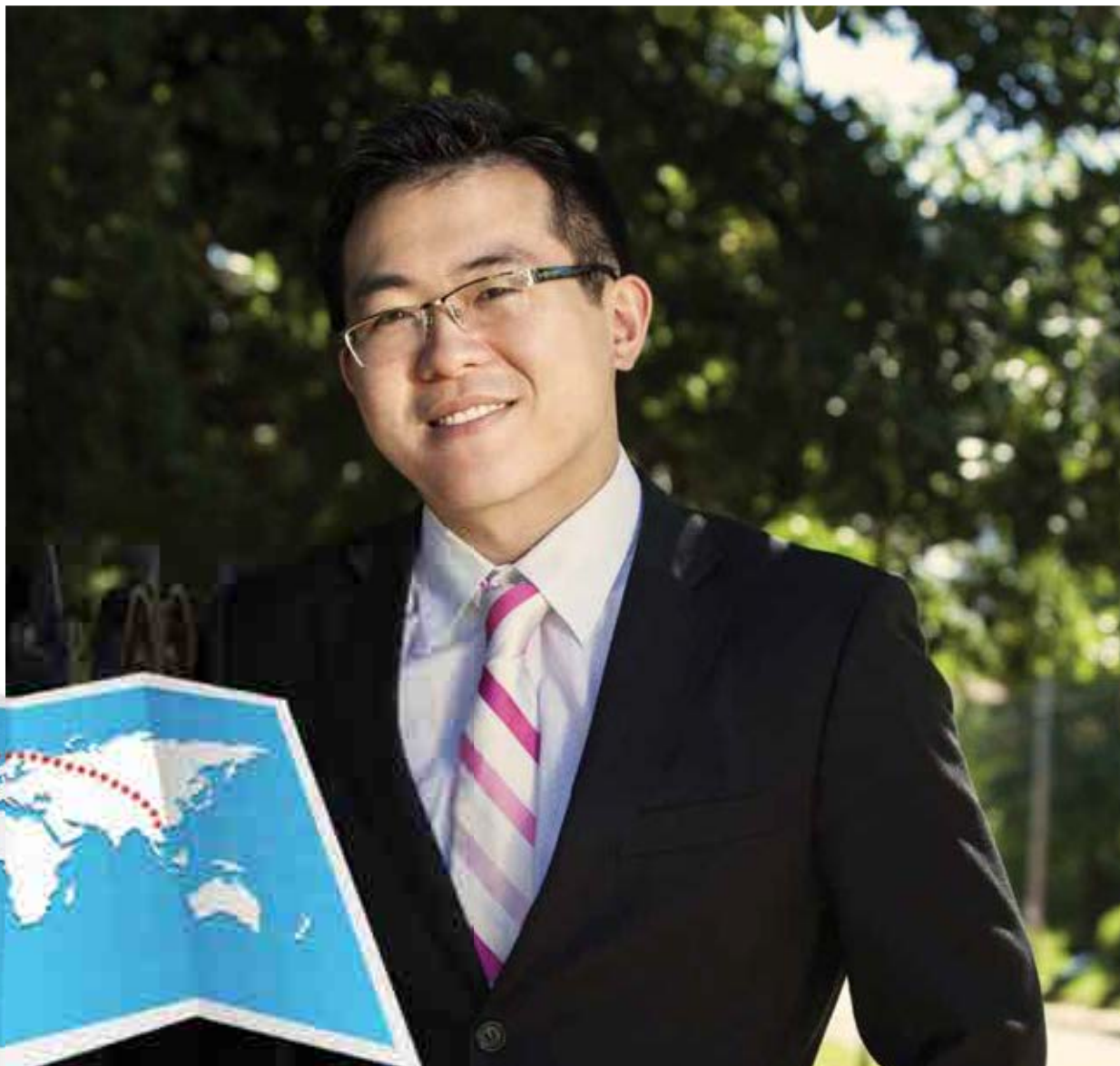
## NEW GRAND OCEAN INTERNATIONAL

The **Export Business of the Year** is awarded to a Nebraska business that is successful in selling and delivering products or services internationally.

2013 – Elliott Equipment

2014 – Bruckman Rubber

2015 – New Grand Ocean International



North American branch co-founder Harry Hou





## EXPORT BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

"Nebraska is a fantastic place to be. Nebraska is Beef Nation and Iowa is Pork Nation. This location is very good for us."

**N**BDC has been a source of advice and assistance to Harry Hou since before he co-founded the North American branch of New Grand Ocean International in Omaha four years ago.

As a family-owned business headquartered in Thailand, New Grand Ocean International is a leading meat importer and exporter to wholesalers in the restaurant, pet food, fertilizer and fuel industries, averaging annual sales of \$72 million. Additionally, New Grand Ocean International assists suppliers with regulation and health inspection compliance within Thailand.

Hou, a University of Nebraska at Omaha graduate, was working as a personal banker when his family began contemplating opening a North American office and situating it in Omaha.

"My first consultation with NBDC was when we were starting up," Hou recalls. "That was when I met Veronica Doga (NBDC export consultant, now director of the Procurement Technical Assistance Program), and she was really, really helpful."

The NBDC team in Omaha provided assistance with a business plan and financial projections. The team helped research what it would take to export meat and meat by-products to Thailand, as well as gather information about relevant U.S. regulations. NBDC also conducted research about the plastics industry and about genetically modified organisms and their consumption worldwide, says Josh Nichol-Caddy, NBDC export consultant and market research analyst.

"Nebraska is a fantastic place to be," Hou says. "Nebraska is 'Beef Nation' and Iowa is 'Pork Nation.' This location is very good for us."

The New Grand Ocean International office in Omaha has grown from a single employee to four full-time employees. Hou also supervises a number of sales managers overseas.

Hou says one of the greatest challenges has been the strength of the U.S. dollar. "We have had to deal with the strong dollar, which has gone up 20 percent," he says. "Nothing has changed about our business, but because of the strong dollar, our cost goes up 20 percent. If this persists, we have to find a way to add value and diversify."

Most recently, Hou has sought to expand his product lines to include fish, specifically Asian carp from the Missouri River. Hou's plan to develop a fish processing facility in Nebraska has been delayed by a lack of fishermen willing to participate. "If we had the supply, we could do it," he says.

Hou is an active supporter of bilateral trade between Nebraska and the Far East, especially China and Vietnam. He frequently travels overseas and recently returned from a visit to Southeast Asia in anticipation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. He also has hosted meetings between potential investors and other stakeholders and representatives of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce.

"I hope we can finalize and join the Trans-Pacific Partnership," Hou says. "I believe it would be a source of many opportunities."

