

# How Iron Man Can Help Make It In America

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You may not believe this, but economic development has something to learn from Iron Man. When Tony Stark and his “super suit” enter a combat zone, his technology scans the environment: inhabitants, structural deficiencies, assets, potential pitfalls. This evaluation, though quick, provides him with the information necessary to efficiently apply his resources (here, weapons) and leave the zone on top. Communities investing in manufacturing and economic development apply the same techniques as Iron Man, working in a region, scanning the environment and applying resources (tax incentives, workforce development and infrastructure upgrades instead of repulsor rays) to come out on top with robust economic growth.

It's no secret that government budgets are tight. Everyone wants to find the most productive use for funds, and in the recovering economy job growth is a high priority. According to the Economic Policy Institute, manufacturing has played a leading role in the nation's economic recovery, adding 504,000 jobs between February 2010, when manufacturing employment fell to its lowest point, and October 2012. These 504,000 jobs constituted 11.1 percent of the 4.5 million jobs created in that period. In order to continue this growth without straining budgets, local and state governments could benefit from a roadmap highlighting efficient and effective industries, community capabilities and workforce strengths for investment. This roadmap is derived from clear market understanding of the community and the region.

Market understanding is a critical tool, but creating a clear picture can be difficult. It requires information on a broad range of factors, from workforce strengths to transportation infrastructure. The Make it in America Challenge, currently being conducted by the Departments of Commerce and Labor and the Delta Regional

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Authority, provides funding and incentives for communities and regions to think strategically about encouraging investment, both domestically and from abroad. Successful strategies will undoubtedly involve a thorough market analysis, understanding of assets and opportunities, and extensive collaboration between regional experts and leaders. These partnerships will support decision makers by identifying and expanding knowledge of regional assets, supply chain capabilities and capacities and current and future workforce strengths. These federal agencies are modeling these partnerships by leveraging their existing resources and acting in a more collaborative, strategic, and effective manner. Through the Make it in America Challenge:

- The Economic Development Administration funds will assist states, cities, non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, and/or Economic Development Districts with infrastructure construction, technical assistance or strategic planning that will encourage insourcing of productive activity by U.S. firms, foster increased foreign direct investment, or incentivize U.S. companies to keep their businesses and jobs here at home.
- The National Institute of Standards and Technology's Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) will identify supply chain strengths and weaknesses and what industries the community is best poised to serve. The MEP Centers will provide technical assistance to the identified suppliers to prepare them to serve those industries.
- The Employment and Training Administration will provide funds for education and training through the public workforce system that will raise the technical skill levels of American workers to remain competitive in high-growth industries and occupations.
- The Delta Regional Authority funds will be used to assist in the economic development of rural areas within the Delta Region by providing technical assistance for business development and economic development planning.

Each component alone can help provide an incentive for useful investment, but when leveraged together a higher return on investment can be achieved. Over the long term, the partnerships forged will continue collaborations, offering private and public leaders insight into the current and future manufacturing markets of their region, adding one more tool to the region's proverbial "super suit."

Please visit the [Make it in America Challenge](#) [1] page for more information.

See the original blog at [nistmep.blogs](http://nistmep.blogs) [2].

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### **Links:**

[1] [http://www.manufacturing.gov/make\\_it\\_in\\_america.html](http://www.manufacturing.gov/make_it_in_america.html)

[2] [http://nistmep.blogs.govdelivery.com/2013/05/30/how-iron-man-can-help-make-it-in-america/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=how-iron-man-can-help-make-it-in-america](http://nistmep.blogs.govdelivery.com/2013/05/30/how-iron-man-can-help-make-it-in-america/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=how-iron-man-can-help-make-it-in-america)