



Regional Manufacturer Taps ISTEP Funding To Expand Overseas Presence

by Megan Wieser

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EDWARDSVILLE – A Red Bud, Illinois-based maker of coil processing equipment is expanding its global footprint with support from its 20-year relationship with the Illinois SBDC International Trade Center (ITC) at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Red Bud Industries, Inc. (RBI) most recently reached out to the ITC to request financial support via the Illinois State Trade and Export Promotion (ISTEP) program to exhibit at Metal Expo, a virtual international trade show held in Moscow, Russia.

RBI Vice President of Finance Kathleen Liefer said the company's ongoing presence at this show is critical in building rapport with its current customers, as well as enabling RBI to pursue existing leads and provide a platform for prospects.

"Metal Expo went really well for us, considering the ongoing pandemic," Liefer said. "We were able to meet with several new leads, in addition to nurturing some existing relationships. One recent international project generated significant interest from similar companies, so having the opportunity to discuss this new interest at Metal Expo was extremely beneficial. As a result of this trade show, we're now aware of new potential clients. Thanks to support from the Illinois SBDC ITC at SIUE via the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and ISTEP, we're gaining traction in this part of the world."

RBI Contract Administrator Brandon Sachtleben shared that the firm's partnership with the ITC and Director Silvia Torres Bowman becomes more essential and valuable each year, as U.S. demand for RBI's products decreases.

"Twenty-five years ago, we began exporting," said Sachtleben. "But in 2020, we knew we needed to greatly expand our exports. Our partnership with the State of Illinois and the Illinois SBDC International Trade Center at SIUE has guided us through the process of obtaining ISTEP and CARES Act funding. That in turn has connected us with a cadre of outstanding technical consultants, each equipped to answer our questions and point us in the right direction to forge alliances with customers and distributors worldwide. Thanks to this support, RBI is establishing footholds in additional markets such as those in Western Europe, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Thailand and elsewhere in Southeast Asia."

RBI's industry is tough and competitive, Sachtleben said, with the pandemic adding a layer of complexity and challenges.

"COVID-19 put the brakes on our international business," he said. "But the state and the ITC at SIUE have guided us to a solid path forward. The consultants we've secured are helping us greatly with safety inspections and support as we get machines operational in a number of new and expanded markets. For any company in Southern Illinois or statewide, this is a great resource that RBI strongly recommends. You may think you're alone in the challenges of exporting, but you're not. The ITC stands ready to help."

Torres Bowman said RBI has long been an outstanding client. “It continues to be our pleasure to work with Kathy, Brandon and their staff,” Torres Bowman said. “RBI is another representation of the hard work and deep commitment to growth that coexists among business communities in southern Illinois. We are delighted to be able to tap into vital funding for small businesses and provide continuing support as they compete and shine in the global marketplace.”

For more information on Red Bud Industries, visit <https://www.redbudindustries.com>.

For more information about the ISTEP program or CARES Act funding, contact the ITC by email at International-Trade-Center@siue.edu or phone at 618-650-3851, or visit siue.edu/itc.

The Illinois SBDC International Trade Center at SIUE serves businesses in southern Illinois by providing individualized, no-cost export advising, identification of foreign buyers, agents and/or distributors through trade leads, international market analysis and more. The ITC is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, as a service to the region’s entrepreneurial and business community. As a key member of the Illinois SBDC Network, the ITC delivers these important services to its clients while supporting the goals and objectives of both the [SIUE School of Business](#) and the University at large.

Photo: RBI Contract Administrator Brandon Sachtleben.