



CONTACT:
Terrell Ellis, Executive Director Advantage Valley
(304) 546-7323

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AREA DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS TO HOST
AUTO SECTOR SUPPLY CHAIN EXPO**

Charleston, WV. (January 29, 2019) - Advantage Valley and the Robert C. Byrd Institute (RCBI) will host a trade show designed to link small businesses who are interested in doing business with major companies in the automotive parts sector. The event will educate attendees on the procurement process of some major automotive manufacturers in the state. The Expo will be held on Thursday, March 7 from 1:00-4:00 PM at the Valley Park Conference Center in Hurricane. Toyota, NGK and Sogefi USA, and others in the auto parts manufacturing sector, will be represented and hosting individual meetings with vendors and suppliers.

Local company representatives can learn about opportunities in materials, services, supplies and commodities required for the day-to-day operations and procurement processes of some of the most successful businesses in the state. All types of businesses are encouraged to attend including those who may provide input to the auto parts manufacturing process to those who provide commercial cleaning, building maintenance, and lawncare to name a few. A resource fair will provide small businesses additional resources for business development, workforce training and marketing.

The Automotive Parts Manufacturing industry provides great opportunity for entrepreneurs and business leaders to be successful in this region. The Automotive Parts Manufacturing industry is led by 11 manufacturers in the region, realizing over \$157 million in annual profit. Though the industry is strong in the Region, only 36% of the \$203 million regional demand is met in-region by existing manufacturers - demonstrating the significant market opportunity in the Advantage Valley Region. Job prospects are strong as well. Average earnings in the industry are high at \$79,712 and it is expected that jobs in the industry will expand by 15% over the next five years.

“One way RCBI grows West Virginia’s economy is by connecting existing businesses to contracting opportunities here at home,” said Derek Scarbro, director of RCBI’s Appalachian Hatchery initiative. “This, in turn, enables larger manufacturers such as those in the automotive sector to learn about potential state suppliers, some of whom may be capable of providing goods and services faster, more reliably and even cheaper.”

Terrell Ellis, Executive Director of Advantage Valley, sees great benefit in business-to-business events like the Expo. “If small businesses have the opportunity to learn the needs of the key industrial players, they may have the capability to become a part of the local supply chain. It can

be a win-win situation, allowing companies to make the choice to use a local supplier. This opens new markets for our small businesses. We all know that when we grow our local businesses, it has an exponential effect on the local economy. Sometimes our existing businesses need a little help to serve a new economy, one that is no longer based primarily on coal.”

Advantage Valley, Inc. is a private nonprofit economic development organization representing the Charleston and Huntington, West Virginia metropolitan statistical areas. In West Virginia, the region is represented by Boone, Cabell, Clay, Kanawha, Lincoln, Putnam and Wayne Counties with a combined population of nearly 600,000 people. Through an extensive research and stakeholder engagement process we have identified Automotive Parts Manufacturing as a significant business opportunity for entrepreneurs and growing businesses in Advantage Valley.

This effort is a project of RCBI’s Appalachian Hatchery, in partnership with Advantage Valley, which is part of POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization), a multi-agency initiative that delivers federal resources to help communities affected by job losses in coal mining and related industries. Funding is provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission, U.S. Economic Development Administration and the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.

The West Virginia Automotive Supply Chain Expo is free and open to the public. Register at <http://www.rcbi.org/go/autoexpo>

For additional information, contact Terrell Ellis at (304) 546-7323.

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