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Clemson receives $3.5M federal economic grant

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CLEMSON — Clemson University has been awarded a $3.5 million federal grant to support regional economic development and advanced skills training.

The grant, part of a $20.5 million overall funding program announced Tuesday by the U.S. Department of Commerce and other departments and groups, will go to the Clemson University Center for Workforce Development.

The federal government's Make it in America challenge is designed to encourage U.S. companies to keep, expand or re-shore their manufacturing operations and jobs in America and entice foreign companies to build facilities and make their products here. Clemson's application focused on encouraging in-sourcing, domestic company expansion and foreign direct investment. University officials say the award will allow the university to expand the center's programs and help create manufacturing jobs in South Carolina.

The challenge, which was issued in March, allowed applicants to submit one funding proposal. Clemson University will collaborate with Work Link, Tri-County Technical College, Greenville Technical College and the South Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership and others.

"This initiative ties engineering and science with economic development to help place South Carolina at the forefront of advanced manufacturing and job creation," said Anaud Gramopadhye, dean of the college of engineering and science at Clemson University.

An addition to and partial renovation of Freeman Hall will also be financed by funding from the project. The addition will consist of the Select South Carolina Innovation Hub, which is a digital innovation center built on Clemson University's campus and run by the Center for Workforce Development.

The center will give economic development offices, state agencies and education institutions access to state-of-the-art digital learning tools, equipment and expertise, among other roles.