



## Hendricks County Economic Development Partnership

5201 East U.S. Hwy. 36 | Suite 501 | Avon, Indiana 46123  
317.745.2400 | fax 317.745.0757 | [www.hcedp.org](http://www.hcedp.org)

For Immediate Release  
October 21, 2011

Media contact:

Cinda Kelley-Hutchings  
Executive Director, HCEDP  
[kelley@hcedp.org](mailto:kelley@hcedp.org)

### **“ECONOMIC GARDENING” GRANT HELPS PLAINFIELD COMPANY IDENTIFY, PREPARE TO EXPAND INTO NEW MARKETS**

Plainfield, IN -- “Small business owners are always short of all kinds of things, from time, to skilled colleagues, to money,” muses Craig Carson. “The one thing we’re not short of is ideas, but it’s difficult to develop those ideas because of those other shortages.”

Thanks to a pilot program called “Planting Seeds for Growth,” Carson, the CEO and General Manager of JECO Plastic Products in Plainfield, was able to tap into market research expertise that helped him identify new applications and business opportunities for technology the company already owned.

The Hendricks County Economic Development Partnership (HCEDP) was eager to identify a company to participate in the program formulated by the Edward Lowe Foundation, which was being funded in part through a grant from the Metropolitan Indianapolis Board of Realtors® (MIBOR).

“The pilot is built on an economic development concept called ‘Economic Gardening’ that focuses helping local Stage 2 businesses grow and prosper, so they can create more local jobs,” explains HCEDP Executive Director Cinda Kelley-Hutchings. “We’re firm believers in the concept, and when MIBOR announced its funding, we couldn’t wait to move forward.” Rich Carlucci, Plainfield Town Manager, agrees with Kelley-Hutchings on the importance of working with our existing local industries, “Plainfield places as much value on our existing business base as we do in attracting new companies to the community. If we can support our local companies, like JECO Plastics, we are only adding to the depth of our local economy”.

Kelley-Hutchings had worked with Carson in the past, and the two discussed the opportunity. He agreed that Jeco would serve as the pilot for HCEDP’s participation. “There were some markets and product ideas I had been thinking about,” he recalls. “I was considering a few specific applications and had researched several different materials, but didn’t have time to explore the opportunities in depth.”

Through the pilot program, JECO received 40 hours of professional assistance from a business research company. “These were highly skilled individuals who were able to work in a very efficient manner,” says Carson. “I was able to work with them to narrow their efforts down to a couple areas where

they could provide meaningful data. There was a great deal of flexibility in structuring the 40 hours that were allocated to us.”

Beyond allowing Carson to focus on running his business while they performed their investigation, the research company was able to tap into proprietary databases that weren’t available to most business owners. “Not only did they explore the markets I requested,” he recalls, “they also identified other applications that had similar functionality and provided new possibilities I hadn’t considered, along with specific potential customers.”

JECO has hired an additional employee to explore the opportunities in more depth and work with the company’s network of sales representatives to identify potential customers for the new applications. While it will be some time before those opportunities result in production, Carson is confident that they will eventually allow him to expand the company’s workforce. “The program allowed us to get through step one and verify that we’re moving the right way.”

The grant from MIBOR covered half the cost of the services JECO received, and HCEDP’s local partners made up the balance. A recent white paper from the Purdue Center for Regional Development examined local entrepreneurship-based economic growth support and noted that “Hendricks County is moving in the right direction by building their capacity to support new and growing businesses.” The paper cited the economic gardening effort, confirming that “Knowing more about their market, their competitors, etc. is something [companies] know they need but don’t know how to get.”

Carson says that the program also reminded him of the value of keeping an open mind when it comes to outside assistance. Like many business owners, he’s inherently suspicious about help from government and other public agencies. “I’ve learned that you can’t have a blanket judgment about what they do,” he explains. “This program is one example. I’ve also worked with some people from the U.S. Commerce Department, and they’ve helped me find additional business overseas.”

Plainfield prides itself as the largest small town in Hendricks County with progressive ideas toward history, quality of life, education and economic development. As a result of the excellent transportation system, close proximity to the airport and its special quality of life, new subdivisions and modern shopping facilities continue to sprout. To learn more about Plainfield, please visit their website at [www.townofplainfield.com](http://www.townofplainfield.com).

The Hendricks County Economic Development Partnership (HCEDP) is a public-private agency and is the primary agency responsible for attracting new jobs and new investment in Hendricks County, Indiana. New business investment in Hendricks County since 2001 totaled \$1,087,671,747.00 with the creation of more than 12,733 new jobs. Information on available development sites, buildings, workforce training, incentive programs, community profiles, small business development and other resources is available at [www.hcedp.org](http://www.hcedp.org) or by calling 317-745-2400.