



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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Tool Gauge taps state Work Start grant to keep pace with expansion

Commerce awards \$125,000 through the Economic Development Board of Tacoma-Pierce County to support workforce development programs that will help enable the company's expansion and plans to hire 100 more workers over the next five years.

OLYMPIA, WA – The [Washington State Department of Commerce](#), in partnership with the [Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County](#) and nonprofit small business manufacturing consultant [Impact Washington](#), has awarded \$125,000 from the Governor's Strategic Reserve Fund to help Tacoma-based Tool Gauge train an estimated 100 new workers and advance the skills of another 50 incumbent employees to address continued business growth.

Tool Gauge is a family-owned company that currently employs over 150 people in manufacturing complex, high-quality metal and plastic parts and assemblies for the global aerospace industry. It is one of only a handful of Boeing-certified class I and II plastics shops in the world capable of machining certain parts. The company is in the midst of a \$20 million facilities expansion.

"This is a huge boost to our expansion and training efforts, and we are very excited about the potential this Work Start grant brings to Tool Gauge," said Debbie Lee, Tool Gauge CEO. "As we build our new facility and hire new staff, employee training remains a central component of our success. This state support is critical to helping us meet our training goals before we move into our new factory in July. It also enables us to move more quickly toward our goal of building a world class aerospace manufacturing facility, right here in Tacoma."

Tab Wilkins, Impact Washington president and center director, added, "Impact Washington is delighted to provide workforce training to support the growth and continued success of this world-class aerospace supplier in collaboration with our economic development partners."

"I appreciate the Washington State Department of Commerce and Governor Jay Inslee's unwavering support of job creation and the impact that their support is having throughout the region," said Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards. "I am especially excited that their efforts will bring valuable tech training and aerospace jobs right here to Tacoma."

Chris Green, Commerce assistant director for economic development and competitiveness, said, "Washington's greatest competitive advantage for business recruitment and retention is the exceptional quality and depth of our workforce. Continued investment in our people strengthens communities by providing employers a job-ready talent pool with the skills needed to operate technologically advanced equipment and thrive in a high-performance environment."

“We believe that a good quality of life starts with a good job,” said Bruce Kendall, president and CEO of the Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County. “Tool Gauge’s investments mean more great jobs for Pierce County’s world-class aerospace workers.”

Washington is recognized by two separate, independent studies as the best and most competitive place to design, manufacture and assemble aircraft in the world. The aerospace sector in Washington employs over 136,000 people in about 1,400 companies, and generates nearly \$70 billion in economic activity throughout the state. There is at least one aerospace-related company in 35 of the state’s 39 counties. [Learn more](#) about Washington’s aerospace and space industry.

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About Commerce

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