



MICHIGAN SENATE

Appropriations Requests for Legislatively Directed Spending Items

Date Submitted: 04/20/2026

1. Sponsoring legislator's full name:

Senator Sue Shink

2. Cosponsoring legislators' names (if applicable):

N/A

3. Intended legislatively directed spending item recipient:

Lean Rocket Lab

4. Physical address of legislatively directed spending item recipient and the intended location of the project or activity:

133 W Michigan Ave, Jackson, MI 49201

5. The recipient's employer identification number:

83-0792165

6. Requested amount of the legislatively directed spending item:

\$150,000.00

7. What is the purpose and how does the legislatively directed spending item provide a public benefit that is an appropriate use of taxpayer money?

The Southcentral Michigan Manufacturing Technology Adoption Project: Lean Rocket Lab (LRL), a 501(c)(3) non-profit and designated MEDC Small Business Support Hub, serves as a critical bridge between the high-tech startup ecosystem and the over 6,000 small-to-mid-sized manufacturers (SMMs) that define the economy of Southcentral Michigan. This \$150,000 appropriation will fund the scaling of LRL's proven model of technology scouting, vetting, and integration support for regional manufacturers. Southcentral Michigan is home to a high density of traditional job shops, low volume manufacturers, high-volume manufacturers, and the supporting finishing operations that are the backbone of the local workforce. These businesses face a critical challenge: the need to modernize operations, increase throughput, and improve quality amidst a persistent shortage of skilled labor and global competition.

Unlike OEM and large Tier-1 corporations, these SMMs lack the internal R&D departments or the innovation bandwidth required to identify and de-risk new technologies such as AI, robotics, machine monitoring, and IIoT—that are necessary to remain competitive. Building on years of experience in the advanced manufacturing sector, Lean Rocket Lab provides a specialized service to our regional manufacturers. We proactively scout the Michigan and Midwest startup ecosystems for advanced technologies that are ready for deployment. A central component of this work involves hosting events (pitch events, workshops, and demo days), visiting manufacturers, and facilitating introductions. These activities provide structured forums for our SMMs to get connected and exposed to the right vetted technology startups. By bringing these two groups together, LRL facilitates immediate connections that lead to real-world technology adoption. Our comprehensive process includes: **Vetting:** Rigorously assessing the reliability and ROI of new technologies before they ever reach a local shop floor. **Connecting:** Acting as a trusted matchmaker through high-impact pitch events and targeted business introductions. **Adoption Support:** Helping regional firms navigate implementation to ensure these tools increase productivity without placing undue strain on existing staff. This project provides a direct public benefit by ensuring Southcentral Michigan’s traditional manufacturing base remains globally competitive. By helping SMMs adopt technology that increases capacity without requiring additional labor, we protect existing high-wage jobs and prevent the technological obsolescence that leads to offshoring. This investment functions as "economic insurance" for the region, fostering long-term stability and enhancing the productivity of the state’s vital manufacturing sector. Furthermore, this request serves a clear public purpose in alignment with Article IV, Section 51 of the Michigan Constitution by supporting the health and economic welfare of the state's citizens.

8. Has the legislatively directed spending item previously received or been awarded any of the following types of funding in the past 5 years? If so, how much? Check all that apply:

State

Amount

\$1,850,000.00

9. Estimated time frame for completion of the legislatively directed spending item project:

10/01/2026 -9/30/2027

10. Is the recipient a nonprofit corporation?

Yes

Additional Information for Nonprofit Corporations (if applicable)

The answer to questions 1 to 3 must be "Yes" for the nonprofit corporation to qualify for a legislatively directed spending item.

1. Has the nonprofit corporation continuously operated in this state for the preceding 36 months?

Yes

2. Has the nonprofit corporation had a physical office in this state for not less than the preceding 12 consecutive months?

Yes

3. Does the organization have a board of directors?

Yes

4. List all of the officers and active members on the board of directors:

Brandon Marken, LRL Ken Seneff, LRL Jennifer Rivera, CPA Bradley Johncox, Lally Group Rich Collins, Commonwealth Associates David Shirkey, Orbitform Nadia Abunasser, MEDC Sean Hilbert, Cobra AERO/MOTO

Certification By Sponsoring Legislator

"I certify that my immediate family members, legislative staff members, and I have no direct or indirect pecuniary interest in the requested legislatively directed spending item."

"I certify that the intended recipient of this legislatively directed spending item is not a for-profit entity."

"I certify that the information in this form is true to the best of my knowledge."

Senator Sue Shink