

# Could a grant-funded Economic Recovery Coordinator help retain jobs in St. Cloud?

Anna Haecherl, Saint Cloud Times Published 5:41 p.m. CT June 14, 2018



Electrolux will cease production at its St. Cloud facility, according to a press release Tuesday Jan. 30 from the company. Production is expected to continue through 2019. Wochit



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(Photo: Jason Wachter, jwachter@stcloudtimes.com)

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ST. CLOUD — In the wake of Electrolux's planned 2019 closure, the city's Economic Development Authority is applying for a federal grant to assist in retaining jobs and growing businesses in St. Cloud.

The funding would be used to hire an Economic Recovery Coordinator who will be responsible for facilitating a two-year program to keep more jobs in the area and build relationships with companies headquartered outside of Minnesota.



Cathy Mehelich, St. Cloud Economic Development Director (Photo: Submitted Photo)

"It's funding to help the community in its long-term recovery efforts from this closure," said St. Cloud Economic Development Director Cathy Mehelich. "I truly think we're going to see at least two if not three business expansion projects as a result of building these relationships and this aggressive two-year effort."

The grant comes from the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Economic Adjustment Assistance Program that provides assistance to regions experiencing adverse economic changes. Mehelich said this is the first time the City of St. Cloud is accessing this program.

The first steps in the process — filing an initial project proposal along with a comprehensive economic development strategy — have been approved by the federal EDA. Now the city has 30 days to submit their grant application.

The project's total budget is \$240,000. Up to half of that could be covered by the grant and the rest would need to come from matching funds. Mehelich said Electrolux has provided a verbal commitment of \$50,000 towards the effort and the city is seeking additional \$10,000 matching fund commitments from local foundations.

The two-year contract would have four primary objectives:

- Facilitating a target industry and workforce analysis focused on the region's economic base, industry sectors and strengths of those sectors and their opportunities from long-term growth.
- Creating an aggressive business retention and expansion program that builds relationships with existing St. Cloud corporations headquartered outside of Minnesota.
- Coordinating with workforce partners to identify what workforce training opportunities are available for laid-off Electrolux workers.
- Assisting the city in property negotiations with Electrolux regarding the future use of their building.

Relationship building will be a large part of the job, Mehelich said. While local organizations, like the Chamber of Commerce and the Greater St. Cloud Development

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Corporation, have strong ties with companies based in the region, the new coordinator will work on strengthening relationships with companies headquartered outside of Minnesota that have businesses in St. Cloud.

"We've identified a list of a dozen of those," Mehelich said. "We really want to build a relationship... make sure that they're aware of the assets and opportunities back here in St. Cloud."

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Cathy Mehelich, St. Cloud Economic Development Director

The federal EDA will have 30 days to review and act on the city's application. If approved, Mehelich said the next step would be developing an RFP to bring a skilled coordinator on board with the Mayor's office.

"Our real purpose and the desired outcomes at the end of this is to see more business expansion from our local companies," Mehelich said. "And as a result of that, job creation and reemployment opportunities for Electrolux employees and others.

"I'm really excited about the opportunity to turn this into a positive and assist the community."

*Have a tip about business news in the St. Cloud area? Contact Business Reporter Anna Haecherl at [aehaecherl@stcloudtimes.com](mailto:aehaecherl@stcloudtimes.com) or 320-259-3662.*

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