

Ravalli Machine Shop Awarded USDA Grant

Stevensville, MT- Bitterroot Tool & Machine (BTM) LLC, located in Stevensville has been awarded a \$33,000 from the USDA, Rural Business Enterprise Grant program to obtain ISO 9000 Certification. The total project cost is \$74,000. The USDA has many programs that support and help to grow innovation in rural areas. The Missoula regional USDA office was very proactive in assisting the Ravalli County Economic Development Authority's application on behalf of BTM. BTM was founded on the basis of providing quality machine tools and parts for select industries. BTM continues to operate under a mission where the emphasis is on high quality, superior performance and outstanding customer service. BTM produces aircraft parts for a company that sells to impressive multi-national customers, parts produced in Stevensville, Montana. When BTM obtains their ISO Certification it will provide for increased productivity by opening the door for additional customers such as Delphi. The ISO Certification process will be led by Kreg Worrest, a Engineer with the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC).

ISO 9000 is a series of international standards for organizations' Quality Management System (QMS). ISO 9001 is the requirements standard for company Quality Management Systems. Independent, third-party registration provides assurance that the registered company complies with the requirements of the standard. MMEC has a 100% success rate of guiding clients through to ISO 9001 registration. As a supplier for the aerospace industry, BTM has experience with the expectations of customers who themselves are ISO 9000 registered. Second-party audits from these suppliers attest that Bitterroot Tool and Machine has an existing quality management system that is well defined though not yet compliant with the ISO 9001 requirements. The company is well managed by founders Randy Jones and Rick Hixon. Together they have 40 years of precision and general machining experience. Randy has about 15 years of tool and die experience, operating surface grinders allowing him to grind form to .0001 tolerances. In the coming year and a half four new jobs are projected to be added by BTM due to the ISO Certification. This request is for \$33,000. New positions at BTM will add to the number and diversity of higher paying job in the area. BTM provides some on the job training and plans to begin providing benefits in the next 24 months.