

Grant will help Vermont wood products

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Vermont's wood products industry is getting a boost thanks to a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Agency.

The money will be spent on marketing for Vermont wood products.

"Vermont's forests and Vermont's craftsmen are the best in the nation," said Vermont's independent Sen. James Jeffords. "We all know that. It's time other people know that. I look forward to the day when Vermont wood products carry the same reputation as Vermont maple syrup."

Jeffords spoke at Knight Kitchens at the Airport Industrial Complex, one of the businesses expected to benefit from the grant. Knight Kitchens makes custom cabinet and wooden kitchen facings.

Owner George Ritter said his company marketed directly rather than through a distributor.

"We do home shows," Ritter said. "This fall we'll do shows at the Long Island Convention Center, the Meadowlands in New Jersey, those are big areas for us. It's taken years to build a name and a reputation. We spend about 1 percent of our budget on advertising and it works."

Paul Costello from the Vermont Council on Rural Development said the state hopes to use the grant to help Knight Kitchens expand its market penetration and help other companies to duplicate Knight's success.

Costello said the funds would help manufacturers get their products to existing trade shows, establish trade shows and design competitions in Vermont and other marketing techniques designed to promote the Vermont brand.

"We all love the Vermont landscape," he said. "We're not going to preserve the Vermont landscape by fiat and we're not going to preserve it by buying it. We're going to preserve it by creating an economy that preserves it. We've got to provide an economic basis for land to stay in production."

Information from: Rutland Herald