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## Medical Implant Manufacturer Is First In CT's Small Business Subsidy Program

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Oxford Performance Materials, which has benefited from Connecticut's support four times since 2001, has become the first recipient of the state's Small Business Express program.

Under the program, the state has set aside \$100 million to lend and give to companies headquartered in Connecticut with fewer than 50 employees who need to buy equipment or have expansion plans that require more employees than current revenue can support.

The state chose Oxford, a South Windsor medical technology firm, for a \$200,000 loan and a \$100,000 grant through the Department of Economic and Community Development.

Oxford has developed several product lines in the decade since it was formed. The firm, with has 17 employees, up from 15 in August, makes customized medical implants using a process called additive technology.

Connecticut Innovations first invested about \$300,000 in Oxford in 2001, when the firm in New Britain, developing membranes for fuel cells. The following year, CI invested an additional \$700,000. Oxford later moved to Enfield, developed medical materials, and was bought in 2009 by a French firm, bringing a hefty profit to CI.

Last year, Oxford spun off as an independent firm, and its president, Scott DeFelice, re-formed the company to join the implants industry, and moved it from Enfield to South Windsor. The company borrowed \$1.2 million from CI in the move, to buy equipment.

DeFelice said the company is focusing on custom-made implants for head and jaw surgeries, which is a much higher-margin product than its former line of raw materials for implants. It's not yet turning a

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The company, which spent \$900,000 of its own cash on a laser machine to make the implants, plans to hire six more people this year, DeFelice said.

Oxford was celebrated Wednesday by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, legislators and Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner Catherine Smith. Smith said there are 200 more applicants in line for the Small Business Express program. The department aims to give each an answer within a month.

Malloy made the point that the answer will not be 'yes' for all of the companies.

One of the recent hires the state money helped fund was Dean Bissonnette, who is going to be a manufacturing technician and inspector once he's trained. Bissonnette had previously worked for the Wood Group, a Scottish company in East Windsor that overhauls turbine engines used in power plants, and is much diminished from its former size.

This job doesn't pay as well as that one did, but Bissonnette, who went a year without even being able to get temporary work in factories or warehouses, said it feels great to be back at work.

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