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BUSINESS

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Third Frontier singles out the Toledo area as 'Solar Hotspot'

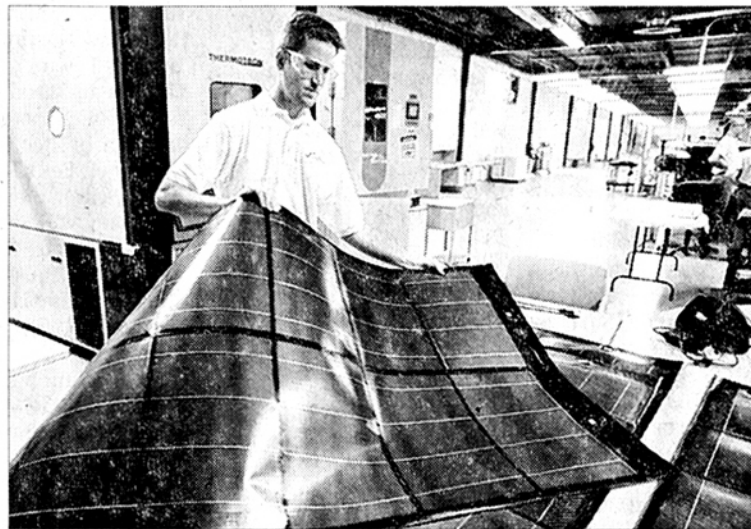
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It has taken nearly seven years, but northwest Ohio and the Toledo area in particular are finally grabbing a prominent share of the spotlight and funding through the Ohio Third Frontier program.

In the program's annual report, which was released yesterday, the Third Frontier noted the success of its new advanced energy program and singled out the Toledo area as a "Solar Hotspot" for research, development, and commercialization of advanced solar technologies.

The report noted that, statewide, the Third Frontier was able to attract an additional \$3.5 billion this year in new resources for projects and companies.

That equals nine new dollars coming in for every one given out in grants by the Third Frontier program to technology-based



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Todd Armstrong, business assistant to the CEO of Xunlight Corp., shows samples of solar panels produced by the Toledo company.

economic development.

When the program was created in 2002, the state predicted that it would generate three new dollars for every dollar in grants it expended.

The report said that since 2005, when the program was expanded, it has spent \$403 million and created or retained 7,757 jobs with an average salary of \$67,654.

In addition, it has supported the creation or attraction of 514 companies since 2005.

In northwest Ohio, it has resulted in a total investment of \$33 million in solar projects, which has yielded 5,000 jobs in the solar energy field, the report claims.

The report touted recent academic success at the University of Toledo, as well as expansions by

two local companies: **First Solar Inc.** and **Xunlight**, the latter of which has received more than \$40 million in private capital during the past year.

It began 20 years ago with a solar energy grant to the University of Toledo, but only recently has the industry blossomed, said Steve Weathers, president and chief executive of Toledo's Regional Growth Partnership.

"It's just in these last few years where it's gained all its notoriety," Mr. Weathers said.

Northwest Ohio, according to the report, received \$79 million in grants out of a total of \$893 million awarded statewide, the report shows.