

JobsOhio Case Study: Our Response to COVID-19



Stitches USA and Buckeye Mask Company Step Up to Produce Millions of Masks in Ohio

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold across the U.S., already overwhelmed manufacturing supply chains were pushed to a breaking point.

More than 2,000 manufacturers in Ohio began producing masks to curb severe shortages among local frontline healthcare providers and other essential workers. However, this only resulted in a production capacity of approximately 200,000 masks per week across the entire state—not nearly enough to meet demand. Recognizing this problem, two Ohioan businesses—organizations that normally would be competitors—decided to join forces to help.

A Collaborative Effort

Sugarcreek-based textile manufacturer Stitches USA and Cleveland-based startup Buckeye Mask were connected through the Ohio Manufacturing Alliance, a partnership between the Ohio Manufacturers Association, Ohio Development Services Agency, JobsOhio, and the Ohio Hospital Association.

The two businesses realized that if they pooled their resources, they could not only reduce costs and increase efficiency but make the greatest impact at a critical time. To do this, however, they required advanced automated sewing equipment that could be customized to make masks.

The sewing technology uses a system of conveyors to move the mask components down the production line into the proper position and geometry at just the right time. This standard of equipment comes at a cost. In fact, the price for 15 machines capable of producing 100,000 masks per day would come out to approximately \$3.5 million.

Investing in Success



Malyssa Huba, Buckeye Mask
Cleveland, Ohio

Local investors came to the rescue. Stitches USA received a \$500,000 grant from the Ohio PPE Retooling and Reshoring Grant Program and a \$1.2 million loan from JobsOhio. Meanwhile, Buckeye Mask received a \$30,000 grant from the Ohio PPE Retooling and Reshoring Grant Program and a \$1.8 million loan from JobsOhio.

As a result, they could buy the technology they needed to produce high-quality cotton face masks on a huge scale. Using first-of-its-kind automation, both companies' combined efforts facilitated the production of over 1.5 million masks a month for civil use.

Competing in a Crisis

This level of mask production is competitive with Chinese facilities—an impressive win for Ohio, which has now reduced its reliance on foreign markets and is better equipped for the future. This success story is also proving to be an inspiration to other local organizations, demonstrating how—with the support of entrepreneurs, government, and industry experts—Ohioans can successfully compete with foreign markets.



We saw an acute need in Ohio for efficient production of PPE and stepped up to the challenge. The speed at which this project came together has been incredible and was made possible by the efforts and foresight of so many across the state.”

Carla Macklin
President, Buckeye Mask Co.