

# Start-up plans \$3.4 million expansion, 110 new jobs

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By Bill Toland, Post-Gazette Harrisburg Bureau

Just a year after arriving in Pittsburgh, a fledgling supply and purchasing company is undertaking a three-year expansion that will add 110 jobs and more than double its space in the South Side's Terminal Buildings.

Using a variety of state grants, tax credits and loans totaling nearly \$460,000 and \$2.9 million of its own funds, [MRO Direct Inc.](#) will grow from 2,600 square feet to 6,000, the company said.

The loan and grant package was arranged by the state's Department of Community and Economic Development. MRO will receive a \$100,000 grant, a \$200,000 small business loan, \$110,000 in tax credits awarded to companies that create new jobs, and nearly \$50,000 work-force training grants.

MRO acts as a purchasing agent, supplying maintenance, repair and operational equipment -- hence, the company's initials -- to Fortune 500 companies by negotiating contracts between buyers and vendors. MRO has been open for less than a year, with its first anniversary coming next week.

So far, it has two major clients -- TRW Inc., an automotive engineering company, and Valspar Corp., a paint company -- and hopes to land two more next year. MRO employs 13, including three outside contractors.

For now, MRO is based on the ground levels of the Terminal Buildings, but in the spring it will be moving into four of the upper-level delivery bays. "There's a million square feet in our facility," said Don Belt, MRO's president. "We have unlimited growth possibilities."

The Terminal Buildings complex, the century-old warehouse that was once the largest building between Chicago and New York, is owned by Pittsburgh Terminal Properties Corp.

Over the last year, it has secured several new tenants, mostly small businesses and nonprofit arts groups, including the visual arts exhibition gallery called Springboard Space and the Coro Center for Business Leadership.

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