SBDC counselors are well known for their expertise in putting financing packages together for startup businesses, marketing and operations. Sometimes the simple act of bringing businesspeople together is the only catalyst needed to form a sustaining and substantive partnership.

Nate Beyerstedt, owner of Engineered Foundry Solutions (EFS) and manufacturer of equipment that reduces greenhouse gas, first approached the Port Authority of Winona for matching loan funds to assist his business. Merchants Bank of Winona brought Beyerstedt and Mark Thein, a 9-year SBDC consultant, together for the loan packaging, business plan and sales projections – and Beyerstedt’s project became a reality.

“The Port Authority is excited to participate in a project that shows the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Winona,” said Lucy McMartin, program development director for the city of Winona.

But times are not easy for this entrepreneur. Although Beyerstedt’s company is the only one authorized to manufacture and repair Mastermelt equipment, the economy has a lock hold on his customers in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa, Texas, Tennessee and Utah, who are not just reducing their spending, they’re eliminating it.

“‘They’re laying off 25 to 30 percent of their work force and operating at 60 percent capacity,’” he said.

“We’ve hit a few speed bumps, and even though we’ve shown them they’d get a payback on their investment in two to three months, we couldn’t finalize a couple of anticipated projects in 2009,” he said.

To generate cash, he spends more time on the casting, commercial treat heating, pattern making, CNC machining, fabricating and welding part of his business. “Being so diversified is key to our success,” he said.

Then Thein brought Beyerstedt and tool and die maker Timothy Klug, owner of Klugwerx, together. Klug was looking to increase his workspace to house his machinery. Today, EFS and Klugwerx are incubated in the same building, sharing resources and customers.

“This is really a story of two businesses sharing space and hanging through the tough economic environment together,” Thein said.

“Tim has been more than a business associate, he’s been a great friend. We’ve learned a lot from each other and will continue to work together offering a one-stop shop for our customers needs,” Beyerstedt said. The coincidence: Beyerstedt and Klug live only a mile apart – and they never knew it.

Although Thein is no longer actively counseling him, Beyerstedt has a couple of plans in the works. “Tim and I are in the process of installing some new machinery and expanding our capabilities for 2010,” he said.

A new web site is coming soon: www.engineeredfoundrysolutions.com