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MSU Becoming Center for Atom Research

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They're the building blocks from which everything is made, we're talking about the atom. They're so small, you'll find billions of them in a grain of salt, but those tiny atoms could add up to a billion dollars to Michigan's ailing economy. It's an effort to keep

Michigan State University at the center of atom research. It's Michigan State University's newest team. They're playing on a different kind of field and the stakes are much higher than a trophy or a bowl game. They're playing for a 550 million dollar project funded by the US Energy Department, but it won't be easy.

Senator Carl Levin, (D) Michigan: "It's stiff competition."

That's why leaders from the public and private sectors are joining forces to prove MSU is ready to take the reins as a world leader in nuclear physics.

Patrick Anderson, Anderson Economic Group: "This will be the center of the world for this technology for the next 10 to 15 years."

Once it's built, discoveries at the facility for rare isotope beams could do everything from treat cancer to boost security at our borders. Experts say it would also provide a big boost to Michigan's economy.

Patrick Anderson: "In the operation, there is roughly 500 million dollars in new spending, much of it funded by the federal government, added together we have a billion dollars in new income in Michigan that we would not otherwise get."

MSU already leads the nation in nuclear physics, but President Lou Anna Simon says the university needs this project to keep ahead of the pack.

Lou Anna K. Simon, Michigan State University President: "Like competitive business, there are other labs that have same technology. If you don't stay on top, your lead eventually erodes."

And Senator Carl Levin says experimenting in new technology could lead to the turnaround our economy needs.

Senator Carl Levin: "If you talk about diversification, and we do, science is a big part."

It's going to be tough. MSU's biggest competition is a national lab so they've got the homefield advantage, but Michigan officials say, with the right game plan in Washington, they think this team can pull out the win that could benefit the entire state. The US Energy Department is expected to make its decision sometime this fall.



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