

Agency aids small firms in exporting

By Laurel Kenner
STAFF WRITER

Attorney Thomas Chan ordinarily charges \$225 an hour for his advice on exporting to Asia, Latin America and Europe.

But for small-business owners who come to a federally funded center that opened Wednesday in Los Angeles, the advice of Chan and 100 other international business experts will be free.

The Export Small Business Development Center, four years in the planning, is for people who want to export but don't know how.

"We will help you with the orders; we will help you move the goods; we will even help you get the financing. It can be done. You can export from Los Angeles," said Tim Murphy, president of Export Managers Association of California, which won funding for the center.

Located in the California Mart in downtown Los Angeles, the export center will arrange free one-on-one technical assistance and provide access to computer export databases for small-business owners.

The center has enlisted 100 consultants in fields such as law, finance, marketing, transportation, customs, foreign exchange, licensing agreements and freight forwarding.

Small-business owners will be referred to appropriate consultants, based on the center's assessment of the company's long-term export potential.

"I hope people take advantage of this," said Chan, an intellectual-property expert who left his position as international counsel at Ashton-Tate two years ago to found his own law practice.

The center's toll-free number is (800) 371-1110.

Training programs are planned in cooperation with local universities.

The center represents government's most tangible response so far to the crisis engulfing California's economy.

Los Angeles county has lost 73,000 high-paying aerospace jobs since 1986 and is expected to lose 36,000 non-farm jobs this year, said county economist Jack Kyser.

"The prospects for 1992 are, quite frankly, not too promising," Kyser said. "The obvious answer is international trade."