

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government index on economic trends, released Wednesday, signaled a continued, though relatively slow growth in the economy, and a resulting expansion of job opportunities for American workers.

The index of leading indicators advanced in June for the eighth straight month but by the smallest margin in seven months.

The Commerce Department said its index, composed of a dozen individual statistics, rose three-tenths of one per cent in June. That compared to a seven-tenths of one per cent rise in May.

The May figure represented a downward revision for the month from the 1.4 per cent originally reported. The June advance was the smallest since the one-tenths of one per cent registered in November.

A particularly encouraging note in the June index was that the primary upward influence came from a 13.6 per cent jump in the volume of contracts and orders for factories and facilities.

The jump reversed a 3.6 per cent decline in that category in May and indicated that business may be getting serious about expanded capacity — and thus creating jobs — to cope with further increases in demand.

So far, consumers have been the biggest spenders in the recovery and bigger business spending is considered essential for continued growth.

Also pointing upward in the composite were faster growth in cash and near-cash held by consumers and business, higher prices for key wholesale products, higher stock prices and slower deliveries by suppliers,

The slower deliveries are taken as a sign of increased demand in the economy.