



## EAMA RSP Hybrid Meeting Notes September 10, 2025

**Welcome** – EAMA RSP Chair Chris Jewell started the meeting at 9:02 a.m.

Chris welcomed new EAMA RSP member **Mohawk Northeast**.

Chris opened the floor for employers to share their recent accomplishments.

- **Hannah Belmont** shared that **Westminster Tool** is being inducted into the American Manufacturing Hall of Fame.
- **Sarah Adams** from **Foster Corp.** shared that their parent company, GEON Performance Solutions, was voted by its employees a 2025 [Great Place to Work Certified](#) employer. In addition, two female leaders at Foster and one at GEON were recognized in *Plastics News' 2025 Women Breaking the Mold!* Lastly, she shared that they hope to achieve EcoVadis Gold status this fall, signifying their strong performance in sustainability.
- **Francheska Cordero** from **Nordson EFD** shared that among their Foundation's local \$225,000 contributions was a \$25,000 donation to NFA.

**Employer Instant Poll** – Manufacturing members were asked what platforms they use at their company for internal file sharing and whether they use discussion boards in their work. Of the 18 manufacturers who responded, 12 used SharePoint; 1 used Google Drive and 2 use both Microsoft Team and SharePoint for file sharing. Only 3 of the 18 manufacturers use a discussion board. When asked to identify topics for potential EAMA RSP discussion boards, workforce-related topics led the responses, although nearly half of the respondents said they would welcome discussion boards about all the proposed topics.

**Wild Card Topic** - **Director Tony Benoit** asked the members to comment on the Wild Card question: “Many companies experience times of boom and bust, where business is alternately very good or very lean. How do you manage your employees through those times?”

**Sarah Adams** shared that **Foster Corp.** uses a staffing agency to help manage employee demand. They are also piloting an initiative to “over hire” a bit to create what Sarah referred to as a “bullpen.” **Jeff Dickey** from **The Lee Company** agreed that using a staffing agency has been a good strategy, particularly during busy times. The Lee Company also does quite a bit of employee cross training to manage workflow. **Mary Fitzgerald** from **Acme Wire** added that the CT Dept. of Labor's Shared Work Program has been a successful tool for them to avoid layoffs and commended the program's flexibility. **Vicki Frye** from **Jeffco Fibres** said that their work tends to be fairly even, so they advise their staff that when overtime is available they should “work it”.

### **Employer Spotlight** – **Mary Fitzgerald, Acme Wire**

Acme Wire is a custom wire and metal fabricator located in Mystic. They have 45 employees and operate two shifts at their 73,000 square foot location. It's a family-owned business started by her father in 1970, and Mary has been with the company for 40 years. She serves as President working alongside her two brothers. They do tool design, tooling, wire cutting, forming, CNC forming, metal stamping, machining, and a lot of welding, primarily resistant spot welding. One of their long-term customers is 3M Scott, for which they produce a backpack rack for

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firefighters' oxygen tanks. Mary is a strong advocate of youth outreach and does quite a bit with the local Boy Scout and Girl Scouts, middle and high schools, community colleges, and Eastern CT State University.

### **EAMA RSP Employer Survey Results & Follow Up – Tony Benoit**

Tony extended his sincere thanks to the manufacturers who completed the 2025 Employer Survey. EWIB's KPI for the past year just completed was a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 35, and the results exceeded that with an NPS of 50, suggesting that the members are happy with the benefits they receive from being a member. Responses to the two primary survey questions can be found in the table on the right.

Using the survey results as the starting point, over the summer the Steering Committee and several additional members held a planning session. The group identified several strategies and action items for the coming year, including:

- Strengthening ways to connect members with resources
- Developing additional ways to share best practices (i.e., discussion boards/SharePoint)
- Enhancing the EAMA RSP LinkedIn page
- Encouraging members to invite colleagues from their company to get involved with EAMA RSP
- Continuing to address advocacy as topics of interest arise
- Focusing on growing the next generation of manufacturers
- Providing opportunities for networking such as roundtables and events

### **Plastics Working Group Status – Chair Hannah Belmont,**

**Westminster Tool** shared that regular meetings of the Plastics Working Group will be discontinued. Instead, roundtable discussions will be scheduled around topics of interest to plastics-related members as needed. **Dave Parmalee** from **Wepco Plastics** noted that there are exciting things going on with plastics training at CT State providing opportunities for the campuses to combine resources.

**Next Steps:** If you have topics you would like the plastics group to consider for a roundtable, please contact Hannah Belmont at [hbelmont@westminstertool.com](mailto:hbelmont@westminstertool.com).

**Partner Corner – Andy Morrison, REAL Custom Training** – REAL Custom Training is a leadership development training provider in eastern CT. They believe that for training to be worthwhile, it must be REAL: Relevant, Engaging, Actionable, and Lasting. They provide group training at their training center in Putnam or can design customized trainings delivered on site at an employer's facility.

**Next Steps:** To learn more about REAL Custom Training contact Andy Morrison at [andrew@realcustomtraining.com](mailto:andrew@realcustomtraining.com) or visit his website at [www.realcustomtraining.com](http://www.realcustomtraining.com).

**Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI) Update – David Allard, EWIB** – David reported that YMPI is off to a strong start this academic year with 12 returning high schools and 3 new schools (Windham, Wheeler and Lyman Memorial) being onboarded. In pursuit of continuous improvement, over the summer EWIB developed key steps to build on last year's YMPI successes. These include:

- Partnering with CT State to provide machined parts kits and metrology equipment to YMPI schools to improve competency in precision measurement.
- Building out curriculum resources to improve program implementation and delivery.

### **Employer Survey Results**

What should be the strategic role of EAMA RSP? (Pick 3)

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| • Resources                      | 71% |
| • Best Practice Sharing          | 62% |
| • Workforce Pipeline Development | 57% |
| • Networking                     | 52% |
| • Advocacy                       | 29% |
| • Professional Learning          | 24% |
| • Other priority (new members)   | 5%  |

Which content and focus areas are most important to you? (Pick 5)

|                                            |     |
|--------------------------------------------|-----|
| • Retaining Employees                      | 57% |
| • Inspiring Young People for Manufacturing | 52% |
| • Recruiting Employees                     | 48% |
| • Healthcare Costs                         | 43% |
| • Business to Business Connections         | 38% |
| • Curricula for Manufacturing Training     | 38% |
| • Employee Culture & Satisfaction          | 38% |
| • Safety                                   | 33% |
| • Small Business Issues                    | 29% |
| • Automation & AI                          | 24% |
| • Energy Costs                             | 19% |
| • Childcare Availability & Cost            | 10% |
| • Other (Succession Planning)              | 5%  |
| • Housing Availability & Affordability     | 0%  |

- Reframing the YMPI success criteria into a three-level structure that clearly communicates varying degrees of student achievement to improve understanding among students, schools, and potential employers of the outcomes of the program.

Linda Riquier reminded the group that there was still time to register for the GNACC Manufacturing Expo, which will be held on September 25 at Dodd Stadium.

**Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI Update)** – Carol LaBelle, EWIB – Carol reported that the new program year started on July 1. By the end of the first quarter, 14 classes will have been held training roughly 200 individuals. Looking ahead, the MPI is on track to offer about 26 classes in the first six months – with about 400 individuals trained. The schedule for the second half of the year (January–June) should be finalized soon. EWIB is also planning for growth, as Electric Boat gears up for expanded hiring needs in 2026.

**MIB/MPI Discussion** – Courtney Murphy, Electric Boat – EWIB President Michael Nogelo reminded members that about a year ago Jess Key from EB had introduced the process by which the Maritime Industrial Base (MIB) was working with EB and Newport News to create curriculum packages based on their pipeline training programs for national distribution. EAMA RSP members were given the chance to review curriculum modules as they were developed. Michael asked Courtney to update the EAMA RSP members on this process. She explained that EB has been working with a few schools in other states to replicate what we have in Connecticut but that it can take 6 to 9 months to get a school ready. The MIB curricula will accelerate this process of getting training partners established. For the last year they have been working with educational providers piloting MIB curricula, including welding, and have been getting good results. The trades are in various stages of readiness and will be available to regions with MIB suppliers across the country. Courtney credited the MPI with “doing it right.” Michael further noted that EAMA RSP members will be provided a two-page summary highlighting what is different in each curriculum and will rely on MPI training providers to flag changes of interest to EAMA RSP members during pilot classes.

**Director’s Report – Tony Benoit** - Tony called for volunteers from EAMA RSP in two areas:

1. **CT State – Quinebaug Valley – Manufacturing Engineering Technology Degree roll out** – CT State - Quinebaug Valley is considering offering an associate degree program in Manufacturing Engineering Technology. The program has been offered at other campuses for years and provides a mix of theory and practice. Graduates would be well suited to work at the intersection of engineering, design, and production.  
  
**Next Steps:** Would you be willing to advise QV on curriculum, recruiting, and marketing? Do you see your company hiring graduates? Please email Tony Benoit at [eamarsp@gmail.com](mailto:eamarsp@gmail.com).
2. **Safety Swap** – EAMA RSP had recommended the creation of a process under which companies could look over each other’s shoulder to review and improve safety practices. Linemaster Switch and US Button conducted a pilot of this process. The participants found the Swap to be valuable and made two suggestions to improve future Safety Swaps: (1) create a safety checklist to streamline to review, and (2) formulate guidelines for pairing companies.

**Next Steps:** If your company is interested in participating in a Safety Swap or serving on a task force to create the checklist and guidelines, please email Tony Benoit at [eamarsp@gmail.com](mailto:eamarsp@gmail.com).

Tony also thanked **Sarah Adams** from **Foster Corp.** for hosting the CONN OSHA event this summer as well as **Willie Barber** from **Electric Boat** and **Jessica van der Swaagh** from **SPIROL** for hosting The Long Game event.

**EAMA RSP Annual Meeting/Networking Event** – Linda Riquier - Linda shared details about the EAMA RSP Annual Meeting/Networking event on **Wednesday, October 22**, from 4:30-7:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn in Norwich. The event features keynote speaker Sean Scanlon – CT’s Comptroller, an abbreviated business meeting, networking opportunities, and an Expo highlighting our Support Partners. Employers are encouraged to invite other members of their staff as well as manufacturing colleagues. The deadline to register is October 10.

**Next Steps:** Manufacturers: Please use [THIS LINK](#) to register.

Support Partners: Please use [THIS LINK](#) to register.

**Next EAMA RSP Hybrid meeting: Wednesday, December 17, 2025, 9:00-10:15 a.m.**