



EAMA RSP Hybrid Meeting Notes

December 17, 2025

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

Chris welcomed new EAMA RSP member **MFG Solutions**.

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

- **Hannah Belmont** shared **Westminster Tool** has been able to hire six new employees at their newly acquired company, Winthrop Tackle in Essex.

Employer Instant Poll – Manufacturing members were asked to choose up to 7 topics from a list of 15 potential roundtable/webinar choices that they would be “most likely to attend.” Topics related to their workforce topped the list (specifically employee development, workplace culture, employee retention strategies, attracting employees, wellness programs and mental health supports). Other top vote getters were manufacturing apprenticeships and AI for productivity.

Wild Card Topic - **Director Tony Benoit** asked the members to comment on the holiday-inspired Wild Card question: “Has business been naughty or nice in 2025? What would you like Santa to leave under your company tree?”

Mary Fitzgerald shared that **Acme Wire** had its **best year ever** and they are projecting a positive 2026. Mary would like a “young toolmaker” under their company tree. **Meredith Shay** commented that **InCord** had a stable year and wished for healthy employees under their tree. **Chris Jewell** shared that business for **Collins & Jewell** was “naughty” for the first half of the year but was “nice” for the remainder of the year. He hoped for zero safety incidents under their tree. **Dan Chaplin** said business at **Forge 41** was mainly nice and, under his tree, he would like a new CNC machine. **Dave Young** from **APCM Manufacturing** had a backlog of sales orders that will carry into the new year. **Ryan Stickle** shared that business for **KPG Machine** was flat but defense work is carrying them through the end of the year. **Jeff Dickey** said business for **The Lee Company** improved in the second half of the year with their medical and aerospace segments picking up. He would like lots of new staff under his tree, especially a set-up machinist.

Employer Spotlight – **Meredith Shay, InCord**

InCord, located in Colchester, is America’s leading producer of safety netting. They are a Certified ISO 9001 Quality Management System manufacturer and a certified Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Meredith and her sister have owned the company since 2020. They produce custom netting for a wide variety of applications including amusement, sporting, construction, lifting, material handling, maritime, and theatre. Meredith proudly touted the fact they have been voted a Hartford Courant Top Workplace for fifteen consecutive years.

Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI) – **David Allard, EWIB**

David shared that the EAMA Youth Pipeline Working Group toured Bacon Academy in Colchester’s YMPI program in November. Employers were able to observe students in various classes engaged in sheet metal, blueprints, drafting, engineering, and automotive coursework aligned with YMPI and industry standards.

Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance – A Connecticut Regional Sector Partnership

Industry partners discussed opportunities to strengthen alignment through facility tours, school-employer liaisons, externships, and internships, with YMPI identified as the important bridge.

David also shared that **Bacon Academy YMPI Teacher, David Mason** received the prestigious national Milken Educator Award (including a \$25,000 honorarium) recognizing his leadership and innovative hands-on manufacturing instruction (welding, machining, CNC, and fabrication). He was the only Connecticut educator selected this school year and will join other awardees at a Washington, D.C., forum in June 2026.

The YMPI is in the midst of another busy year with 12 returning schools and 3 additional new schools for a total of 15 programs. The current focus is on scheduling half-day training workshops for each YMPI cohort at either of the community college training centers (Quinebaug Valley and Three Rivers).

Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) – Carol LaBelle, EWIB shared that during the first six months of the program year (July – December 2025), the MPI conducted 31 classes and trained approximately 330 participants. Looking ahead at the schedule for the second half of the program year (January – June 2026), 57 classes are planned, potentially training 700 participants which would bring the total number of individuals trained this program year to over 1,000.

Michael Nogelo from **EWIB** also shared that Electric Boat is looking to hire 2,000 trades workers in CT in each of the next three years. EB secured \$3M to expand training capacity with infrastructure and new equipment at existing and new MPI training facilities. They are waiting to hear about a much-needed infusion of additional funding to meet industry demand. EWIB is constantly thinking about how all EAMA RSP employers can benefit from the MPI and recognizes the challenges of wage competition. He encouraged EAMA RSP employers to consider hiring MPI graduates.

Partner Corner – Anna Mumford – CONNSTEP and Eileen Candels – CCAT

Anna reminded the members that the final rule for CMMC 2.0 was released in November and that Cybersecurity capabilities will be built into defense contracts requiring companies to demonstrate CMMC compliance to be eligible to bid on and receive defense contract awards. Eileen shared the CCAT oversees funding to assist with Cybersecurity compliance through the Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) which can provide up to \$35,000 in matching funds for compliance-related activities. They encouraged EAMA RSP members to attend their webinar CMMC 2.0 Compliance / Funding Opportunities scheduled for **Thursday, January 29, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.**

Next Steps: To register for the January 29 CONNSTEP/CCAT webinar, click [here](#).

Click [here](#) for details about Cybersecurity funding opportunities available through CCAT.

Working Group Updates

Workforce Working Group Chair Jeff Dickey reported that, at their November meeting, the group explored financial wellness programs available through local financial institutions such as Chelsea Groton Bank. They are also looking for companies that would be interested in participating in a safety swap. Lastly, he asked for suggestions about how to improve meeting attendance.

Next Steps: Companies interested in participating in a future Safety Swap should contact Director Tony Benoit at eamarsp@gmail.com. If you would like to join the Workforce Working Group, contact Tony as well.

New name for Youth Pipeline Working Group – Director Tony Benoit shared that to avoid confusion with the Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative the Youth Pipeline Working group has been renamed the “Youth Outreach Working Group.” Member feedback has been positive as the new name better reflects the group’s mission.

Next Steps: If you are interested in joining the Youth Outreach Working Group, contact Tony at eamarsp@gmail.com.

Director's Report – Tony Benoit

Discussion Board – To facilitate conversation among members, Tony announced that EAMA RSP is piloting a discussion board on the DiscourseHub platform. The DiscourseHub app is also available in the Apple App Store and Google Play.

Next Steps: Manufacturing members interested in participating in the Discussion Board pilot should contact Tony at eamarsp@gmail.com.

Accenture/DECD developing strategy for CT-RI Model-Based Enterprise Tech Hub – Tony reported that the federal government is providing funding to states to develop Innovation Hubs. The CT Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) has hired Accenture to develop a joint application between Connecticut and Rhode Island for the region to serve as a center for model-based engineering. RTX, the parent company of Pratt & Whitney, now requires model-based design to speed up design and production. He also noted that CCAT provides training on model-based design.

Next Steps: Manufacturers can build their awareness of the possibilities and requirements of Model-Based Design and other Digital-Thread technologies with courses offered regularly by CCAT. Click [here](#) for details about their next awareness training sessions or [here](#) for the upcoming schedule of broader training.

CMC 2026 Legislative Priorities – Tony reminded members that EAMA RSP is a member of the Connecticut Manufacturers' Collaborative (CMC). CMC has set its priorities for the 2026 legislative session as follows:

- Allow pass through entities to be eligible for R&D tax credits
- Provide additional options for small manufacturing businesses to provide affordable health insurance for employees
- Address rising energy costs for small businesses
- Better align high school graduation requirements and the school accountability index with business and industry demands
- Provide economic stability for manufacturers by continuing strong adherence to the state's fiscal guardrails
- Require more effective agency regulation reviews to eliminate and modify burdensome and costly employer mandates

Next Steps: If you have a specific interest in any of the topics or would like to attend one of the CMC monthly meetings (usually held on the second Monday at 3:00 p.m. virtually via Teams) please contact Tony at eamarsp@gmail.com.

CT State – Quinebaug Valley – Spring Manufacturing Classes – Steve LaPointe

Steve shared the Spring 2026 Advanced Manufacturing Class schedule and encouraged employers to register their employees for one or more classes. Classes offered include Electronic Variable Speed Drives, Manufacturing Math, CNC Maintenance & Repair, Blueprint Reading, Parametric Design (SolidWorks), Electronic Circuits & Devices, Hydraulics & Pneumatics, Robotics, Safety in the Workplace, and Quality & Lean Principles. Classes start January 23, 2026.

Next Steps: Contact Steve LaPointe, stephen.lapointe@ctstate.edu, or Jodi Clark, jodi.clark@ctstate.edu, for curriculum details and for information about registering your employees. Subject to funding availability, classes may qualify for Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) funding. Contact the Business Services Team for more details: Jeff Martel, jeff@nectchamber.com, or Joelle Garrett, JGarrett@chamberect.com.

October Annual Meeting Recap – Chris Jewell thanked everyone who attended the EAMA RSP Annual Meeting on October 22. Keynote speaker State of CT Comptroller Sean Scanlon was well-received by the audience. He also thanked the Support Partners who exhibited at the meeting and felt they added great value to the event. He reminded people that we have to pay for people who RSVP but don't show up and encouraged everyone to let EAMA RSP know if they are unable to attend.

Next EAMA RSP Hybrid meeting: Wednesday, February 18, 9:00-10:15 a.m.