



EAMA RSP Hybrid Meeting Notes May 13, 2026

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

Chris welcomed new EAMA RSP members **Doncasters** and **Thermo Fisher Scientific**.

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

- **Neil Gilman** announced that **Gilman Gear** has been named the exclusive supplier of lacrosse goals to the World Lacrosse International Federation and the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.
- **D Bouchard** of **Pith Products** shared that they received a \$25,000 RISE grant from seCTer which will enable the company to make major strides towards achieving CMMC 2.0 Level 1 certification.
- In celebration of their first-ever month with \$40 million in sales, **Jeff Dickey** from **The Lee Company** shared that the company awarded every employee with an envelope filled with \$400 in cash. He also announced that later this year the company will complete the purchase of a machining company in Watertown.
- **Hannah Belmont** from **Westminster Tool** was named a Woman in Business honoree by the *Hartford Business Journal*.
- **Joe Carlone** from **Linemaster Switch** shared that they would begin construction on a 12,000 sq. ft. warehouse, making it their third location in northeast Connecticut.

Employer Instant Poll – Manufacturing members were asked about the importance of employee succession planning at their company.

- While 89% of respondents consider succession planning very important, 56% said their plan needs work, and only 35% review their plan regularly.
- Employers are employing a variety of tactics to strengthen their succession planning efforts. Top responses included: identifying future leaders and providing them with additional technical skills, cross training employees, utilizing a leadership development program, using retirees to mentor/shadow employees, and identifying future leaders and moving them into a different role.
- The discussion that followed the poll delved into succession planning both for employee succession and for business succession. Members showed enthusiasm for both topics.

Employer Spotlight – **Joe Carlone, Linemaster Switch**

Joe Carlone, President & CEO of Linemaster Switch in Woodstock shared a brief history of the company noting that they will celebrate their 75-year anniversary in 2027. Since joining the company in 2005, Joe has helped transform the company from a traditional footswitch manufacturer into a globally recognized leader in advanced medical and industrial human interface control technologies. Under Joe's leadership, Linemaster has advanced from conventional electromechanical footswitches to sophisticated electronic and software-controlled medical-grade foot control devices.

Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance – A Connecticut Regional Sector Partnership

Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) – David Allard shared that the MPI is on track to deliver 85 classes during the 2026-27 program year, serving over 1,000 participants. Approximately 55 of the 85 classes will be held between January and June 2027.

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

David reported that the YMPI is experiencing a year of strong growth, with 148 students participating across 14 comprehensive high schools; up from 120 students last year. YMPI schools have already sent students to complete the evaluation process at CT State, and preliminary results are better than last year's. He thanked those EAMA RSP members who are participating in the Greater Norwich Area Chamber of Commerce Manufacturing Career Fair which will take place May 14 at the Norwich Holiday Inn. David encouraged employers that are interested in recruiting YMPI students to contact their Business Services Representative.

Lastly, as noted at the March EAMA RSP meeting, EWIB has engaged Wisewire, an educational consulting firm, to develop instructional resources for the YMPI. The consultant is converting the curriculum to a set of digital modules, with lesson plans and hands-on skills exercises. David reported that the work is going very well with positive feedback from partner schools. Looking ahead, there will be an opportunity for Wisewire to support EAMA RSP members in benchmarking their evolving skills needs to align the YMPI curriculum.

Next Steps: Employers interested in interviewing YMPI students should contact their Business Services Rep: Jeff Martel, jeff@nechamber.com or Joelle Garret, jgarrett@chamberect.com.

Working Group Updates

Workforce Working Group Chair Jeff Dickey shared that response has been strong for the Worksite Wellness Lunch & Learn event on June 12 at Putnam Plastics and encouraged manufacturing members to register soon if they wanted to attend. Presenters will include Sara Gustavesen, Wellness Coordinator at Putnam Plastics, who will share details of how the company started a well-regarded employee wellness program. In addition, representatives from local banks will speak about the financial wellness programs they offer, and mental health experts will discuss Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services available to employers.

Next Steps: Register [here](#) for **Employee Worksite Wellness Lunch & Learn on Friday, June 12, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.** at Putnam Plastics in Dayville.

Business 2 Business Working Group Chair - Tony Benoit shared that due to bandwidth issues, Dan Chaplin has relinquished his role as Chair of the working group.

Hannah Belmont reported on the group's April 28 visit to the UConn College of Engineering Innovation Shop (iShop). She said the group was impressed with the progress the iShop has made in a relatively short period of time. She noted that UConn will be creating an iShop Advisory Board in the fall which might present opportunities for EAMA RSP members.

Youth Outreach Working Group Co-Chair Willie Barber reported that the group had a wonderful visit to Parish Hill High School and were impressed by the passion exhibited by the instructors and staff to be able to develop such a robust YMPI program at a small high school. He shared that the working group will be planning visits to other YMPI schools including possibly Tourtellotte in Woodstock, Rham in Hebron, and Norwich Free Academy (NFA).

Next Steps: EAMA RSP manufacturing members are encouraged to join a working group. If you are interested or would like more details about the working groups, contact Tony Benoit at eamarsp@gmail.com.

Partner Corner – Keri Valente – CT Department of Labor (CTDOL) Apprenticeship Unit

Keri Valente from the CT Department of Labor (CTDOL) Apprenticeship Unit explained that a manufacturing apprenticeship consists of two components: on-the-job training and related instruction. She also outlined the benefits of the Manufacturing Apprenticeship Funding Program for companies with less than 300 employees. The program provides a wage subsidy from the Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) of up to \$15,000 over two years, with payment starting after an apprentice or pre-apprentice has been employed a minimum of six months. Additional financial incentives are available through the U.S. Department of Labor American Manufacturing

Apprenticeship Incentive Fund as well as an attractive tax credit from the CTDOL. For more information contact Keri Valente of the CT Department of Labor (Keri.valente@ct.gov, 860-263-6129) or Eileen Candels of CCAT (ecandels@ccat.us).

A webinar is scheduled for Friday, July 17, with Keri and Eileen to learn more about Manufacturing Apprenticeship and funding resources.

Next Steps: Register [here](#) for the EAMA RSP Manufacturing Apprenticeship & Funding Resources Webinar Friday, July 17, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Director's Report – Tony Benoit

2026 Employer Survey – Tony urged the manufacturing members to complete the 2026 Employer Survey which is critically important in ensuring that EAMA RSP meets their needs and priorities.

Next Steps: Take the employer survey [here](#).

Legislative Session Recap – Among the highlights of the legislative session which ended on May 6, the large SB1 bill included Section 267 which extends the state of CT R&D tax credit to pass through entities such as LLCs and S Corps. He thanked EAMA RSP members for their support and specifically acknowledged Joe Carlone from Linemaster Switch and Meredith Shay from InCord for their advocacy. For a good recap of the session, Tony encouraged people to review the May 7 CBIA article which can be found [here](#).

Discourse Discussion Board – Due to a lack of interest in Discourse, we have put the discussion board on hold for now.

Next Steps: If there is ever a topic that you want to put in front of other manufacturing members between meetings, email Tony at eamarsp@gmail.com, and we will share it.

Finally, Tony encouraged members to save the date for the **EAMA RSP Annual Meeting and Expo** which will be held on **Wednesday, October 28**. He shared that the keynote speaker for the event will be Marietta Lee from The Lee Company.

Show Me the Money - Linda Riquier

Linda highlighted the following funding opportunities for manufacturers:

Industry Driven Skills Training – IWT/OJT Funding - EWIB will soon have Incumbent Worker and On-the-Job Training funding for upskilling existing employees who have been employed for as little as one day. The program will reimburse eligible training costs up to \$10,000 per employee. Employers with less than 500 CT employees can receive up to 80% of eligible training costs (up to 50% for employers with 500+ CT employees).

Next Steps: For more information, contact your Business Services Reps: Jeff Martel jeff@nectchamber.com or Joelle Garrett JGarrett@chamberect.com.

Manufacturing Internship Program (MIP) - The Manufacturing Internship Program (MIP) allows Connecticut manufacturers with less than 300 employees to apply for a matching wage subsidy grant and receive up to \$14,000 for up to four qualified college interns hired and enrolled for work in Summer 2026 (April 1 - Aug 31). Wage subsidies will match up to 50% of intern wages, capped at \$3,500 per qualified intern, subject to the availability of funding.

Next Steps: For more information about the intern program and funding offered through the MIF, administered by CCAT, click [here](#) or contact Eileen Candels at ecandels@ccat.us.

Next EAMA RSP Hybrid meeting: Wednesday, August 5, 9:00-10:15 a.m.