



EAMA RSP Hybrid Meeting Notes

August 5, 2026

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

Chris welcomed new EAMA RSP member **Electro Mechanical Specialists**.

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

- **John Genna** announced that **JG Creations** received a \$10,000 RISE grant from seCTer, which enabled him to purchase an additional laser engraving machine greatly speeding up his processes.
- **Hannah Belmont** from **Westminster Tool** was honored by *Plastics News* as a 2026 ‘Women Breaking the Mold’ honoree.
- **Charlie Pious** from **Unicorr Packaging** shared that they recently achieved ISO recertification. They also Invested in 3D printing capabilities to speed up product design.
- **Mary Fitzgerald** from **Acme Wire** announced that, with help from a Manufacturing Voucher Program (MVP) grant, they purchased new laser welding equipment to help automate some of their TIG welding processes.
- Chris shared that 3 of the 16 companies competing in the CBIA “Coolest thing made in CT” bracket competition are members of EAMA RSP. Best of luck to **Chapco, The Lee Company** and **Sheffield Pharmaceuticals**.

Employer Instant Poll – The intent of the August Instant Poll was two-fold: to call attention to heat hazards in the workplace and to take a lighter look at summer heat. OSHA issued a new enforcement directive in April 2026 as part of the National Emphasis Program (NEP), to protect employees from heat-related hazards. In addition, included in Public Act 26-68 (aka the budget implementer), passed during the CT 2026 legislative session, is the creation of a task force to study heat safety in the workplace, including best practices to prevent employee exposure to heat illness. The task force must submit its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly’s Labor and Public Employees Committee by January 1, 2027.

On the lighter side of things, the Instant Poll revealed the following from the respondents: The two most popular ways to beat the summer heat were to jump in the pool or head to the beach/lake. When asked about their preferred level of SPF protection, SPF 50 was the clear winner. As for the last time they drove a non-air-conditioned car, the overwhelming majority said they drove their parent’s car “back in the day.” And finally, the question about the most unusual flavor of ice cream enjoyed sparked an interesting array of responses including bacon, basil, Johnny Walker infused, maple bacon and balsamic vinegar.

Next Steps: More information about OSHA’s Heat safety standards/enforcement can be found here:

<https://www.osha.gov/heat-exposure/standards>

https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/enforcement/directives/CPL_03-00-024_0.pdf

Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance – A Connecticut Regional Sector Partnership

Wild Card – The wild card topic asked, “Some people have said that Connecticut’s new laws and policies going into effect this year have changed their hiring plans. Has your hiring outlook shifted?” A lively discussion ensued. **Hannah Belmont, Westminster Tool**, said they are altering their budgeting due to the pause on CMMC certification enabling them to hire additional employees. **Lynn Sammon, Griswold Products**, shared that they created a new position to assist with CMMC certification and that they are increasing their hiring across all locations since they are facing an aging workforce. **Chris Jewell, Collins & Jewell** added that they too are facing retirements. **D Bouchard, Pith Products**, noted that CT’s Paid Sick Leave requirements are creating some workforce challenges for them.

Employer Spotlight – D Bouchard, Pith Products

D Bouchard, Operations Manager of Pith Products, gave an overview of the products they manufacture at their 26,000 sq. ft. facility in Ashford. Pith Products primarily designs and manufactures customized tool storage solutions that improve manufacturing efficiencies. They reduce project costs for their customers by helping reduce the risk of misplacing tools, of leaving tools on the shop floor or in an engine component, and of having duplicate tools in the production rotation. Their clients include Pratt & Whitney and Sikorsky as well as other OEMs, Maintenance & Repair Organizations (MROs), tool vendors, and tier suppliers to meet growing demand for lean manufacturing processes and stricter Foreign Object Debris (FOD) control policies.

CT State – Quinebaug Valley Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center – Jodi Clark

Jodi shared QV’s fall class schedule and encouraged members to upskill their employees by enrolling them in one or two classes or in their full two-semester programs. In addition to their center in Danielson where they teach machining and mechatronics, Jodi noted that they are building a training center at the college’s satellite campus in Willimantic, which should be completed by January. Quinebaug Valley is also teaching welding and outside machinist classes at Tourtellotte High School in Thompson. She also encouraged employers to watch for an invitation to set up a table at their annual “**Manufacture your Future**” event on **Friday, October 23**.

Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) – David Allard, EWIB

David announced that the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative is celebrating its 10-year anniversary, a huge milestone for the program. EWIB has commissioned an economic impact study to measure and document the positive effect of the MPI on the region. Results are expected within weeks and will be shared with EAMA RSP. He shared that last program year the MPI served 1,048 individuals - a record number since its inception in 2016. The MPI is on pace to deliver another 57 sections between July and December.

David mentioned that the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) has initiated a two-step Request for Proposal (RFP) process to continue funding the Regional Sector Partnerships (RSPs) in the state. EWIB initiated that process in conjunction with EAMA RSP by submitting the required acknowledgement form. EWIB appreciates OWS for recognizing the value of the RSP model and for continuing to invest in the RSPs. He also credited EAMA RSP as a template for the RSP model that has been replicated statewide.

OWS has asked for EWIB’s assistance to connect employers with an evaluator of the Career Connect grant, which was one of the funding sources for the MPI. They are looking for employer feedback about member experience with the MPI.

Next Steps: If you are interested in sharing your feedback about the MPI with the OWS evaluator, contact Carol LaBelle at labellec@ewib.org.

Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI) – Amanda Murphy, EWIB

Amanda reported that the YMPI had a year of strong growth, with 152 students participating across 14 comprehensive high schools, with a 15th school (Wheeler High School in Stonington) joining YMPI in the coming year. Of the 152 students enrolled in the YMPI, 101 took the final evaluation required to receive their YMPI credential; 58 students passed the evaluation, an increase over the prior year. She noted a couple reasons for the improved completion rate, precision measurement practice kits given to the schools and half-day workshops provided by CT State – Quinebaug Valley and Three Rivers. Amanda also encouraged employers to participate in the **GNACC Manufacturing Expo at Dodd Stadium on Wednesday, September 23, 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

Next Steps: Register for the GNACC Manufacturing Expo [here](#).

Working Group Updates

Workforce Working Group – In the absence of Chair Jeff Dickey, Tony Benoit shared that the Worksite Wellness Lunch & Learn event at Putnam Plastics on June 12 was a great success. The program encompassed all aspects of employee wellness including mental health and financial wellness. During her presentation, Sara Gustavesen, Wellness Coordinator at Putnam Plastics, shared the economic benefits of implementing a worksite wellness program including a \$3.27 return on investment for every \$1 spent. Tony also shared his gratitude to Putnam Plastics for the tour following the lunch event, simply stating “Wow! What a company!”

Youth Outreach Working Group - Co-Chair Willie Barber reported that at their last meeting the group had a great discussion about the benefits of work-based learning activities. Plans are underway for several fall events: a field trip to Rham High School in Hebron, a ribbon cutting event at Lyman Memorial High School in Lebanon’s to highlight their new welding program, and a meet & greet with the four technical high schools in the region to explain their work-based learning program. Members will receive more information about these events.

Business 2 Business Working Group Chair - Tony Benoit introduced **Reid Chamberlin, President of Woodstock Manufacturing** as the new Chair of the working group.

Reid shared his goal for the working group is to facilitate the sharing of best practices and resources with fellow EAMA RSP members. Specifically, he would like to encourage members to purchase products/services from each other and to make use of the diverse talent, skill sets, and specialties of fellow member companies to benefit one another instead of hiring outside.

He also invited all manufacturing members to attend the **Member Meetup Networking event at Pith Products on Wednesday, October 7, from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.**

Next Steps: EAMA RSP manufacturing members can register for the October 7 Member Meetup at Pith Products [here](#).

All 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 – Ishrat Nazmi – CT APEX Accelerator

Ishrat Nazmi outlined the variety of services that CT APEX (formerly the CT Procurement Technical Assistance Center) offers manufacturers who are looking to compete in federal, state, local, and Government markets. The Center can assist with SAM.gov registration, SBA certifications and help with bid sourcing and the application process. In addition, it provides CMMC education. For more information visit <https://ctapex.org/>.

Of particular interest to EAMA RSP members, APEX staff are adept at helping businesses create government-ready Capability Statements. They will be offering a webinar, **“Capability Statements that Open Doors,”** for EAMA RSP members on **Wednesday, September 30, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

Next Steps: Register [here](#) for the CT APEX Capability Statement webinar.

Director’s Report – Tony Benoit

2026 Employer Survey – Tony thanked the members who completed the survey. Results will be reviewed and analyzed at the Steering Committee’s strategy session in September, and a report will be presented at the November EAMA RSP quarterly meeting.

Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) AI grant proposal – Tony shared that OWS had shared an opportunity to manufacturers around the state to submit ideas for specific AI training that would benefit their company. While OWS did not apply for the grant, EAMA RSP members Electric Boat, Linemaster Switch, Westminster Tool, and Jeffco Fibres answered the call with ideas. Tony thanked them for stepping up to the plate.

DoW CMMC 2.0 Pause - In mid-July, the Department of War (DoW) initiated a pause on Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) Phase II requirements, which were scheduled to go into effect on November 10, 2026. Tony informed the members that the DoW issued a Request for Information (RFI) designed to get feedback from businesses across the Defense Industrial Base on CMMC implementation, share their compliance challenges, and offer suggestions to improve the program. He encouraged interested members to respond to the RFI by the August 14 deadline.

EAMA RSP Annual Meeting/Expo – Linda Riquier encouraged the members to save the date for the EAMA RSP Annual Meeting & Expo, **Wednesday, October 28, 4:30-7:30 p.m., at the Holiday Inn in Norwich**. The evening will include an abbreviated business meeting, great food, and a cash bar. Marietta Lee, President & CEO of The Lee Company, is the keynote speaker. Support Partners are invited to set up an expo-style table to showcase the products and services they can offer EAMA RSP businesses.

Show Me the Money - Linda Riquier

Linda highlighted two childcare-related opportunities for the members:

- **U.S. Tax Code Changes Support Childcare** - Permanent changes to the U.S. federal tax code, enacted through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1), offers expanded support for childcare.
- **New London County Tri-Share Pilot Program** – PA 24-91 directed the CT Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to create this first-of-its-kind childcare cost-sharing initiative for employers in New London County. Together, families, employers, and the state each pay one-third of childcare expenses - making care more affordable, sustainable, and accessible.

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