

MEP ADVISORY BOARD Annual Report 2024



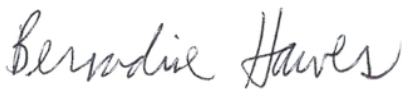
2024 MEP Advisory Board Annual Report

In 2024, the MEP Advisory Board continued its work advising the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) and assessing the program's performance and strategies. The MEP program is focused on narrowing the workforce gap, mitigating supply chain vulnerabilities, and adopting and leveraging technology. These areas constitute the primary goals of the MEP National Network 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. This year, the Board focused on helping the Network achieve these goals.

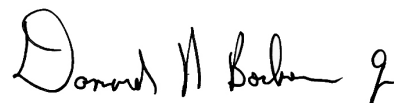
We are excited to see progress in all these areas. For example, through the Supply Chain Optimization and Intelligence Network (SCOIN), NIST MEP awarded \$50 million, authorized by the CHIPS and Science Act, to all 51 MEP Centers. Now in its second year, this funding is supporting the efforts of MEP National Network supply chain experts as they work with manufacturers to identify risks, address vulnerabilities, and improve supply chain connections. The Network's workforce training and events are helping workers adapt to rapid changes in manufacturing technologies. Additionally, we are pleased to see NIST MEP building new partnerships to strengthen the workforce pipeline and support manufacturers in adopting advanced technologies to stay competitive.

All Board members are committed to providing valuable feedback and strategic advice on these and other MEP initiatives. With its broad expertise and perspectives, the Board ensures that the MEP program stays aligned with the changing needs of manufacturers.

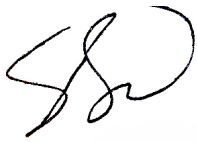
We are proud to be part of the MEP National Network and look forward to continuing our important work in strengthening and empowering U.S. manufacturers.



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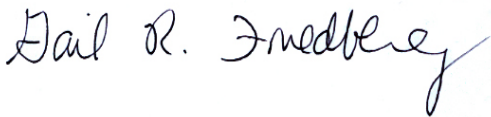
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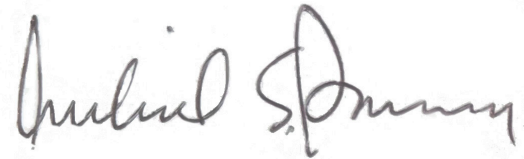
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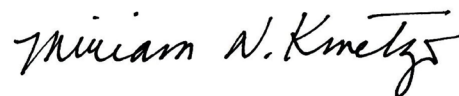
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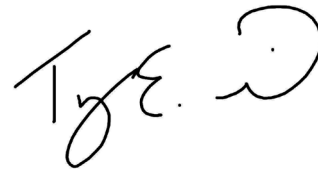
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Manufacturing Extension Partnership Background

Mission and Vision

Mission: Strengthen and empower U.S. manufacturers.

Vision: We are the go-to resource for America's manufacturers ensuring U.S. manufacturing is resilient and leads the world in manufacturing innovation.

Driving Force: We are driven to attain and uphold U.S. manufacturing preeminence which is essential to our nation's long-term economic strength and to protect our national security interests.

Role: The MEP National Network focuses its expertise and knowledge as well as that of its partners (industry, educational institutions, state governments, NIST, and other federal research laboratories and agencies) on providing U.S. manufacturers with information and tools they need to improve productivity, assure consistent quality, accelerate the transfer of manufacturing technology, and infuse innovation into production processes and new products.

Structure

The Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 created the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program to improve the competitiveness of U.S.-based manufacturing by making manufacturing technologies, processes and services more accessible to small and medium-sized manufacturers (SMMs). For over thirty-five years, the MEP program has focused on bridging the manufacturing productivity gap, identifying opportunities for growth and encouraging technology deployment.

Growing from a pilot project of just three Centers to a network of organizations in every state and Puerto Rico, the 51 MEP Centers are now an integral part of the MEP National Network. The Centers provide their manufacturing customers with a wide array of fundamental services in manufacturing, business and process improvements. Today, the MEP National Network has over 1,440 trusted advisors and experts at approximately 460 MEP Center service locations across the nation. The MEP Centers and their partners, including state governments, universities, community colleges, nonprofit entities, associations and private consultants exist to provide manufacturers with the services needed to reduce bottom-line expenses and grow top-line profits, both of which are needed to thrive in the global marketplace.

Impacts

In fiscal year 2024, the MEP National Network worked with more than 36,000 U.S. manufacturers. Throughout the year, the program showcased over [300 success stories](#) detailing MEP Center projects, each featuring a testimonial from the client. These stories show how each project is customized to meet the manufacturer's specific needs and how the clients value the results of these partnerships. MEP Center experts helped manufacturers across the country, including:

- **Alabama:** "Alabama Technology Network provided clear guidance on areas where we were excelling and constructive feedback on opportunities for improvement. Their approach was collaborative, ensuring that our team felt comfortable discussing various aspects of our quality management system. Chris' [ATM's AS9100 internal auditor] ability to balance a rigorous evaluation with a positive, solution-oriented attitude made the [process smooth and educational for everyone involved.](#)" — John Pate, Manufacturing Operations Manager, Metal Research, Inc. (Alabama Technology Network client)
- **Arizona:** "Arizona MEP cares so much about their clients. With their assistance, expertise and resources, we've implemented many projects that [enabled our growth and expansion.](#)" — Jason Grove, President, Pilgrim Aerospace Fasteners (Arizona MEP client)
- **Oklahoma:** "At Stroud Safety, our family of employees is our most valuable resource. Thanks to the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance, we created [long-term, sustained benefits to not only our workers but to the growth of our company.](#)" — Daniel Meek, Manager, Stroud Safety (Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance client)

NIST MEP Budget

The FY 2024 appropriation for the NIST MEP program was \$175 million, which was the same amount the program received in FY 2023. MEP also received \$3.6 million in congressional directed spending (earmarks) for specific projects in FY 2024. Nonfederal cost share requirements were reinstated for FY 2024 federal funding for MEP Centers.

As part of the \$175 million annual appropriation, \$12.3 million in funding was awarded competitively to Centers to add capabilities to the MEP program through projects that solve new or emerging manufacturing problems that are not already provided for under the Centers' base MEP awards.

About the MEP Advisory Board

The statutory purpose of the Board is to provide advice and recommendations to the NIST Director on the following items:

- The activities, plans and policies of the MEP program
- The soundness of the program's plans and strategies
- Current performance in relation to MEP program plans

The MEP Advisory Board consists of members broadly representing the interests and needs of the manufacturing sector appointed by the NIST Director. By statute, at least two members must be on an MEP Center board and at least five other members must represent small U.S. businesses from the manufacturing sector. In addition, at least one Board member must represent a community college. Board members are limited to two consecutive, full three-year terms and are ineligible for reappointment for a year following the expiration of their second term. In addition, the law requires the Board to meet at least twice per year. In FY 2024, the Board met three times to perform its chartered functions.

Several changes occurred to Board membership in 2024. Patricia Moulton's second term expired in June 2024. NIST MEP and the Board is appreciative of her years of service, leadership, wise counsel, and commitment to the MEP program.

The Board welcomed the following new members in 2024:

- **Winston W. Chang**, Chief Technology Officer, Global Public Sector, Snowflake, Washington, D.C.
- **Dr. Jermaine Ford**, President, Florence-Darlington Technical College, Florence, South Carolina
- **Candice M. Smith**, Engineering Executive, Chicago, Illinois

This brings the Board roster to 16 members.

The current makeup of the Board represents the range of the U.S. manufacturing ecosystem, from CEOs and executives at various-sized manufacturing companies to academic leaders at both state and community colleges. The important and varied perspectives of these volunteers have and will continue to positively impact the MEP program into the future.

2024 MEP Advisory Board Activities

Advisory Board Meetings

The MEP Advisory Board members were joined by leadership and staff from NIST, NIST MEP, MEP Centers, and MEP program stakeholders for three meetings in 2024:

- March 5-6 in Gaithersburg, Maryland and Washington, D.C.
- June 27, virtual
- September 16 in Cleveland, Ohio

Detailed MEP Advisory Board [meeting minutes](#) are available on the NIST MEP website.

The meetings provided opportunities for Board members to discuss the constantly changing issues facing manufacturers, stay current on the latest trends in manufacturing, advise the NIST Director about the MEP program, and to actively engage with MEP Center Directors and other stakeholders.

Department of Commerce and NIST leadership were involved in each 2024 MEP Advisory Board meeting. U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo addressed the Board in person to open the March 2024 meeting held at the Commerce Research Library in Washington, D.C. Dr. Laurie Locascio, the Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology and Director of NIST, spoke to the Board at the June meeting. Now former NIST Associate Director for Innovation and Industry Services (IIS) Mojdeh Bahar participated in all three meetings, briefing the Board on a wide range of topics including program leadership, strategic plan implementation and metrics, supply chain, strategic partnerships, and critical and emerging technology.

At each meeting, the Board received detailed updates from NIST MEP leadership on programmatic operations. The meetings included presentations and high-level discussions on various topics integral to the program and to manufacturing. The Board continued its focus on helping the Network successfully execute the MEP National Network 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

Presentations at the March meeting included programmatic updates from MEP Director Pravina Raghavan and G. Nagesh Rao (who became MEP Acting Director soon after the meeting). The March meeting also included an update on the Supply Chain Optimization and Intelligence Network and a briefing on progress toward MEP National Network 2023-2027 Strategic Plan goals. Additionally, the meeting featured robust panel discussions on electric vehicle and aerospace supply chains.

The virtual meeting in June included updates on programmatic operations from G. Nagesh Rao and presentations from NIST's Innovation and Industry Services (IIS) offices (the MEP program also falls under NIST's IIS unit). Program overviews were provided by the NIST Office of Advanced Manufacturing, the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, and the NIST Technology Partnerships Office. In addition, NIST MEP staff and MEP Center leaders presented on the newly formed strategic working groups aligning with the MEP National Network strategic plan's three themes: supply chain, technology and innovation, and workforce.

The September Board meeting was held in Cleveland, Ohio, preceding the Network's annual workforce-focused FireWorks Conference. Several Board members stayed to attend FireWorks. This third and final meeting of 2024 featured programmatic updates from G. Nagesh Rao, NIST MEP division overviews and briefings from the strategic working groups. The briefings were followed by a presentation about the planned MEP National Network brand messaging refresh.

Strategic Working Groups

The MEP National Network, in consultation with the Board, established three working groups to continue progress made toward the goals and metrics discussed at the September 2023 Board meeting. The goals focus on the strategic plan's three themes: supply chain, technology and innovation, and workforce. The goals and metrics include:

- **Mitigating supply chain vulnerabilities** by increasing engagement with critical domestic manufacturing industries by 3% and increasing the MEP National Network's business risk assessment and mitigation projects by 3%.
- **Narrowing the workforce gap** by growing the number and depth of workforce-supporting partnerships by 3% and increasing the number of advanced manufacturing training projects by 15%.
- **Adopting and leveraging technology** by increasing by 10% advanced manufacturing technology awareness and education engagements with smaller manufacturers to better prepare them to adopt new technologies. And to increase cybersecurity projects by 5% to make manufacturers more resilient and prepared to adopt new technologies.

The working groups comprise NIST MEP federal staff and representatives from MEP Centers. Each working group briefed the Board during the September 2024 meeting.

Workforce Strategic Working Group

Purdue MEP's (Indiana's MEP Center) Director Ranae Stewart presented on workforce development efforts across the Network from the MEP Center perspective, highlighting four key areas: awareness, pipeline building, attraction and retention, and partnerships.

NIST MEP's Ben Vickery, National Platforms Division, presented on two newly announced competitive awards to MEP Centers in Oklahoma and Kansas that have a workforce focus. He also outlined the goals and objectives of the working group, actions the group has taken to meet its goals and objectives, and next steps.

Leverage Innovation and Technology Strategic Working Group

NIST MEP's Scott Dockum, Savann Thorn and Marlon Walker, and Massachusetts MEP's Director Kathie Mahoney presented on the goals and milestones of the working group and its pending actions. They discussed the current state assessment, which will focus on understanding the Network's technology

capabilities, products, and services, how they are delivered to SMMs, gaps in services, and opportunities to support MEP Centers.

Supply Chain Strategic Working Group

NIST MEP's Nathan Ginty, National Platforms Division, and Delaware Valley Industrial Resource Center (part of Pennsylvania MEP) Director Chris Scafario presented on the objectives, activities and progress of the working group. They also discussed plans for MEP Centers, including a supplier scouting playbook, assessment tools, and system enhancements.

Conclusion

The MEP National Network had a productive year progressing toward our strategic goals of narrowing the workforce gap, mitigating supply chain vulnerabilities, and adopting and leveraging technology. Through our partnerships with federal and state partners, NIST labs, other federal labs, other government agencies, Manufacturing USA institutes, technical community colleges and universities, non-profit stakeholders, industries, and SMMs, we have created jobs, secured financial stability, saved businesses, bolstered communities, and been a supply chain lifeline to companies and government agencies across the country.

The MEP National Network is a leading force and expert authority in American manufacturing with 51 MEP Centers and trusted advisors helping manufacturers address critical needs, accelerate and strengthen growth, and remain competitive in the global marketplace. Additionally, members of the Advisory Board represent a wide range of industries and are abreast of trends and challenges facing domestic manufacturers. We understand that a strong manufacturing base is key to a robust U.S. economy and the protection of our national security interests.

The MEP Advisory Board and the entire MEP National Network is fully committed to building a domestic manufacturing ecosystem that will thrive in the face of global competition. The Network is a proven, turnkey resource focused on re-establishing the U.S. as the manufacturing superpower of the world. The work we do today will lay the foundation for the next generation of U.S. manufacturing, driving long-term growth, innovation, and competitiveness in a global economy.



The Go-To Experts for Advancing U.S. Manufacturing.



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