



Since 1988, the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) has been committed to strengthening U.S. manufacturing, continually evolving to meet the changing needs of manufacturers. Through its services and partnerships it has had a profound impact on the growth of well-paying jobs, the development of dynamic manufacturing communities, and the enhancement of American innovation and global competitiveness.

MEP's strategic objective is to create value for all manufacturers, with a particular focus on small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs). MEP is able to provide this support to individual manufacturers through its nationwide network of local centers made up of teams of experts and business professionals. MEP is a part of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), a U.S. Department of Commerce agency.

ABOUT MEP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

MEP centers are engaged in a wide variety of activities to help SMEs develop a skilled workforce and organizational policies that reflect progressive workforce practices. In addition, MEP centers support efforts to build the workforce development eco-system for manufacturing. Essential components of these efforts include: ensuring access to career ladders, competitive wages and benefits, training opportunities, and mentorships/ internships/ apprenticeships. MEP Centers provide a variety of services in their specific region, based on need and complimentary resources. MEP Centers can assist with:

- Talent Pipeline
- Internships and Apprenticeships
- Recruitment / Job Matching
- Skill Certifications
- Work-based Learning
- Workforce Intermediary
- HR Policies and Practices
- Workforce as Business Service Strategy

Examples of MEP center activities include:

- Catalyst Connection (PA) offers workforce pipeline initiatives such as college internships, scholarships, a technology program for students who can't/don't want to participate in traditional internships, a program connecting teachers with manufacturers, and a robotics competition involving partnerships between high schools and manufacturers.
- MassMEP (MA) created the Manufacturing Advancement Center in Workforce Collaboration (MACWIC), a collaborative of more than 100 SMEs and brought in a college to assist with certification. The model has been adopted by other colleges, and those programs are working with post-secondary and vocational schools on training toward jobs and pre-apprenticeships.
- The Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC), a Pennsylvania MEP center is part of a team that worked on a one-year \$298,500 "Skill Up" grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). As part of the MRC-led Skill Up Workforce Development Project, the Da Vinci Science Center (a nonprofit in Allentown with a focus on scientific and technical careers) led the creation of the Dream It. Do It. Pennsylvania website in partnership with MRC, the Lehigh Career and Technical Institute (LCTI), and the Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board (LVWIB). The site facilitates access to a nationally recognized brand, a robust support network, and numerous activities (internships, video contests, etc.) to attract students to manufacturing careers and provide resources for students, their families, educators, and manufacturers.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

Association of Community Colleges (AACC) to work closely with its member colleges to inform academia of changing skill requirements. MEP supports AACC's annual Workforce Development Institute in numerous ways. Plenary sessions and panel presentations by MEP experts convey the transformation of manufacturing jobs and skills and introduce colleges to the MEP system. At the local level, centers partner with community colleges to deliver standard or customized training and improve industry outreach, education, and services. This partnership maximizes access to high-quality, job-focused training; several hundred MEP-community college partnerships have been active over the last decade.

SKILLS CERTIFICATION

NIST MEP partners with The Manufacturing Institute of the National Association of Manufacturers to promote the value of manufacturing skills certifications from entry-level through professional positions. MEP also works with the Society of Manufacturing Engineers and the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (professional and technician-level certification providers) to create and promote an understanding of the skills necessary for advanced manufacturing by speaking at their conferences and contributing blog posts and articles for their audiences.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)

WIOA, enacted in 2014, seeks to impose greater accountability on federal-state training partnerships. It requires a designated "job-driven checklist" to be incorporated into all federal job-training grant applications to maximize the effectiveness of those programs. The checklist includes elements such as "Engaging Employers" upfront to determine worker training needs, and "Earn and Learn" – offering work-based learning opportunities with employers. NIST MEP and local MEP centers offer a number of programs and services that align with the full checklist.

NEXT STEPS

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JOIN THE DISCUSSION



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