

MEP ADVISORY BOARD Annual Report 2023



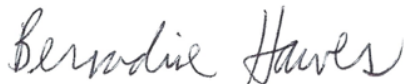
2023 MEP Advisory Board Annual Report

In 2023, the MEP Advisory Board continued its work to advise on the MEP program's plans and strategies. U.S. manufacturing continues to face challenges. To address them, the entire MEP National Network™ is focusing its efforts on the strategic pillars outlined in the new MEP National Network 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. These pillars include making progress toward mitigating supply chain vulnerabilities, narrowing the workforce gap, and helping manufacturers adopt and leverage technology.

The Supply Chain Optimization and Intelligence Network (SCOIN) is a significant step forward in these efforts. This \$20.4 million pilot expansion award program, authorized by the CHIPS and Science Act on June 1, 2023, will help establish new MEP service offerings to provide manufacturers with what they need to improve existing supply chain networks and fill gaps in the supply chain. The Board's discussions have been robust and focused on increasing the resilience of domestic supply chains and the competitiveness of our nation's manufacturers.

Our Board members come from diverse backgrounds and our discussions are enriched by our varied experience and viewpoints. Several new members joined the Board this year, bringing fresh insights and expertise to our group. Collectively, we thoroughly understand the multifaceted challenges facing manufacturers and we are fully engaged in providing guidance and advice on solutions.

We continue to believe strongly in the MEP National Network's mission to transform U.S. manufacturing, and we are honored to be part of these efforts.



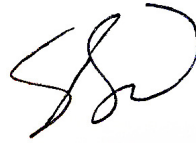
Bernadine Hawes, Chair
Senior Advisor
Econsult Solutions, Inc.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Donald Bockoven, Vice Chair
Chief Executive Officer
Darling Fibers
Darlington, South Carolina



Ray Aguerrevere
Vice President/General Manager
Custom Metal Designs
Oakland, Florida



Beth Bafford
Vice President of Strategy
Calvert Impact
Washington, D.C.



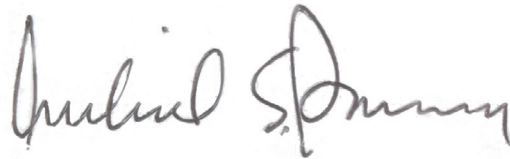
LaDon Byars
President and Chief Executive Officer
Colonial Diversified Polymer Products, LLC
Dyersburg, Tennessee



Louis Foreman
Chief Executive
Enventys Partners
Charlotte, North Carolina



Gail Friedberg Rottenstrich
Chief Executive Officer
Zago Manufacturing Company, Inc.
Newark, New Jersey



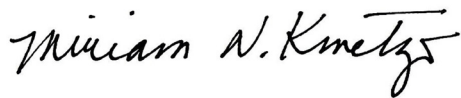
Michael Garvey
President and Chief Executive Officer
M-7 Technologies
Youngstown, Ohio



Mary Isbister
President
GenMet Corporation
Mequon, Wisconsin



Sean Ketter
Vice President of Global Procurement and Supply Chain
Oshkosh Corporation
Oshkosh, Wisconsin



Miriam Kmetzo
Executive Vice President, Retired
Welding Technology Corp.
Farmington Hills, Michigan



Mitch Magee
Manufacturing Industry Consultant
Hamilton, Ohio



Chris Mathews
Chairman
National Custom Hollow Metal Doors and
Maple Leaf Awning and Canvas
Little Rock, Arkansas



Patricia Moulton
Central Vermont Recovery Officer
State of Vermont
East Charleston, Vermont



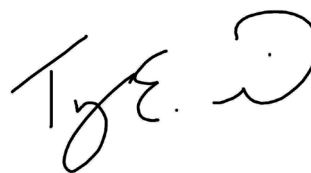
Matthew B. Newman
Principal Managing Partner
New Era Advisors
Tulsa, Oklahoma



Dr. Annette Parker
President
South Central College
North Mankato, Minnesota



John T. Smith
Chief Executive Officer
Wood-Mizer Holdings, Inc.
Lafayette, Indiana



Tyrome Smith
Director of Strategic Partnership
Common Mission Project
Bowie, Maryland



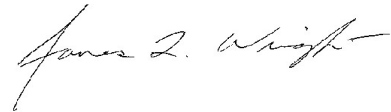
George Spottswood
Owner and Chief Executive Officer
Quality Filters, Inc.
Robertsdale, Alabama



Leslie Taito
Executive Vice President for Business Operations
Taco Comfort Solutions
Cranston, Rhode Island



David Vasko
Manufacturing Industry Consultant
Milwaukee, Wisconsin



Jim Wright
Vice President of Operations
Proof Research
Columbia Falls, Montana

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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 (FY) 2023, the MEP National Network interacted with more than 36,000 U.S. manufacturers. According to a third-party survey, the Network helped these manufacturers achieve \$16.2 billion in new and retained sales, \$2.9 billion in cost savings, \$4.8 billion in new client investments, and helped to create or retain more than 107,100 U.S. manufacturing jobs.

In FY 2023, for every dollar of federal investment, MEP generated \$24.60 in new sales growth and \$27.50 in new client investment. This translated into more than \$4.3 billion in new sales. During this same time, for every \$1,633 of federal investment, the Network created or retained one manufacturing job.

Since 1988, MEP has worked with 154,031 manufacturers, leading to \$148.7 billion in new sales and \$31.6 billion in cost savings, and it has helped create and retain over 1.6 million jobs.

NIST MEP Budget

The FY 2023 appropriation for the NIST MEP program was \$175 million, which represented an increase of \$17 million over NIST MEP's FY 2022 funding. MEP also received \$13 million in disaster supplemental funds and \$1 million for an earmark. Nonfederal cost share requirements were waived for FY 2023 federal funding for MEP Centers, as they have been for the past three years.

Approximately \$135 million of MEP's funding went directly to the MEP Center base awards. Additional funds were awarded competitively to Centers for direct support of the MEP National Network's engagements with manufacturing firms, as well as for enhancing the Network's ability to deliver a greater range of services and to deliver services more efficiently.

Supply Chain Optimization and Intelligence Network

The CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 created an expansion award pilot program – another vehicle for the MEP program to issue federal funding to the MEP Centers. In 2023, MEP awarded a total of \$20.4 million in expansion awards to all 51 MEP Centers to establish the national Supply Chain Optimization and Intelligence Network (SCOIN).

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 2023, the Board met two times to perform its chartered functions.

Several changes occurred to Board membership in 2023. Board chair Matthew Newman finished his second term in March 2023 and a new chair and vice chair were designated. Bernadine Hawes stepped into the role as chair and Donald Bockoven accepted the nomination for vice chair. In addition to Matthew Newman, several additional members left the Board in 2023: Ray Aguerrevere, LaDon Byars, Mary Isbister, Mitch Magee, George Spottswood, Leslie Taito and Jim Wright. Their leadership and advice over their years of service, and their time and commitment to the MEP Advisory Board are appreciated.

The Board welcomed the following new members in 2023:

Beth Bafford, Vice President of Strategy, Calvert Impact, Washington, D.C.

Louis Foreman, Chief Executive, Enventys Partners, Charlotte, North Carolina

Gail Friedberg Rottenstrich, CEO, Zago Manufacturing Company, Inc., Newark, New Jersey

Michael Garvey, President and CEO, M-7 Technologies, Youngstown, Ohio

Sean Ketter, Vice President of Global Procurement and Supply Chain, Oshkosh Corporation, Oshkosh, Wisconsin

John T. Smith, CEO, Wood-Mizer Holdings, Inc., Lafayette, Indiana

Tyrome Smith, Director of Strategic Partnership, Common Mission Project, Bowie, Maryland

David Vasko, Manufacturing Industry Consultant, former Senior Director of Advanced Technology at Rockwell Automation, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

This brings the Board roster to 14 members going into 2024.

The current Board members represent the diversity of the U.S. manufacturing industry, 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.

2023 MEP Advisory Board Members

BERNADINE HAWES, CHAIR

First term expires July 2024

Bernadine Hawes is an executive-level, nonprofit professional and economic development specialist working in the areas of manufacturing strategy, small business growth, and project management workforce development. She is a Senior Advisor at Econsult Solutions, Inc. which provides robust quantitative analysis with trusted expert insights and impactful implementation to businesses and the public sector in urban economics, real estate economics, public infrastructure, public policy, and community and neighborhood development and planning. Her long career includes her work as Technology Specialist for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in crafting the state's "Blueprint for Technology" and leadership roles on regional and national manufacturing industry boards, including past chair of the MEP Advisory Board. Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Ms. Hawes has a Master of Science from the University of Pennsylvania and is a summa cum laude graduate of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. She has been the national co-chair of Penn's Black Alumni Society and is a former member of the University of Pennsylvania's James Brister Society for Diversity Inclusion.

DONALD BOCKOVEN, VICE CHAIR

Second term expires October 2025

Donald Bockoven is the CEO of Darling Fibers, a textile production operation based in Darlington, South Carolina. He has extensive experience over a nearly forty-year career as a senior leader within both large and small companies across many industries. He specializes in transformational company growth through performance improvement. He has extensive knowledge in organizational redesign through Lean Six Sigma manufacturing practices, adaptive and advanced work systems and quality management. Mr. Bockoven has extensive board experience. He currently sits on the South Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership Board and recently left the South Carolina Manufacturers Association Board. At the national level, he was the vice chair of the National Council of Textile Organization's board until April 2019 and, in 2018, was appointed to the President's Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations for a four-year term. He has also served on technical advisory boards at the community college level as well as startup companies.

RAY AGUERREVERE

Resigned from the Board February 2023

Ray Aguerrevere is the Vice President/General Manager for Custom Metal Designs, located in Oakland, Florida. Custom Metal Designs is an industry leader that designs and manufactures turnkey industrial automation solutions that include collaborative and industrial robotics, autonomous vehicles, and complex conveyor systems for clients worldwide. Mr. Aguerrevere has led the company through a technological transformation resulting in a tripling of revenues since 2005. Mr. Aguerrevere has a Bachelor of Business Administration in finance from the University of Central Florida and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Florida. He serves as president on the board of the Manufacturers Association of Central Florida and is board chair of the FloridaMakes (the Florida MEP Center) board of directors.

BETH BAFFORD

First term expires May 2026

Beth Bafford is Vice President of Strategy at Calvert Impact, a nonprofit financial institution that has mobilized \$5 billion from over 20,000 investors in pursuit of social and environmental impact. Ms. Bafford leads Calvert's strategy and new business development efforts to build financial products and services that accelerate private capital for the benefit of communities worldwide. Her focus is on how to unlock the traditional capital markets for good. She also leads the organization's loan syndications and structuring practice, corporate strategy, communications, and impact management and measurement. Prior to Calvert, Ms. Bafford was a consultant in McKinsey & Company's D.C. office where she focused on U.S. health reform strategy. She worked as a Special Assistant at the White House Office of Management and Budget during the drafting and passage of the Affordable Care Act, as a Regional Field Director and Community Organizer on the 2008 Obama for America campaign, and as a Senior Associate at UBS Financial Services.



LADON BYARS

Second term expired February 2023

LaDon Byars is the President and CEO of Colonial Diversified Polymer Products, LLC of Dyersburg, Tennessee. Colonial Diversified produces high-quality rubber products for a wide variety of industries, including automotive, defense, commercial building, construction, farm equipment, aerospace, computers, medical, telecommunications, recreation, health, entertainment, plumbing, refrigeration, and many more. She started out as a financial analyst and rose to become president of the company. Ms. Byars is very active in the manufacturing community, has received many awards, and is on the advisory board of the University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services, which houses the Tennessee MEP Center.

LOUIS FOREMAN

First term expires May 2026

Louis Foreman is the founder and Chief Executive of Enventys Partners, an integrated product design and engineering firm. Over the past 20 years, he has created nine successful startups and is directly responsible for creating over 20 others. He is an inventor with 10 registered U.S. patents, and his firm has developed and filed well over 700 more. Mr. Foreman is an Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship at Wake Forest University, Johnson & Wales University, Central Michigan University, and an Adjunct Professor and the Entrepreneur in Residence at The McColl School of Business at Queens University. He serves on the board of directors of the James Dyson Foundation, the Intellectual Property Owners Association, the Federal Reserve Bank Industry Roundtable, Beyond Campus Innovations, Park National Bank, the Intellectual Property Owners Educational Foundation, and the Small Business Administration National Small Business Development Centers Advisory Board. He served for seven years on the Patent Public Advisory Committee of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, including the last two years as Chairman.



GAIL FRIEDBERG ROTTENSTRICH

First term expires May 2026

Gail Friedberg Rottenstrich is the CEO and majority owner of Zago Manufacturing Company, Inc. Established in 1993, and located in Newark, New Jersey, Zago manufactures self-sealing fasteners and sealing switch boots. Zago is a manufacturing industry leader in New Jersey. The firm established its Sustainability 360 social impact initiative by reaching out to students in the community with internships and apprenticeships, providing skills and education-based manufacturing career pathways. Ms. Friedberg Rottenstrich sits on the New Jersey MEP Board of Trustees and is a member of the Leadership Council of the Northern New Jersey Manufacturing Industry Partnership. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in political science from the State University of New York at Albany and a law degree from George Washington University School of Law. She practiced trademark litigation and counseling in New York City for several years. She currently serves on the Fair Lawn, New Jersey Borough Council where she focuses on sustainability and economic development.

MICHAEL GARVEY

First term expires July 2026

Michael Garvey is President and CEO of M-7 Technologies, an engineering, manufacturing and research organization in Youngstown, Ohio. M-7 Technologies is a Governing Board member of America Makes, the National Additive Manufacturing Innovation Institute, ASTM International Standards Development Committee E57 3D Imaging Systems, and the Association for Manufacturing Technologies. Mr. Garvey began his career on the New York Stock Exchange with Wagner, Stott and Co. In 1985, he returned to Ohio to help rebuild his family's manufacturing business. Mr. Garvey has since worked in the defense, transportation, energy, and industrial markets, teaming with technology partners from around the globe. For the past 15 years, he and his company have focused on equipping the small and medium-sized manufacturing workforce with digital capabilities. Mr. Garvey is on the Manufacturing and Growth Network (part of Ohio MEP) board and has served on a number of boards and committees including NIST's Visiting Committee on Advanced Technologies and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Board of Overseers. Mr. Garvey has seven patents related to advanced manufacturing and machine learning.



MARY ISBISTER

Second term expired March 2023

Mary Isbister is President of GenMet Corporation, a custom metal fabricating company located in Mequon, Wisconsin. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science in chemistry, she worked at Pfizer in Groton, Connecticut for 11 years. During her tenure at Pfizer, she held positions in medicinal chemistry, clinical research, and senior organizational development. In 1997, she moved to Wisconsin and founded Synergy Solutions, an organizational development and strategic planning consulting business, which she ran until 2001. In 1999 Ms. Isbister and her husband purchased GenMet Corporation, a custom manufacturer specializing in high-value-added metal fabrications and enclosures. From 2010-2014 Ms. Isbister also served on the U.S. Manufacturing Council, reporting to the Secretary of Commerce.

SEAN KETTER

First term expires February 2026

Sean Ketter is Vice President of Global Procurement and Supply Chain for Oshkosh Corporation, a Fortune 500 designer and manufacturer of specialty truck, truck bodies and access equipment with over \$8 billion in revenue in 2021. Mr. Ketter is responsible for efforts including: global category management; supplier performance; supply chain compliance; environmental, social, and governance (ESG); risk management; and technology modernization. Before joining Oshkosh, he served in various roles with John Deere including strategic sourcing, product development, quality and supplier development. He holds a bachelor's degree in industrial and systems engineering and a master's degree in manufacturing systems engineering from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Mr. Ketter currently serves as the board chair for the Wisconsin Procurement Institute, a leading APEX accelerator (formerly procurement technical assistance center) and as a board member of the Grainger Center for Supply Chain Management at the University of Wisconsin's School of Business.



MIRIAM KMETZO

First term expires July 2024

Miriam Kmetzo has recently retired as Executive Vice President for Welding Technology Corp., a global leader in resistance welding and industrial automation based in Farmington Hills, Michigan. She has a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a Master of Science in management from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Ms. Kmetzo began her career in process and quality management and has held various positions in manufacturing for over 30 years. She joined Welding Technology Corp. in 1996 as a Quality Manager and rose to become Executive Vice President with responsibilities for human resources, operations and quality. In addition to her passion for manufacturing, Ms. Kmetzo is equally passionate about performance excellence. Ms. Kmetzo is honored to have served a three-year term on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award judging panel and continues to be actively involved in both the national and state Baldrige programs. Currently, Ms. Kmetzo continues to assist various organizations, particularly, but not limited to the manufacturing sector. She helps them develop and implement target operating delivery models, execute cost reduction programs, and optimize business processes.

MITCH MAGEE

Second term expired March 2023

Mitch Magee is the retired Director of Global Advanced Manufacturing Technology for PPG's aerospace business unit. He has over 40 years of manufacturing experience, having served in capacities from front-line plant operations to global quality and environment, health and safety roles in PPG's automotive, industrial, and food and beverage package coatings business units. Mr. Magee is also actively engaged in workforce development as the past chair of the Delaware Manufacturing Association and led the development of Delaware's first Pathways to Prosperity high school manufacturing technology program. This program was developed in conjunction with Gov. Jack Markell's administration, Delaware Technical and Community College, and local high schools. Mr. Magee has also served on the Delaware Workforce Development Board, boards of Western Pennsylvania Air and Waste Management Association, Delaware Technical Community College-Terry Campus, Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce, and as a Pickaway County, Ohio trustee. He has a Bachelor of Science in liberal arts from Allegheny College, a Master of Science in chemical engineering from the University of Pittsburgh, and is a licensed professional engineer.



CHRIS MATHEWS

First term expires May 2025

Chris Mathews is the Chairman of National Custom Hollow Metal Doors and Maple Leaf Awning and Canvas. Mr. Mathews is passionate about operational excellence achieved through training, innovation and building long-term trusting relationships. He has taken an active role in economic development, serving from 2006-2016 as a Director on the Little Rock Port Authority, including two years as Chair. More recently, he has served on the Arkansas Manufacturing Solutions (Arkansas MEP Center) advisory board and on the Arkansas Economic Development Commission. He is currently serving a three-year appointment by Gov. Asa Hutchinson on the Arkansas Science and Technology Board of Directors, serving as a Director and a member of the commercialization committee.

PATRICIA MOULTON

Second term expires June 2024

Patricia Moulton was appointed Central Vermont Recovery Officer by Gov. Phil Scott in November 2023 to provide long-term flood recovery work. Prior to this appointment, Ms. Moulton served as Executive Director of the Workforce Development Division of the Vermont State Colleges System. Ms. Moulton previously served as the first woman President of Vermont Technical College from September 2016 through July 2023, when Vermont Technical College merged with two other universities to form the new Vermont State University. Prior to that, Ms. Moulton served as secretary of the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Ms. Moulton has served in a variety of appointed positions in Vermont state government, having been appointed by four different governors. She has served as commissioner of labor in addition to several economic development-related appointments. She has also served as appointed chair of an environmental regulatory board for the state of Vermont. Ms. Moulton spent 22 years in the practice of economic development on the local, regional and state levels. She has worked as executive director of four different regional economic development corporations in Vermont. She also ran her own economic development consulting company for several years. Ms. Moulton is a graduate of the University of Vermont with a degree in political science.



MATTHEW NEWMAN

Second term expired March 2023

Matthew Newman is the Principal Managing Partner of New Era Advisors. He has diverse and extensive expertise in business development, management and advocacy for sustainability. Mr. Newman is an entrepreneur and intrapreneur whose career has focused on innovation, business development, business management, modernization initiatives, environmental, social and governance facilitation, and leveraging and improving core assets and mission-critical initiatives. He specializes in renewable energy, low carbon solutions, novel technologies, logistics and optimization, electricity generation, natural gas, financial derivatives and risk management, identifying profit opportunities in the sustainability spectrum, and building collaborative relationships at the local, state and federal levels. Mr. Newman has a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Oklahoma. He is an active volunteer serving on boards and task forces on state and local levels. He has been a guest lecturer at several colleges and universities.

DR. ANNETTE PARKER

First term expires May 2025

Dr. Annette Parker is currently President of South Central College (SCC). At SCC, she collaborated with Minnesota State University to develop transfer pathways for students. South Central College was awarded a Minnesota state center of excellence in agriculture, that has developed a national curriculum and assessments for the National Pork Board. She served on President Obama's Advanced Manufacturing Partnership, making recommendations to sustain and grow American manufacturing competitiveness. In this role she successfully developed a Minnesota collaboration that secured a \$15 million grant to implement the national strategies within the state. Since her arrival, South Central College has been awarded over \$20 million in grants and nearly doubled its foundation's capital campaign. She is a graduate of Lansing Community College and was selected as their 2015 alumni of the year.

JOHN T. SMITH

First term expires September 2026

John T. Smith is the CEO of Wood-Mizer Holdings, Inc., an employee-owned global leader in portable sawmill design, manufacture and sales. Wood-Mizer operates factories in the U.S. and Poland and has company-owned branches in 30 countries on six continents. As a seasoned executive, he has set strategy with a focus on sales and profitability growth for his organization, doubling global sales during a four-year period. Mr. Smith has extensive experience as a manufacturing executive specializing in strategic and innovative thinking. He has a track record of prioritizing new technology adoption. He increased capital expenditures to purchase next-generation, highly productive equipment for Wood-Mizer factories. He also sets a high priority on Wood-Mizer's workforce. He demonstrates a continuing commitment to collaboration and servant leadership, a leadership style that prioritizes serving the team and organization over personal priorities. This includes using lean manufacturing and keeping a steadfast focus on taking care of people. Mr. Smith is a graduate of Purdue University with a Master of Science in industrial administration. He serves on the board of advisors of the Purdue Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Indiana MEP Center).

TYROME SMITH

First term expires February 2026

Tyrome Smith has over 25 years of experience helping executives and their teams understand human and organizational dynamics. He is currently the Director of Strategic Partnership for the Common Mission Project, whose mission is to create an international network of entrepreneurs driven to solve the critical challenges of our time. Mr. Smith is responsible for creating an ecosystem of public, private and government partners. He was previously a senior trusted advisor to executive level decision makers in the Department of Defense (DOD) where Mr. Smith supported strategic initiatives focusing on maximizing value across the enterprise. In this role, he developed an innovation education program for the DOD, including coaching and mentoring product development teams engaged in an internal incubator.

GEORGE SPOTTSWOOD

Second term expired May 2023

George Spottswood is Owner and CEO of Quality Filters, Inc. (QFI) in Robertsedale, Alabama. QFI was incorporated in 1981 in Gulf Shores, Alabama. Mr. Spottswood and his father, Horace Spottswood, purchased the business in 1983. At the time of purchase, QFI employed eight associates and operated out of a 10,000-square foot rented facility, manufacturing a single HVAC air filter product. Today, QFI employs 150 associates and operates out of a 70,000-square foot corporate-owned facility. He has served two terms as associate council president of the National Air Filtration Association (NAFA) as well as served on several NAFA committees in varying roles. Mr. Spottswood has been involved with the Alabama Technology Network (ATN, Alabama's MEP Center) since 2005. He was named 2005 ATN Business Innovator of the Year for the state of Alabama. Other corporate awards include the 2011 Innovator of the Year Award for Alabama by the Southern Growth Policy Board.

LESLIE TAITO

Resigned from the Board February 2023

Leslie Taito is the Executive Vice President for Business Operations at Taco Comfort Solutions. Taco is a 100-year-old, third-generation, family-owned global company based in Cranston, Rhode Island that engineers and manufactures high-efficiency indoor heating, cooling, and plumbing comfort systems. Using her over 25 years of management and manufacturing experience, she is responsible for Taco's global supply chain, logistics and quality. Previously, she served as Chief of Staff at Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, and she was CEO of Hope Global, a manufacturer of textile products and engineering solutions. She was also the Director of Regulatory Reform for the Rhode Island Office of Management and Budget. She has held leadership positions as the CEO for the Rhode Island Manufacturing Extension Services, Inc., Executive Director of the Rhode Island Manufacturers Association, and Acting Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Rhode Island Regional Employment and Training Board. In addition to serving on the MEP Advisory Board, Ms. Taito is a member of the Polaris MEP (the Rhode Island MEP Center) Advisory Board. She also has served by appointment of the governor on the Rhode Island Manufacturing Advisory Council and the Lean Government Initiative. Actively involved in her community, Ms. Taito has served in executive board leadership positions and as chair of the Northern Rhode Island and North Kingstown Chambers of Commerce.

DAVID VASKO

First term expires May 2026

David Vasko is an industrial automation innovator, a change agent, and a respected industry consultant. As Senior Director of Advanced Technology at Rockwell Automation, he was responsible for applied R&D, and global product standards and regulations. He led the development of technology to define the future of industrial automation, including digital twins, digital transformation, industrial networks, functional safety, and the industrial Internet of Things. He contributed to developing a communications protocol currently used in over 20 million industrial devices. Mr. Vasko was a member of the NIST Visiting Committee on Advanced Technology, the Forbes Technology Council, the Connect Systems Institute steering committee, the Advanced Regenerative Manufacturing Institute/BioFabUSA Leadership Advisory Council, and the boards of the Wisconsin Technical Council and the IOT Talent Consortium. He currently serves on the 5 Lakes Institute board and the Marquette University advisory council. Mr. Vasko holds 80 U.S. patents, has authored 20 papers, and contributed to three books. He was Rockwell Automation's Engineer of the Year in 2005.

JIM WRIGHT

Second term expired March 2023

Jim Wright is the Vice President of Operations for Proof Research, located in Columbia Falls, Montana. Proof Research is an industry leader that designs and manufactures state-of-the-art carbon fiber composite firearms for both military and commercial applications. Mr. Wright has over 25 years of experience in manufacturing engineering and production management across the aerospace, automotive, semiconductor and firearms industries. Throughout his professional career, he has spent a significant amount of time abroad working with European and Asian companies, and brings a passion to apply best-in-class concepts and lean manufacturing principles to help improve manufacturing within the U.S. He holds a Bachelor of Science and Master of Business Administration from Southern Illinois University and was a member of the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (Montana's MEP Center) advisory board for six years, serving in both the vice president and president roles. He is active in the local community and serves on the board of directors for the Kalispell City Chamber of Commerce.

2023 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 two meetings in 2023:

- March 7-8 in Washington, D.C.
- Sept. 13 in Buffalo, New York

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

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo addressed the MEP Advisory Board at the March meeting in Washington, D.C. Laurie Locascio, the Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology and Director of NIST, also spoke to the Board at the March meeting. NIST Associate Director for Innovation and Industry Services Mojdeh Bahar participated in both meetings, briefing the Board on NIST extramural programs, including Baldrige and Manufacturing USA.

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. With the MEP National Network 2023-2027 Strategic Plan in place, the focus of the Board switched from planning to execution.

Discussion at the March meeting included MEP Expansion Awards strategy to build capabilities across the Network. In addition, the Board provided feedback about appropriate metrics for the first 18 months of the new strategic plan. Robert Atkinson, the President of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, which hosted the Board meeting, discussed U.S. manufacturing productivity. The Board also discussed the need to refresh its working groups.

The September meeting was held in Buffalo, New York during the MEP National Network Forum, which many MEP Advisory Board members participated in. The meeting featured NIST MEP division overviews, and a presentation on new goals and metrics under the three pillars of the current strategic plan. Presentations were followed by a workforce panel discussion where representatives from several MEP Centers described successful projects, with an emphasis on those that can be replicated nationwide.

These two Board 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.

Advisory Board Working Groups

At the September 2023 meeting, the Board discussed a new structure for working groups:

Strategic Plan Implementation Groups consisting of:

- MEP Advisory Board
- Center Leadership Team
- MEP Center Directors
- Key stakeholders (including original equipment manufacturers)

Three groups focused on the strategic pillars:

- Supply Chain
- Workforce
- Technology and Innovation

Operational Groups

- One focus group for Supply Chain Optimization
- Communities of Practitioners
 - Industry 4.0/Cybersecurity
 - Food Processes
 - Semiconductor
 - Toyota Kata
 - Workforce
 - Marketing
 - Performance Metrics
 - Learning Management

MEP National Network 2023-2027 Strategic Plan

The central tenets of the new strategic plan are Empower Manufacturers, Champion Manufacturing, Leverage Partnerships, and Transform the Network. The 2023-2027 strategic plan focuses on new program themes of supply chain, workforce, and technology and innovation. The full plan is available on the [NIST MEP website](#). The primary goals of the 2023-2027 strategic plan are:

- **Narrow the workforce gap:** Enable SMMs to navigate the current workforce shortage while improving productivity and profitability, build a pipeline of future employees for the manufacturing sector
- **Mitigate supply chain vulnerabilities:** Increase supply chain visibility, assess supply chain risk
- **Leverage technology:** Increase technology adoption, ensure wholistic, comprehensive application and use of technology, strengthen cybersecurity capabilities, partner with federal labs to accelerate the use of new technologies

The 2023-2027 strategic plan will guide the MEP National Network toward these goals through strategies to embrace future growth, broaden and deepen expertise, strengthen relationships and influence with state authorities and agencies, expand collaboration between Centers and across the MEP National Network, and develop and exercise convening power to build strategic partnerships in each state and regionally.

This new strategic plan will provide strategic direction for the MEP National Network and partners, but the implementation of those strategies will reside with each of the individuals who make up the Network, enabling and empowering them to craft the most effective means of execution for their contexts.

Primary Goals of the MEP National Network 2023-2027 Strategic Plan



Narrow the Workforce Gap

Enable SMMs to navigate the current workforce shortage while improving productivity and profitability

Build a pipeline of future employees for the manufacturing sector

Mitigate Supply Chain Vulnerabilities

Increase supply chain visibility through initiatives such as the Supply Chain Optimization and Intelligence Network (SCOIN) and supplier scouting

Assess supply chain risk

Leverage Technology

Increase technology adoption

Ensure wholistic, comprehensive application and use of technology

Strengthen cybersecurity capabilities

Partner with federal labs to accelerate the use of new technologies

New Goals and Metrics

At the September meeting, the Board received a detailed presentation on new goals and metrics for the MEP National Network 2023-2027 Strategic Plan's first 18-month period. These goals focus on the strategic plan's three pillars and 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.



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