

<b>TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE</b>	<b>NO.</b> 06-24
	<b>DATE</b> August 27, 2024

**TO:** STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES  
STATE WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATORS  
STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD CHAIRS  
AND DIRECTORS  
STATE LABOR COMMISSIONERS  
STATE RAPID RESPONSE COORDINATORS  
AMERICAN JOB CENTERS

**FROM:** JOSÉ JAVIER RODRÍGUEZ   
Assistant Secretary

**SUBJECT:** Benefits of Collaboration Between the Public Workforce System, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Program and the Manufacturing USA Network of Institutes

- 1. Purpose.** The purpose of this Training and Employment Notice (TEN) is to encourage workforce system collaboration and strategic partnership with the U.S. Department of Commerce's Manufacturing Extension Partnership program and the Manufacturing USA network of institutes to provide assistance and support to manufacturing firms, particularly small and medium-sized manufacturers, to prepare a skilled workforce to support economic growth while preserving and creating jobs.

This TEN rescinds and replaces the Employment and Training Administration's (ETA) previous notice, TEN No. 38-11, *Benefits of Collaboration Between State/Local Workforce Investment Boards and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Program*.

- 2. Action Requested.** ETA encourages Workforce Development Boards, American Job Centers, and the broader workforce system to become familiar with the [MEP program](#) and [Manufacturing USA Institutes](#), to identify the MEP Center and Institute(s) nearest you, and to initiate the conversation to establish a partnership as opportunities arise. For a detailed outline of the MEP and Manufacturing USA Impact areas, please see [Strengthening U.S. Manufacturing: Manufacturing USA and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership | NIST](#).

The Resources section at the bottom of this TEN provides links to the contacts for MEP Centers and the Manufacturing USA Institutes, coordinated by the Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology ([NIST](#)). Contact your local MEP Center or the relevant Manufacturing USA Institute to explore options for collaborating to support manufacturing companies, particularly small and medium-sized manufacturers, to help them address challenges, enhance their competitive position, and ultimately create jobs and hire and retain skilled workers.

### **3. Summary and Background.**

- a. Summary – This TEN provides examples of promising practices of collaboration between the workforce system, states, and local Manufacturing Extension Partnership Centers and the 17 (soon to be 19) Manufacturing USA Institutes.
- b. Background – While the number of manufacturing jobs has declined over the past 20 years as a percentage of national employment, manufacturers now employ 13 million Americans, mostly in jobs with good wages and benefits, and skilled advanced manufacturing workers are still in critical demand. With the almost \$2 trillion in recent investments through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act, the need for a pipeline of skilled manufacturing workers is critical for continued American competitiveness, and to support these investments over the next decade and beyond.

Manufacturers are predicted to generate thousands more technology-related jobs through these investments and other efforts. Advanced manufacturing jobs are often considered to be good jobs as defined by the [Good Jobs Principles](#) published by Departments of Labor and Commerce. However, jobs are at risk of remaining unfilled due to multiple reasons, including lack of awareness or negative impressions of manufacturing as a career path, lack of relevant training opportunities, or lack of individuals with the desired levels of training, applied skills, or experience to fill ‘middle-skill’ jobs in manufacturing. Multiple strategies can be applied to address these workforce concerns.

The Employment and Training Administration at Labor, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership headquartered at Commerce, and Manufacturing USA Institutes sponsored by the Commerce, Defense, or Energy Departments are collaborating with industry partners of all sizes in local initiatives to support quality training and career opportunities that ensure a sufficient number of skilled workers to meet growing demand. All these initiatives drive progress towards ensuring an economically robust and diverse manufacturing ecosystem thrives in America. The initiatives can address workforce needs by creating access to trained workers, ensuring equitable opportunity for career pathways, and improving perceptions of the manufacturing sector as a high-quality career pathway that provides good jobs. These initiatives can also help avert layoffs and closures by helping manufacturers to diversify into new manufacturing markets and identify new manufacturing needs they can meet with their current workforce capabilities and equipment.

### **4. Manufacturing Extension Partnerships and Manufacturing USA Institutes Support of Workforce Needs.**

MEP and Manufacturing USA Institutes have a history of working with Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) and workforce agencies across the country to help manufacturers find and train workers, strengthen companies, and avoid layoffs. Manufacturing USA Institutes and MEP Centers work with multiple partners, including

WDBs, to assess companies facing challenges and identify business opportunities, cost savings, training, retraining, and redeployment opportunities to ensure that companies remain competitive in an ever-changing global economy. Strategies to address manufacturers' challenges might include identifying new markets for existing products, reducing costs through process improvements, reducing waste or energy use, retraining workers for new technologies and processes, and/or implementing innovative growth strategies. MEP Centers can also be instrumental in structuring effective sector strategies and sector partnerships that can address multiple needs of manufacturing businesses, including workforce needs among them. Similarly, Manufacturing USA Institutes collaborate with regional and community partners to execute national strategies for advanced manufacturing education and workforce development.

Each of the institutes in the Manufacturing USA network has ongoing workforce development initiatives that support both supply and demand. On the supply side, they are engaging with educational institutions and industry to increase interest in manufacturing careers and equip manufacturing workers with the skills they need to support the advanced manufacturing of the future. As an example, many institutes have developed specialty online learning initiatives to develop career pathways that offer more individualized curricula and targeting of specific skills, and flexibility that expands the pool of participants, particularly for underrepresented populations with barriers to traditional classroom programs. Some Manufacturing USA Institutes have developed Registered Apprenticeships as robust career pathways. On the demand side, the institutes are helping to define the skills and training needed to satisfy manufacturers' future requirements. These efforts include defining new careers for automation, robotics, artificial intelligence, and data analytics; retraining and upskilling the current workforce; and attracting STEM talent for the future.

**Effective Models of Collaboration.** The following are some examples of successful collaborations between DOL-supported programs and the MEP Centers and Manufacturing USA Institutes. Example programs highlight registered apprenticeships, Job Corps, individuals with disabilities, infrastructure investments, and American Job Centers.

#### ***NJMEP – Registered Apprenticeship Funding***

The New Jersey MEP (NJMEP) is spearheading the Pro-Action Education Network™, a statewide scalable platform to: prepare students and workers to fill open positions to help NJ companies to grow and become more profitable; refresh incumbent worker skills; assess and poll demand for education and training across the state; and facilitate collaboration between education and workforce development stakeholders. The Network leverages resources with the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Today, NJMEP offers both pre-apprenticeships and 12 to 18-month registered apprenticeships across three different occupations (Industrial Manufacturing Technician, Storage and Distribution Manager, and Technical Sales Representation).

#### ***ARM Institute and Partner4Work – National Dislocated Worker Grant Funding***

The Advanced Robotics Manufacturing (ARM) Institute, which is a Department of Defense-sponsored Manufacturing USA Institute, received a Department of Labor grant through the Comprehensive and Accessible Reemployment through Equitable Employment Recovery (CAREER) National Dislocated Worker Grants to support recruitment and training of

unemployed and displaced workers as candidates for manufacturers to hire into entry-level robotics jobs. Through this grant, the ARM Institute is collaborating with Partner4Work, Pittsburgh's Workforce Development Board, to understand the local manufacturing job market by performing a skills gap analysis, identifying WIOA-qualified candidates, and matching them to training and job placement. ARM is also working with Catalyst Connection (located in Pittsburgh and part of Pennsylvania MEP) and Partner4Work to support a job matching feature on [RoboticsCareer.org](https://RoboticsCareer.org) funded by the CAREER grant and working with area robotics and manufacturing employers to ensure that they are actively listing job openings on the site.

As a deliverable of the grant, the ARM Institute is working with a data analytics partner to produce a formalized report highlighting recruitment tactics, best practices in training, employer engagement strategies, as well as a study highlighting rapid employment best practices in the advanced manufacturing and robotics sector. This information can then be used for large-scale deployment in other areas of the country, effectively providing a road map.

#### ***AMT (part of NY MEP) – Partnership with Job Corps***

The Alliance for Manufacturing and Technology (AMT) partnered with Oneonta Job Corps Academy (OJCA), their local Job Corps branch, to attract and train Job Corps residents on smart meter instrumentation. Tooling U SME online curriculum was chosen for the pilot and was completed with the Certified Manufacturing Associate (CMfgA) proctored exams for qualified students from the Smart Meter and Instrumentation program. The pilot program was also supported by an Innovation Grant from America Works in 2022. Students learned everything from Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) programming to low voltage controls, and earned a Certified Manufacturing Associate credential from Tooling U.

AMT and OJCA completed two (6-week program) pilot campaigns to prepare applicants for job opportunities and ultimately permanent hire in the Southern Tier region of Upstate New York. To date, 13 OJCA students have completed the Tooling U SME certification, two have remained in the Oneonta area, while others have gone on to accelerated opportunities across the country including placement with the National Center for Urban Solutions in Ohio. As a result of this partnership, the CMfgA credential was recently accepted by Job Corps nationally as a recognized credential in their CIS3G database.

#### ***NWIRC (Part of PA MEP) – Training Neurodivergent Young Adults for CNC Machining Jobs***

In partnership with the Uniquely Able Project, Northwest Industrial Resource Center (NWIRC) is using Pennsylvania WIOA Statewide funds awarded to the Northwest Workforce Development Board through a Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry Business-Education Partnership Grant to establish [Uniquely Able Academies](#) (UAAs) at two local community colleges in Pennsylvania. Using WIOA funds, these academies are able to train 30-plus individuals annually, with a nearly 100% placement rate. The UAA model is a first of its kind program developed in collaboration between machine technology educators, specialists in education for those with autism, state and local social service agencies, and nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Together, these organizations provide training, support, and job placement services. Upon completion of training, the program

seeks to match math- and computer-savvy neurodivergent young adults to careers as Computer Numerical Control (CNC) operators at local manufacturing companies.

***MAGNET (part of Ohio MEP) – Partner on Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs Grant***

The purpose of the DOL-funded Building Pathways grants is to invest in public-private partnerships that can develop, implement, and scale worker-centered sector strategy training programs to meet the goals of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, as well as investments from the CHIPS and Science Act and Inflation Reduction Act. The Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services' grant project, Charged Up, aims to expand the electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing workforce in Northeast Ohio, in alignment with Ohio's Auto and Advanced Mobility Workforce Strategy, particularly among women, formerly incarcerated individuals, people of color, veterans, and other underrepresented populations.

Part of the Ohio MEP, the activities of the Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network (MAGNET) are focused on: (1) outreach, recruitment, and enrollment in the ACCESS to Manufacturing program as an on-ramp to EV careers, and (2) collaboration and coordination with two community colleges (Cuyahoga Community College and Lorain County Community College) to scale enrollment in EV career pathways (such as industry credentials, Registered Apprenticeship Programs, and/or degree options), and provide supportive services.

***NextFlex – Partner on Scaling Apprenticeship Grant***

Through the Department of Labor's Scaling Apprenticeship grant with Lorain County Community College (LCCC), NextFlex, a Department of Defense-sponsored Manufacturing USA Institute, was able to expand the Ohio Manufacturing Workforce Partnership that they lead, in collaboration with the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and Ohio TechNet. The primary goal of this grant program is to accelerate the expansion of apprenticeships to new industry sectors, including advanced manufacturing. In addition, the grant program seeks to increase the level of apprenticeship activity among employers that have not traditionally implemented apprenticeship programs, particularly small- and medium-sized businesses.

LCCC's TRAIN OH model was launched with extensive support from NextFlex and is now being used to promote expansion of apprenticeships in advanced manufacturing. Additionally, with the assistance of LCCC, NextFlex was able to leverage the Ohio TechNet network to expand their K-12 outreach, recruitment, and STEM education program, FlexFactor, to an additional 12 sites. Further strengthening this strong model of workforce partnership, in March of 2024, NextFlex named LCCC as their first Education and Workforce Development Innovation Center.

***CESMII – Statewide California Workforce Development***

CESMII (Clean Energy Smart Manufacturing Innovation Institute), a Manufacturing USA Institute, supported a statewide workforce development project in California. The project was led by El Camino College in partnership with a diverse group of community colleges and universities in the state, in particular Cal State Northridge, UCLA, and UC Berkeley, as well as the California Department of Education, South Bay Workforce Investment Board,

and the state's Employment Training Panel. Over 2,000 manufacturing workers were trained on Smart Manufacturing skills, along with 361 Defense industry workers. In addition, the project delivered multiple enduring training resources that can support future workforce needs, including:

- Smart Manufacturing Training Modules for an incumbent workforce;
- High School, Community College, and University Smart Manufacturing Curriculum Modules;
- Smart Manufacturing Post-Bachelor Certificate curriculum; and
- Smart Manufacturing content for Chemical Engineering degree program.

***Missouri Enterprise – Partner with Missouri Job Center***

A food processing facility in Missouri, facing an ongoing challenge to maintain and grow adequate workforce levels to keep the operation running smoothly, particularly for entry-level manufacturing positions, connected with the Missouri MEP Center, Missouri Enterprise. Missouri Enterprise's Area Business Manager then partnered with the local Missouri Job Center to identify and create a referral process to support the local community's manufacturing hiring needs. The Job Center recruited applicants to attend a no-cost *Basics of Manufacturing* training program, offered by the MEP, designed to give people basic skills that make them better applicants for entry-level manufacturing jobs. At the end of the course, local employers conducted personal interviews with graduates and made job offers on the spot, benefitting the food processing facility while also connecting local residents and employers in the manufacturing workforce.

5. **Inquiries.** Please direct inquiries to the appropriate Regional Office.

6. **References.**

- Connect with an MEP Center: [Find Your Local MEP Center | NIST](#)
- Impact of MEP National Network: [FY23 MEPNN Overview w IMPACTS 012624.pdf \(nist.gov\)](#)
- Connect with a [Manufacturing USA Institute](#)
- Manufacturing USA Overview: [About Manufacturing USA](#)
- Manufacturing USA Education and Workforce Development: [Manufacturing USA Key Initiatives](#)
- Infographic on Strengthening U.S. Manufacturing: [Manufacturing USA and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership | NIST](#)
- The High Road to the Middle Class map of projects: [High Road to the Middle Class | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](#)
- [Revitalizing America's Manufacturing Workforce: A Manufacturing USA National Roadmap](#)
- [2023 Manufacturing USA Annual Report | Manufacturing USA](#)
- 2022 Memorandum of Understanding between Department of Labor and Department of Commerce: [OSEC DOC MOU.pdf \(dol.gov\)](#)

7. **Attachments.** None