



## EAMA RSP Hybrid Meeting Notes December 18, 2024

**Welcome** – EAMA RSP Chair **Chris Jewell** started the meeting at 9:03 a.m.

Chris introduced new EAMA RSP member **Ryan Stickle** of **KPG Machine** and new Support Partner **CT APEX Accelerator** (formerly the CT Procurement Technical Assistance Program).

**Jeff Dickey** of EAMA RSP member The Lee Co. shared that their CEO, Marietta Lee, was elected to chair the Board of the CT Business and Industry Association (CBIA).

**Employer Instant Poll** – Manufacturing members were asked about their anticipated hiring demand over the next six months. (See results at right.) They were also asked about their perceptions about the challenges of hiring and retaining employees. The same questions were asked in November 2022 and August 2023. Overall, results showed improvement and indicated that hiring and retention challenges are easing for members.

**Jessica van der Swaagh** from **SPIROL** noted that, as a global company, they are pausing their hiring as they wait to see what impact any tariff increases will have on their operations over the next 6-9 months. She also mentioned that some employees who had planned on retiring soon have chosen to stay, impacting succession planning.

### Updates from Working Groups

**Plastics** – **Hannah Belmont, Westminster Tool** – Hannah reported that she has met with Foster Corp. and Nordson EFD about free plastics training resources that are available. These will be shared with the members during the first quarter of 2025 to augment the plastics training available through CT State – Quinebaug Valley. She also mentioned that Westminster Tool is now a certified injection molding training facility.

**Next Steps:** If you are interested in joining the Plastics Working Group or learning more about the injection molding training available at Westminster Tool, reach out to Hannah Belmont at [hbelmont@westminstertool.com](mailto:hbelmont@westminstertool.com).

**Youth Pipeline** – **Jessica van der Swaagh, SPIROL** – Jessica shared that the group met in November and reviewed the Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI) enrollment process, work-based learning opportunities, and the benefits of offering hiring incentives for YMPI graduates. She encouraged members to “adopt-a-school” to strengthen employer engagement with the YMPI and the schools. Members who shared their involvement/interest in adopting specific high schools included: **Mario Infante, Rand-Whitney Containerboard** – Montville, New London, and Bacon Academy and **Mary Fitzgerald, Acme Wire** – Stonington. **Chris Jewell**

### Hiring Demand Instant Poll Results

12 manufacturers replied

Over the next six months, how many **ENTRY LEVEL** people do you anticipate hiring?

None	2	16.7%
1-5	7	58.3%
6-10	1	8.3%
More than 10	2	16.7%

Over the next six months, how many **ABOVE ENTRY LEVEL** people do you anticipate hiring?

None	3	25%
1-5	7	58.3%
6-10	1	8.3%
More than 10	1	8.3%

Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance – A Connecticut Regional Sector Partnership

mentioned that he has a meeting scheduled with Lyman High School in Lebanon about their interest in developing a welding program and in the YMPI.

**Eileen Candels** from **CCAT** mentioned that, in partnership with ReadyCT, they will be hosting a “Pathways to STEM Careers in Manufacturing” event for area high school students and their parents to encourage them to consider a career in manufacturing. The event will be held at the Mystic Aquarium on April 8.

**Next Steps:** Watch for more details about opportunities for employers to host a table at the April 8 Pathways to STEM Careers event. For more information about “adopting a school” contact David Allard at [allardd@ewib.org](mailto:allardd@ewib.org).

**Business 2 Business – Dan Chaplin, Forge 41** – Dan reported that the group met at EAMA RSP member company, Fox Hill Swiss Machine in Coventry. They brainstormed how to get more companies involved with the working group and stressed the importance of networking, particularly for smaller employers. He also encouraged “more seasoned companies” to join the group who may be able to share solutions to problems faced by the smaller members. The group is looking to host a future working group meeting at Forge 41 in Moosup.

**Next Steps:** If you are interested in joining the working group and/or hosting a small networking event/tour at your company, please contact Dan Chaplin at [forge41@outlook.com](mailto:forge41@outlook.com) or Linda Riquier at [lindariquier@hotmail.com](mailto:lindariquier@hotmail.com).

**Workforce & Outreach – Jeff Dickey, The Lee Co.**, reported that, at their November meeting, the group:

- Welcomed new member Jeffco Fibres to the working group.
- Discussed that hiring is a little bit easier now for those who lived through 2021-22.
- Talked about safety programs conducted by EAMA RSP members and started a “best practices” document in their SharePoint.

### Director’s Report

**3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Regional Sector Partnership Convening** – **Tony Benoit** encouraged members to register for the RSP Convening sponsored by the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), to be held on Friday, January 10, at Central CT State University. Tracy Ariel from OWS noted that registrations are full so employers who want to attend must contact her directly.

**Safety & Risk Management** – Based on interest from the members in holding a webinar about Safety & Risk Management, Tony introduced EAMA RSP member **Brian Grossguth** from **Myoshi America** as an expert in safety who is willing to lead the webinar. An instant poll revealed that safety is handled by operations at 7 of the member companies who responded, while 7 companies reported having a dedicated safety manager. Brian stressed the importance of being proactive instead of reactive when it comes to safety, and the importance of not becoming complacent. He also commented that he is not in favor of safety reporting to operations due to potential conflict of interest.

**Next Steps:** Watch for a survey coming soon about safety. Responses will help frame the content of the webinar which will be offered in 2025.

**Challenge of Rising Healthcare Costs** – Tony reported on a forum he recently attended sponsored by the Office of Healthcare Strategy titled “Healthcare Affordability: How It Impacts Your Company and Employees.”

Key takeaways were:

- Rapid healthcare cost increases hurt individual businesses and reduce CT’s competitiveness.
- Costs in CT are higher than elsewhere in the region.
- Hospital costs are the main driver of high costs with pharmacy a fast-growing second.
- Most states have an employer coalition that strives to contain costs.

Tony asked the group how they want EAMA RSP to respond. The conversation indicated that this topic merits further discussion. The Steering Committee will discuss this further and will keep the members informed.

## Updates on EAMA RSP Responsibilities & Initiatives

**Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI)** – Carol LaBelle from EWIB reported that 28 MPI classes were scheduled from July 1 through December 31, 2024. In 2025, the pace is expected to be slower during the first six months. She shared that an Intro to Machine Operator class would be finishing soon and reminded members that On-the-Job Training (OJT) funding is available when hiring an MPI graduate. She encouraged employers to reach out to Jeff Martel and Joelle Garrett from their Business Services Team if they are interested in hiring an MPI graduate.

**Next Steps:** Contact the Business Services Team - Jeff Martel - 860-428-1854, [jeffrey.martel@ctstate.edu](mailto:jeffrey.martel@ctstate.edu) or Joelle Garrett - 860-961-6234, [jgarrett@chamberECT.com](mailto:jgarrett@chamberECT.com) if you are interested in hiring or learning more about the MPI OJT program.

**Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI)** – David Allard from EWIB reported that most schools have started their YMPI courses for seniors. Currently, there are about 100 seniors who are participating in the YMPI program who we can assume will be looking for a job in manufacturing when they complete the program. He encouraged employers to participate in the Greater Norwich Area Chamber of Commerce (GNACC) Youth Manufacturing Hiring Expo at the Holiday Inn in Norwich on May 9. While the students will still need to complete their program and pass the assessment, this event is a chance for EAMA RSP members to get in front of the students, conduct interviews, and make a conditional hiring offer.

**Next Steps:** Save the date and watch for more information about the May 9 Youth Manufacturing Hiring Event.

## Other

**Partner Corner – Steve LaPointe – CT State – Quinebaug Valley** – Steve shared the following updates: Jodi Clark has returned to the Advanced Manufacturing & Technology Program, and Jacque Wetherell has been hired as the Director of Workforce Development & Continuing Education.

He stressed that everything scheduled at CT State – Quinebaug Valley is to meet employer needs and to coordinate with area high schools. There is a big push on high school partnerships moving forward. The scheduled class times are designed to work for both students and businesses.

He shared the Spring schedule of classes and encouraged employers to upskill their employees by enrolling them in a class. Incumbent worker training (IWT) funding is available through EWIB and CCAT to offset the cost of training.

**Next Steps:** Spring 2025 classes start January 24. To enroll your employees, contact Steve LaPointe at [Stephen.lapointe@ctstate.edu](mailto:Stephen.lapointe@ctstate.edu) or Jodi Clark at [jodi.clark@ctstate.edu](mailto:jodi.clark@ctstate.edu).

For more information about Incumbent Worker Training funding options, contact the Business Services Team: Jeff Martel - 860-428-1854, [jeffrey.martel@ctstate.edu](mailto:jeffrey.martel@ctstate.edu) or Joelle Garrett - 860-961-6234, [jgarrett@chamberECT.com](mailto:jgarrett@chamberECT.com).

**Member Request- Local Charities** – Hannah Belmont, Westminster Tool – As a regional company, Westminster Tool supports several local charities. Hannah asked members to share what local charities they contribute to during the holidays. Responses included: Tommy Toy Fund, Santa Anonymous, United Services, Quinebaug Middle College, Matt Alsfeld Memorial Fund (suicide prevention), local VFW, Project Pin, Plainfield Rec Dept., and others.

**Next EAMA RSP Hybrid meeting: Wednesday, March 19, 2025, 9:00-10:15 a.m.**