

Maine MEP Director Showcases Training Program at White House Jobs Summit

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP) today had an opportunity to showcase one of its most successful job training initiatives at President Barack Obama’s White House Forum on Jobs and Economic Growth. Maine MEP Executive Director Rod Rodrigue was invited to attend the high-profile White House event. Rodrigue used the opportunity to present Maine MEP’s Mobile Outreach Skills Training (M.O.S.T.) program, which trains unemployed workers for existing manufacturing jobs using a state-of-the-art mobile training unit.

Today’s White House jobs summit is intended to provide an opportunity for the President and his team to hear from some of the nation’s leading CEOs, small business owners, labor leaders, thinkers and nonprofits about ideas for continuing to grow the economy and put Americans back to work. The Maine MEP executive director was one of approximately 130 individuals invited to participate in the summit.

“I am deeply honored to be able to attend today’s White House jobs summit. The President’s economic team is looking for strategies to increase employment and spur the nation’s economic recovery. We have a terrific story to tell. Maine MEP has developed an innovative program for training unemployed workers for careers in manufacturing and connecting those workers with companies looking to hire people for hard-to-fill positions. I’m delighted that the White House recognized our efforts and gave us an opportunity to discuss our mobile training program,” Rodrigue said.

Governor John Baldacci, who recommended the Maine MEP director to the White House, recognized the program’s potential for assisting unemployed workers.

“Rod has developed innovative training programs that have helped Maine manufacturers find the skilled workers they need,” Governor Baldacci said. “He’s putting people to work and improving the productivity and capacity of their employers. His insight will be a valuable addition to the President’s forum in Washington.”

The M.O.S.T. program is a fast-track training initiative that utilizes a mobile classroom. Outfitted with cutting-edge computer-numeric controlled (CNC) equipment, the mobile unit delivers an intensive skills training program that consists of hands-on curricula utilizing computer-based 3-D simulations and training modules. Participants who successfully complete the program not only gain job training, but receive interviews with employers ready to hire qualified applicants. The Maine MEP’s effort to identify employers with job openings and connect those employers with the trainees differentiates the program from many other training programs and contributes to the M.O.S.T. program’s high level of successful job placements.

Two additional features of the program also contribute to its success. First, the M.O.S.T. program trains workers for entry-level jobs that have a career ladder, higher earning potential and opportunities for advancement. Second, Maine MEP’s role doesn’t end when trainees

graduate from the program. MEP project managers continue to work with employers months after the end of the training program to ensure that trainees have mastered the required skills.

This follow-on feature of the program reflects MEP's mission of training employees so that their improved skills drive company growth.

“One of the unique features of the M.O.S.T. program is the opportunity it creates for trainees to embark on a career in manufacturing. The program qualifies trainees for entry-level manufacturing jobs as computer-numeric control operators, but these CNC positions are not dead-end jobs. In Maine and many other parts of the country there is a real shortage of trained CNC operators. We identify manufacturers with job openings before the training begins, so that individuals who complete the training program have a good chance of successfully competing for these jobs. We believe in giving individuals more than job skills; we want to train them for a career in the high-tech future of American manufacturing,” the Maine MEP executive director stated.

In conjunction with the Jobs Summit, Senator Susan Collins invited the MEP mobile training to travel to Washington, D.C., and obtained permission for it to set up on Capitol Hill so that members of Congress and congressional aides could tour the unit. MEP trainers and staff spent yesterday giving guided tours to congressional visitors, including Congresswoman Chellie Pingree, explaining how the high-tech mobile classroom operates and trains workers.

“With a stubbornly high unemployment rate, we must be creative in developing innovative programs to ensure displaced Mainers are trained and able to reenter the labor force. The M.O.S.T. program accomplishes this by delivering the full continuum of services needed for long-term success – recruitment, assessment, training and job placement,” Rodrigue explained.

“This program is a win-win situation for manufacturers and workers. If initiated nationwide, the program could have an even more substantial impact.”

The M.O.S.T. program was developed and launched in Maine with support from the U.S. Department of Labor. For more information on Maine MEP and the M.O.S.T. program, visit www.mainemep.org.