Maine MEP Board Chairman Applauds Governor’s Budget for Supporting Manufacturing Assistance

Augusta, Maine: Bruce Pulkkinen, chairman of the Maine Manufacturing Extensions Partnership (Maine MEP) today applauded the budget of Governor Paul LePage for including funding to support manufacturing assistance.

“With this budget, Governor LePage keeps faith with Maine’s manufacturing community and demonstrates his continuing support for efforts to strengthen the state’s small and mid-size manufacturers. A strong and vibrant manufacturing sector remains vital to Maine’s economic resurgence. We’re pleased that the Governor’s budget recognizes the importance of manufacturing to our economy and to thousands of skilled Maine workers employed by these firms,” said Pulkkinen.

Manufacturing represents one of Maine’s largest sectors. In 2011, Maine manufacturing accounted for 11.4 percent or $5.9 billion of Maine’s gross state product (GSP) and ranked third among nongovernmental sectors in terms of employment.

“Maine’s economy traditionally has depended upon a robust manufacturing sector, but in recent decades that sector has eroded. Governor LePage came into office pledging to work with business leaders to strengthen and rebuild Maine’s manufacturing base. We applaud the Governor for his commitment to manufacturing. The funding included in this budget will enable us to continue efforts to improve the competitiveness and productivity of Maine firms so that they can compete in a global economy,” Pulkkinen stated.

Maine MEP accomplishes its mission by providing a range of services—from innovation strategies to process improvements to performance-based training to supply chain management—to help transform even the smallest companies into world class manufacturers. Recent projects, for example, have included working with a neuroscience manufacturer in Bowdoin to provide innovation engineering management training, working with a Lewiston manufacturer to expand its welding workforce, and helping an organic nutraceuticals manufacturer ramp up production after Whole Foods agreed to distribute its product throughout the Northeast.

Maine MEP is part of a nationwide network of MEP centers located in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Established by President Reagan in 1988, the program was modeled on the agricultural extension program and designed to assist small and mid-sized manufacturers.

In the past five years Maine MEP has worked with more than 260 small and mid-size manufacturers on projects to implement advanced manufacturing practices and technologies, streamline operations, improve productivity and achieve bottom-line results. An independent third-party analysis reported that these projects succeeded in creating or retaining more than 2,500 jobs, achieved cost savings of $42.6 million and directly increased and retained sales by $458.9 million.

About Maine MEP

The Maine MEP is a program of the Maine Department of Economic Development and an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP system is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to small and mid-size manufacturers.
assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2,000 manufacturing and business “coaches” whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits and enhanced global competitiveness. For information on the Maine MEP program, please visit www.mainemep.org, or phone 1-800-MEP-4MFG.