Maine MEP Awarded $375,000 “Make It in America Challenge” Grant
Funding will strengthen regional manufacturing and assist companies moving to new advanced manufacturing accelerator at former Brunswick naval air station

Augusta, ME – The Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP) today announced that it has been selected as one of 10 nationwide winners under the Obama Administration’s Make it in America Challenge. The three-year $375,000 grant will enable Maine MEP to strengthen regional supply chains and provide training and technical assistance to companies moving to the new advanced manufacturing accelerator at the former Brunswick naval air station. The project was proposed as part of a single tripartite grant application known as the Midcoast Regional Innovation Initiative developed in conjunction with the Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority (MRRA) and Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc. (CCWI).

The Make it in America Challenge was announced by President Obama in March 2013 and is designed to promote a resurgence in American manufacturing. The grants announced today by the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Manufacturing Extension Partnership fund initiatives that strengthen the ability of regions to attract American manufacturers looking to “reshore” overseas manufacturing operations and encourage foreign direct investment in U.S.-based manufacturing.

“These grant funds will help Maine’s advanced manufacturing industry continue to grow by enabling Maine MEP to strengthen regional supply chains and provide the necessary training and technical assistance that companies relocating to Maine need,” said Senator Angus King. “Their work, in collaboration with the Midcoast Regional Development Authority and Coastal Counties Workforce Inc., will build a strong foundation for future innovation and economic redevelopment in the region.”

“Today’s announcement is exciting news for Maine MEP and will enable us to work with companies that are interested in locating to the advanced manufacturing accelerator being developed at Brunswick Landing. In addition we’ll be undertaking activities with our partners to inventory the region’s supply chain capabilities so that manufacturers interested in locating to the area have access to full information about local firms that can meet their supply chain needs. And finally, we’ll be offering ISO 9001 and ISO 50001 training that can provide Maine manufacturers with the credentials they need to export to foreign markets. All of these activities will support the single goal of expanding manufacturing in the Midcoast region,” said Muriel Mosher, president of Maine MEP.

The Midcoast Regional Innovation Initiative developed by Maine MEP, MRRA and CCWI constitutes a three-year integrated plan to expand manufacturing in the region in four targeted sectors: aviation/aerospace, composites/advanced materials, renewable energy and biotechnology. The initiative builds upon the master reuse plan for the former naval air station.

The grant-winning application proposes a two-prong approach. Funding awarded to MRRA will be used to develop TechPlace, an advanced manufacturing accelerator, in former Navy Building 250, which will provide workspace to firms in the four targeted sectors. Manufacturers locating in the accelerator will enjoy a wide variety of tax incentives and support services, including gap analyses and strategic technology assessments provided by Maine MEP and customized workforce training offered by CCWI.

The second prong of the initiative moves beyond the former base to strengthen regional manufacturing assets. Maine MEP will work with its trade association partners to inventory the supply chain capabilities of manufacturers in the four targeted sectors, and it will offer training that can help small and mid-size Maine manufacturers obtain the qualifications needed by international manufacturers and required for
exporters to the European Union. These initiatives should open new markets, enabling Maine manufacturers to expand production.

Funding for the initiative, which totals $2.425 million, is being provided by three federal agencies. The U.S. Economic Development Administration last month announced that it would provide $750,000 to MRRA for retrofitting TechPlace, while the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment Training Agency awarded $1.3 million to CCWI to support regional workforce training activities. Today’s announcement of MEP funding completes the award announcements and ensures that the Midcoast Regional Innovation Initiative can move forward as envisioned.

Maine Commissioner of Economic and Community Development George Gervais, whose department supported the grant application, emphasized the initiative’s coordinated approach as a key to its success.

“This proposal brings together the full range of assets that are needed to develop a strong regional manufacturing cluster,” Gervais stated. “MRRA will develop the facility and lead efforts to attract businesses to the site, while the Maine International Trade Center will market the region to potential foreign investors. Maine MEP, working with trade associations, will inventory the existing supply chain capabilities of manufacturers in the region and provide technical assistance and training to help Maine manufacturers meet international supply chain standards, while CCWI will work with businesses to deliver customized workforce skills training. The Maine Technology Institute (MTI) is also located at Brunswick Landing and has resources to support start-up firms, while the University of Maine’s Advanced Manufacturing Center (AMC) and the University of Southern Maine’s Manufacturing Applications Center (MAC) will work with TechPlace companies to identify, research, develop and commercialize projects.”

Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority Executive Director Steve Levesque expressed pleasure at the final piece of grant funding.

“Maine MEP’s collaboration on this initiative strengthens the services that will be offered to manufacturers at TechPlace. Companies that locate here can know that they will have access to the superb technical assistance and training assets of the MEP program,” said Levesque.

Coastal Counties Workforce Executive Director Mike Bourret also expressed support for the MEP announcement.

“This funding will enable CCWI and Maine MEP to work together to build a highly-skilled and diverse workforce capable of meeting employer demands in midcoast Maine’s innovative manufacturing sectors. By partnering with Maine MEP, we’ll be able to help companies develop strategic roadmaps that identify their technology needs and then deliver customized training so that workers have the skills required to operate state-of-art manufacturing equipment. Our goal is to help manufacturers get ahead of the curve so they can out-perform their competition and improve their supply chain opportunities,” said Bourret.

About Maine MEP

The Maine MEP is a program of the Maine Department of Economic and Community 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 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 professionals 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.