Maine MEP Announces Appointment of Supply Chain Project Manager

Westra to Lead Implementation of Midcoast Regional Innovation Initiative

Augusta, ME – The Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP) today announced that Steve Westra, a specialist in Lean Six Sigma with an extensive knowledge of Maine manufacturers, has been hired as the organization’s supply chain project manager. Westra brings to the position more than 25 years in manufacturing services and economic development. He will be charged with leading the implementation for Maine MEP of a multi-million dollar federally funded initiative to strengthen manufacturing in the midcoast Maine region.

“Maine MEP is pleased to announce that Steve Westra has been appointed as our supply chain project manager and will take the lead in implementing manufacturing initiatives under the Make It in America Challenge Grant,” said Muriel Mosher, president of Maine MEP. “Steve has worked with many of Maine’s leading manufacturers over the course of his career and has the experience to lead this dynamic new initiative.”

In November 2013 Maine MEP and its two partners – the Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority (MRRA) and Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc. (CCWI) – were awarded one of 10 Make It in America Challenge Grants. The grants are designed to accelerate job creation by strengthening regional assets in order to attract foreign manufacturers and encourage U.S. manufacturers to reshore foreign operations back to America.

In Maine the Make It in America Challenge Grant will fund the Midcoast Regional Innovation Initiative, an integrated plan to expand manufacturing in the region in four targeted sectors: aviation/aerospace, composites/advanced materials, renewable energy and biotechnology.

The initiative will support the creation of an advanced manufacturing accelerator, known as TechPlace, on the former Brunswick Naval Air Station, which will provide workspace to firms in the four targeted sectors. Manufacturers locating in the accelerator will enjoy a wide variety of support services, including gap analyses and strategic technology assessments provided by Maine MEP and customized workforce training offered by CCWI.

The Midcoast Regional Innovation Initiative will also support a series of activities designed to strengthen regional manufacturing assets. Headed by Westra, 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 export to the European Union.

Westra expressed his excitement to be leading the initiative to strengthen Maine manufacturing through the supply chain activities supported by the federal grant. “The Midcoast Regional Innovation Initiative should increase the opportunities for Maine manufacturers to participate in international supply chains,” Westra stated. “By identifying the capabilities that exist here in Maine in the four targeted sectors, we will be better able to demonstrate that Maine manufactures can compete globally. The databases developed under this initiative and the training provided to manufacturers should expand opportunities for new sales and increase Maine exports.”

Westra brings to the position extensive knowledge of Maine manufacturers. For the past five years he has worked with Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and NAVSEA on Lean Six Sigma initiatives designed to enhance the efficiency of work at the shipyard. He previously served as lead project manager at Maine MEP, where he was responsible for delivering a variety of process improvement and supply chain services for manufacturers. During that time, he served as Maine MEP’s representative on several international trade missions. Prior to joining Maine MEP in 1999, Westra worked as a development officer in the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development. He began his career as a
director of municipal planning and development.

Westra’s qualifications include training in Six Sigma from Villanova University, training in supply chain management and strategy from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and a Master’s Degree from Tufts University in Municipal Planning and Development.

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.