



2023 IMPACT REPORT

MAINEMEP



we teach manufacturing

mainemep.org

Our Mission

At Maine MEP (Manufacturing Extension Partnership), our mission is to facilitate economic development in Maine by providing vital services to Maine's manufacturers, helping them become more efficient, productive, profitable and globally competitive.

Maine MEP is the most comprehensive resource available for manufacturers in Maine. Whether working with high-tech companies or start-up artisans, Maine MEP forges close and collaborative relationships with our clients to meet their particular needs.

Economic Impact

Maine's manufacturers have an enormous impact on the overall economic development profile of our state. It's no exaggeration to say that, with Maine MEP's help, our small and medium manufacturers keep Maine's economy moving and growing.

In 2023, we continued expanding our capacity for assisting manufacturers. We hired a new project manager based in York County, which deepens our reach in Southern Maine, and through a national SCOIN (Supply Chain Optimization and Intelligence Network) award from NIST, increased our supply chain service offerings.

IN 2023, MAINE MEP CLIENTS REPORTED:



\$39M

IN NEW
SALES

Maine MEP began working on **148 new projects** in nearly every county in the state



\$68M

IN RETAINED
SALES



1400

JOB'S CREATED
OR RETAINED



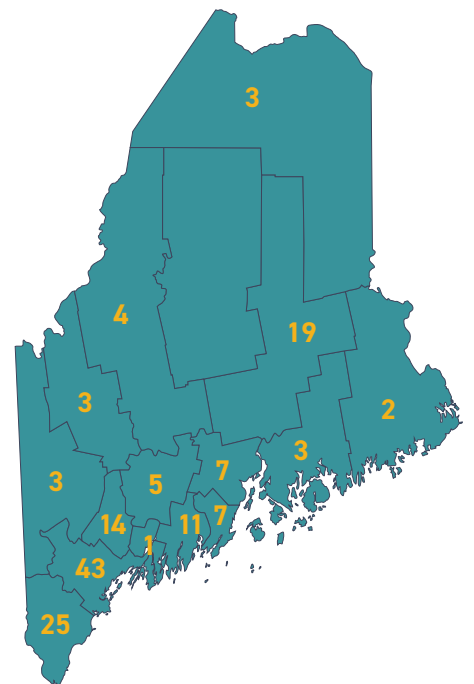
\$23M

IN SAVED
COSTS



\$37M

IN NEW
INVESTMENTS





Is this the “new normal”? No matter what we call it, Maine MEP is seeing that workforce issues, supply chain resiliency, and innovation and technology have become paramount to the manufacturers we serve. In 2023,

we renewed focus in each of these areas, and in doing so, continued to support Maine’s 10-year Economic Development Strategy. I’m proud to share some of what we’ve accomplished for each of these crucial issues.

Workforce: Just as in other business sectors, manufacturers in Maine continue to struggle to find the skilled workers they need. Because every client is unique, our experienced field staff dedicate time in the discovery phase to help determine a custom path forward. We’ve been helping clients with production efficiency, leadership training, and technical solutions to address challenges and remove barriers to growth.

Supply chain resiliency: This past year, Maine MEP refocused our efforts in supply chain optimization. With local and national support from Maine DECD and the MEP National Network, our staff have successfully connected Maine clients with supplier scouting and matching opportunities. We continue to bolster our databases with Maine manufacturing company demographics—including capabilities, certifications, and capacities—in an effort to build a more resilient supply chain.

Innovation and technology: Our partnership with the Advanced Manufacturing Center (AMC) at the University of Maine means that many of the small businesses we work with who do not have the ability to invest in large scale equipment—from high- to low-tech—can make use

of our equipment to develop needed solutions. In 2023, the AMC completed over 35 projects in prototyping, equipment design, and fabrication for small- to medium-sized manufacturers in all corners of the state.

As the “Partnership” in our name implies, we continue to nurture relationships with many great Maine business service providers, community colleges, membership organizations, and independent consultants. This year saw Maine MEP leveraging these relationships on our client’s behalf to stay apprised of funding opportunities and provide the right services at the right time.

In this year’s impact report, you’ll read more about the essential services Maine MEP provides to our state’s manufacturers in the areas of front-line worker training, experiential learning, technical services, and business transformation coaching. You’ll also get to meet our newest project managers.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Larry Robinson, who retired in 2023 after five years of service as Maine MEP’s president. After several years as a senior project manager and then operations manager here, I’m honored to have stepped into this new role in November, and look forward to building upon the successful foundation established under Larry’s leadership on behalf of the manufacturers we serve. I’ve moved from field work to overseeing the strategic vision and staff and ensuring that our leading-edge programs and services for Maine continue, and as part of this new position, I am eager to get to know more of our state’s manufacturing and economic stakeholders. Please reach out at any time.

Jim Fay, President, Maine MEP

PREPARING THE FRONT OFFICE FOR THE FUTURE



LITTLE HARBOR WINDOW

This family-owned business has already enjoyed success and growth by working with Maine MEP to implement lean tools for production. But with changes in leadership ahead, Little Harbor Window realized there could be improvements in front office and workforce efficiency as well. Maine MEP was brought back to facilitate a multi-day workshop using the kaizen model to help the company develop strong office management processes.

About Little Harbor Window Company

Little Harbor Window Company manufactures premier, custom-built windows and doors for discerning architects, builders and homeowners. Established in 1983, the company currently employs 32 people in their state-of-the-art Berwick facility. Little Harbor was awarded the 2016 Maine Wood Products Association Pine Tree Award for Tremendous Growth and Innovation in the Wood Products Industry and voted 2003 SBA Small Business of the Year for Maine.

Challenge

The company is looking ahead to a transition of leadership as the next generation in the family takes over and three other members of the leadership team retire. Little Harbor Windows recognized that although they have done a great job using lean tools to drive improvements in production, there was significant opportunity for improvements with front office processes. This led them to reach out to Maine MEP.

Solution

Maine MEP facilitated a multi-day workshop focused on workforce organization and design to better administrative efficiency. Using the tools from Lean Office,

Maine MEP helped Little Harbor Window Company identify developmental and transactional waste in their front office, most of which were a result of a lack of definition of responsibilities and team structure. Maine MEP Project Manager Jim Fay and the Little Harbor Window team identified current state, and developed a plan to move to an improved future state. Each trainee participated in an overview of the kaizen model, developing and implementing productive countermeasures including the creation of a company organizational chart, accountability matrices, job descriptions, and a process for holding weekly team huddles.

Result

\$350K in new or retained sales due to improved front end operations

\$55K invested in new processes and employee skills

\$35K in costs saved or avoided

3 jobs retained

“As a manufacturer, much of our attention is spent ensuring that production flow is as efficient as possible. But we noticed that our office systems—including communication between departments—were beginning to suffer. This work that we did with Maine MEP brought all the departments together: the energy was incredible and we were able to make immediate strides toward pulling the departments back together.”

—James (Jim) Eaton, President

DELIVERING ON OUR PROMISE



At Maine MEP, we build meaningful relationships with our clients. The trust we establish is the foundation that allows us to provide services that make a noticeable difference. We are most proud when manufacturers report back that they are celebrating success and overcoming their challenges.

Below are a few things we are happy to report that we heard from our clients in 2023

Thank you very much for all the hard work, insight and commitment that has been put into our organization. We would not be the company we are today without Maine MEP's help.

—**Kip Stone**
Owner/CEO, Artforms

After Maine MEP's visit to my production studio, I added the bandsaw they recommended and it has been a total success! A task that used to take up most of the day is now completed in an hour.

—**Dylan Veilleux**
Owner, Juneberry

Working with Maine MEP has transformed the way we think about our processes and communication. Their knowledge and guidance has given us a strong foundation and perspective that will allow us to continue to grow. Every meeting with MEP results in a list of action items and immediate benefits.

—**Devin McNeill**
CEO, Flowfold

I have learned so much from working with MEP. John is always there and willing to help with any problem solving or to run any ideas by. He is a priceless asset.

—**Brody Cousineau**
President, Cousineau Wood Products

THE CENTER OF OUR WORK: OUR PROJECT MANAGERS

At the heart of Maine MEP are our skilled project managers, who come to us with years of hands-on experience in the manufacturing industry and proven success in their fields, and continue to stay on top of the latest technologies, best practices and certification requirements. Our team of project managers establish trusting, collaborative relationships with our clients, allowing even small manufacturers to tap into an extremely high level of expertise and partner with an individual who is genuinely invested in their success.

MEET THE NEWEST MEMBERS OF OUR TEAM

Shaun Gill, Project Manager

A trained marine scientist, Shaun joins Maine MEP with expertise in marine and waterfront operations, automation, technology and process development, scientific facilities, and workforce development. He has led the commission of award-winning automation, managed high-tech facility renovations, co-developed environmental monitoring software, and served as a design consultant on industrial aquatic systems. Shaun says, "My primary role at Maine MEP is that of a bridge, connecting people with information, resources, and each other. Mindful support of people and processes is necessary to arrive at meaningful, stakeholder-oriented solutions." When he's not on the job, you'll find him creating in his home workshop, road-tripping, or out in nature with his dog Grady.



SHAUN GILL

Mariah Cunningham-Knaus, Supply Chain Optimization Project Manager

Prior to joining Maine MEP as a contractor in 2014, Mariah worked on a pilot program at the University of Southern Maine to connect manufacturers to student interns. She now serves Maine MEP in a joint role as the Project Manager for the Supply Chain Optimization and Intelligence Network and matching clients with resources and training. "The best part is visiting manufacturing facilities to see the range of innovative products being made here in Maine," Mariah says. She also keeps an eye on best practices of other MEP Centers around the country. Outside of Maine MEP, while she loves to read, she is mostly kept busy by her twin four year olds, "so you might find me at the library or cheering them on at preschool gymnastics."



MARIAH
CUNNINGHAM-KNAUS

SUCCESSES FROM OUR PROJECT MANAGERS IN 2023



FOREST WENTWORTH

Working with University of Maine students, Forest Wentworth helped **Brodix Blueberries** in Hope implement an optical sorting technology, the first of its kind for blueberries in Maine. Since then, Brodis has been producing four times the volume of berries with about half the labor. "It's rewarding to make a difference for a historically-significant Maine product, especially when the company is family-owned—in this case, for seven generations," Forest says. "And there's potential for this tech to be a game-changer for wild blueberry growers throughout Maine."



BILL WHITTIER

Longtime Maine MEP client **American Steel and Aluminum** enlisted Bill Whittier to complete several projects, including an Initial ISO 9001 Internal Audit and trainings in the Principles of Lean Manufacturing and Kaizen Problem Solving, and a Develop Your Leadership Potential training. The South Portland-based diversified metal products company also underwent a Quality System Implementation ISO 9001, which they were then able to claim as an accomplishment in their marketing and sales efforts.



JAY BURKHART

This year, Jay Burkhart worked with **Hüga** of South Portland, a start-up that produces a battery-operated heated seat cushion for hunting, al fresco dining or attending outdoor sports. (The idea came during COVID, when the founders went to restaurants where they had to eat outside.) Jay met Hüga at MITC's ExporTech, where they mentioned that they were looking to break into the Canadian market. As a result of Jay's assistance, the small company loaded up their truck and drove across the border for a trade show and calls on stores.



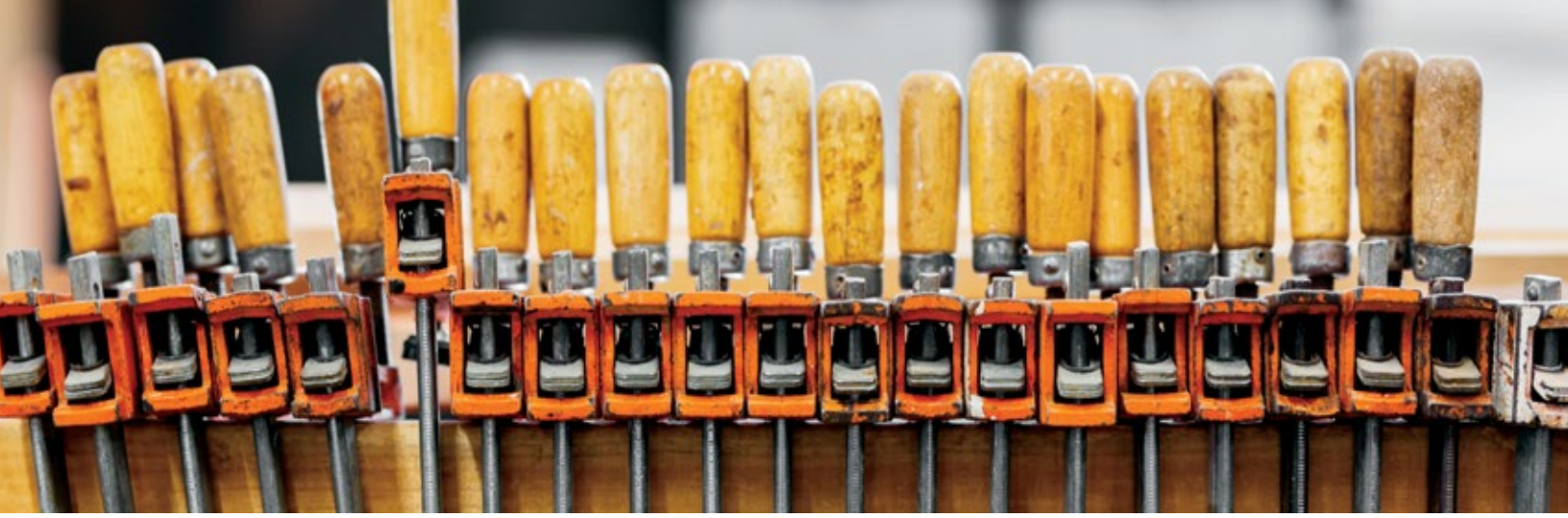
ROB CLEMENT

When **The Dingley Press** of Lisbon sought to develop leadership among key members of their staff, they called upon Rob Clement. Over the course of the program he implemented, Rob saw big changes in team interaction for the successful catalog printer and distributor. Rob notes that "watching as they absorbed concepts, I could tell they were better prepared to lead." As a result, The Dingley Press saw their workforce turnover rate in 2023 at the lowest it's been in years—which, in turn, helped increase productivity.



JOHN KARP

John Karp was busy with **Maine Wood Heat**, a two-generation family business in Skowhegan. The company began with thermal mass fireplaces but has since diversified into mobile wood-fired pizza ovens and coal-fired stationary ovens. With funding from a Prime grant, John and Maine Wood Heat reviewed internal processes and developed a succession plan for the senior members of the family. Maine MEP's work also led to investment in major metal working machinery, opening the door for a new division that serves other companies, including Maine's own Johnny's Seeds.



BOARD MEMBERS

Joan Dolan

*Director of Apprenticeship
& Strategic Partnerships
Maine Department of Labor*

Sally Garand

*Treasurer
Vice President,
Community Banking
Camden National Bank*

Denise Garland

*Finance Committee
Deputy Commissioner
Maine Department of Economic
& Community Development*

Scott Knapp

*Secretary
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Central Maine Community College*

Jack Lesko

*Director of Engineering
Research & Professor
The Roux Institute*

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*Chair, Executive Committee
Executive Director
Midcoast Regional Redevelopment
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David Mika

*Engineering Manager
ALCOM*

Julia Munsey

*Partner
Dougherty Project Management*

David Nemi

*Vice Chair
General Manager
Franklin Printing*

Jonathan Robertson

*Chief Commercial Officer
Southworth International Group*

Harvey Smith

*VP of Operations (Retired)
Kennebec Technologies*

Nancy Strojny

*Assistant District Director
SCORE Portland*

Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is supported by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (a subsidiary of the U.S. Dept. of Commerce) and the state of Maine. Maine MEP is a partner organization of Maine's Department of Economic and Community Development and collaborates with other economic development organizations to provide integrated services to Maine manufacturers.



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Connect with us today for a
no-cost on-site assessment!