



**New England Regional Defense Industry Collaboration (NERDIC)
Quarterly Meeting Summary Notes
April 6, 2023
Scarborough, Maine**

These notes reflect the themes/ideas summarized in the discussion sections of the Quarterly meeting.

Welcome and Vision

Adrian Horn, NERDIC Co-Chair

SPOTLIGHT – REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL INNOVATION

Regional Defense Projects

Tobin McGregor, President/CEO T. McGregor & Associates

OLDCC/DoD Update

Margit Myers (OLDCC Program Manager) was unable to attend, but sent through the following updates in advance of the meeting

- Defense Community Infrastructure Pilot Program FY23 Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity is live and closes June 23 <https://oldcc.gov/defense-community-infrastructure-program-dcip>
- Defense Manufacturing Community Support Program should issue it's FY23 notice in next several weeks - people can sign up on our website for notification and listen to the webinar held 2/28/23 <https://oldcc.gov/defense-manufacturing-community-support-program>
- DoD announces new Director of Defense Innovation <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3351281/secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-announces-new-director-of-the-defense-i/>
- DoD announces new Assistant Secretary for Industrial Base Policy - Dr. Laura Taylor-Kale Taylor-Kale <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/senate-confirms-bidens-pick-for-assistant-secretary-of-defense-for-industrial-base-policy/ar-AA19hlwK>
- President's FY24 Defense Budget includes a section on Enabling Future Capabilities Transition <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3326875/department-of-defense-releases-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2024-defense-budget/#:~:text=Enabling%20Future%20Capabilities%20Transition%20%2D%20Strategically%20more%20modern%20and%20capable%20force.>

DISCUSSION – How do we grow the NERDIC ecosystem and industry engagement? What should be NERDIC’s mission?

Bullet points represent attendees’ feedback

- Smaller businesses and industry want grow, diversify and get more work. Working with PTACs initially has been useful, but the challenge is getting to the next level and getting more work from the DoD.
- Smaller businesses and industry have the people and capacity – but not the connections.
- Connex software makes it easier to see capabilities in a more transparent way. OEA started to build supply chain mapping to look into supply chain and find people. Industry people and small businesses should talk to MEPs about Connex. Maine is talking to Connex to see if it’s a good fit. CT working with Connex.
- One educator noted that NERDIC needs to be going out in person to see what the industry issues are, including Industry 4.0 and workforce. NERDIC also needs to pull together disparate group and connect industry partners.
- NERDIC is the Networks of Networks
- The issue now is how to elevate NERDIC from Phase 1 to Phase 2.
- Cybersecurity in Phase 1 was great but how do small businesses pay to continue with this? The annual cost is just too much. Small businesses will need an expert staff member in cybersecurity, which isn’t realistic. Should there be a cooperative with a master server that small businesses can pay a subscription to use?
- How can NERDIC change the wage gap between manufacturing and low skill non-manufacturing jobs? The work needs to be attractive regarding salary to attract the right workers.

SPOTLIGHT - WORKFORCE

Workforce Wins & Losses

Denise Garland, Deputy Commissioner – Maine Department of Economic Development and Community Development (ME DECD)

- Maine saw the highest migration of people during and since the pandemic. 14th top state in the US in this regard. People moved to Maine for remote work – a challenge for broadband access and quality
- The American rescue fund was a game changer for Maine and it helped expand broadband to remote and rural areas.
- Free college education for high school graduates in Maine’s Community Colleges in 2023 – this will be beneficial for Maine’s workforce going forward.
<https://www.mccs.me.edu/freecollege/>
- Employers added 30,000 jobs in the past 2 years
- Are remote workers going to stay in Maine?
- How do we encourage visitors/tourists to move to Maine?
- Housing stock is a problem – Maine has the oldest housing stock in the nation.

SPOTLIGHT

NERDIC Phase 2 Workforce Initiative

*Meghan Abella Bowen, Senior Program Manager –
Center for Advanced Manufacturing,
Massachusetts Technology Corporation (MassTech)*

- MIT team are helping NERDIC with 2 workforce surveys
- They are asking, “Who are the stakeholders regarding workforce development/educational institutions. What capacity do they have and what are they currently doing in the areas of workforce”. MIT is currently talking to all 6 states as part of the NERDIC Phase 2 Workforce Initiative.
- MIT is also interviewing SMEs regarding implementing Industry 4.0 and how they are filling jobs and what are the skills gaps that are being experienced.
- MIT is bringing this information back to NERDIC. Many of states have already done this research and so it is important not to duplicate this research.
- For more information on the NERDIC Phase 2 Workforce Initiative and to assist the process via interviews, contact Meghan at abella-bowen@masstech.org

DISCUSSION: How do we best tackle the defense industry workforce issue at a regional scale?

What are the near term training needs that NERDIC need to focus on in the next 18 months?

Bullet points represent attendees’ feedback

- There was discussion around workforce and how people just show up and are not invested. There is no upward mobility as staff often have no middle skills and ambition to move up the scale and are happy just for the wage. This problem is due to a lack of training and not having the skill set to be invested and ambitious.
- Industry and small businesses invest in equipment but it is difficult to train staff to operate this high tech equipment and to bring staff to that next level. Staff members are not going to go back to school or night school as they have families etc.
- How do we attract middle and high school students into manufacturing? OLDCC is unable to provide funding for these students. Where does NERDIC go to change this model and attract funding to attract middle and high school students into manufacturing?

SPOTLIGHT

Industry innovation showcases, vendors and exhibits

*Compotech, Inc
Rapid Assault*

SPOTLIGHT – REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL INNOVATION

Adopting Digital Transformation – Why & How?

*Ron Angelo, CEO Connecticut
Center for Advanced
Technology (CCCAT)*

Advance Manufacturing – Partnerships & Collaboration

*John Belding, Director of
Advanced Manufacturing,
The University of Maine
Dr. Jack Lesko, Director of
Engineering Research, Roux
Institute*

The path forward for a strong NE Defense Cluster

*Wade Merritt, President and
State Director of
International Trade, Maine
International Trade Center
(MITC)*

NERDIC Next Steps

David Beurle, Future iQ