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NJMEP

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# MANUFACTURING MATTERS

New Jersey's manufacturing magazine, sharing the voice of the industry. Find the latest updates, resources, and trends shaping manufacturing and hear from the thought leaders driving the industry forward.



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# You Can't Champion American Manufacturing While Defunding It



Peter Connolly  
CEO | NJMEP

Manufacturing is more than just machines and production lines—it's about people. A thriving industry is built on a skilled, diverse, and empowered workforce. That's why NJMEP is committed to not only supporting businesses but also investing in organizations that create real opportunities for individuals facing employment barriers.

President Trump has made domestic manufacturing a central message of his administration. From rally stages to policy platforms, he and his administration have reiterated the importance of bringing jobs back to American soil, reshoring production, and restoring industrial strength.

**"Jobs and factories will come roaring back."**

– President Donald J. Trump

**"Our goal is to make it easier and more affordable to make things again in the United States of America... If you invest in America, in American jobs and American workers and in American businesses, you're going to be rewarded."**

– Vice President J.D. Vance

**The words are powerful—and absolutely right.**

American manufacturing should be roaring back. We should be investing in the businesses, the workers, and the innovation that allow us to make things here at home. Yet the Trump administration's recent decision to not renew contracts for 10 regional Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) centers signals a very

different reality.

The MEP National Network is not a bloated federal agency. It's a high-performing system made up of public-private partnerships in every state—including the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NJMEP)—with a proven track record of economic impact, efficiency, and value.

**In FY24 alone, the MEP National Network supported more than 35,000 manufacturers across the country.**

**+ 108,395 jobs were created or retained**

**+ \$15.0 billion in sales were generated**

**+ \$5.0 billion in new investments were unlocked**

**That's the impact being threatened.**

**Right here in New Jersey, NJMEP's work since 2019 has resulted in:**

**+ 20,278 jobs created or retained**

**+ A massive \$1.42 billion in wage impact**

**+ \$130.03 in economic impact for every \$1 invested**

**+ Over \$515.6 million in new sales supported, \$1.46 billion in retained sales, and \$125.9 million in cost savings to small-medium manufacturers**

**This is not theoretical. This is impact on the ground.**

Small and mid-sized manufacturers don't have built-in training departments or the resources to navigate complex regulatory and technological challenges alone. NJMEP is the partner that helps them meet today's demands and prepare for tomorrow's opportunities. Whether it's workforce

development, supply chain resilience, lean implementation, or adopting smart manufacturing technologies, we step in to make sure these businesses succeed—and by extension, so does New Jersey's economy.

Eliminating the MEP Network does more than cut a program—it removes the scaffolding propping up the very sector this administration claims to prioritize.

You can't say you support "Made in America" while stripping away the support systems that make domestic production viable for smaller firms. Manufacturing isn't just about large-scale factories and big-name corporations—it's about the family-owned machine shop in Paterson, the food processor in Vineland, the electronics maker in Trenton that are

the backbone of the supply chain, supplying critical components to those big-name corporations. These are the businesses that NJMEP serves every single day.

Defunding the MEP Network would strip thousands of manufacturers of the very tools they need to compete. It would weaken our ability to reshore jobs, compromise our supply chain security, and make it harder to close the skilled labor gap that continues to challenge this industry.

Let me be clear: this is not a partisan plea. The MEP Network has long enjoyed bipartisan support, and for good reason. It works. It delivers. And the ROI is irrefutable. Policymakers on both sides of the aisle should be rallying to protect this investment, not slash it.

We urge the Trump administration and all federal decision-makers to reverse course and recommit funding to the MEP National Network. Manufacturing in the United States can thrive. The jobs can come roaring back. But not if we dismantle the very systems that make it possible.

New Jersey's manufacturers are ready to build. We're ready to train, to innovate, and to lead. But we can't do it with one hand tied behind our back.

**If we truly want American manufacturing to thrive, we must invest in what works—and the MEP Network works. It's time to prove that "Made in America" is more than a slogan.**



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# Manufacturing Trends to Watch

## What 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturers Need to Know

Manufacturing in 2025 is defined by innovation, adaptation, and resilience. As the industry responds to shifting global demands, advancing technologies, and rising workforce pressures, manufacturers in New Jersey must stay informed and proactive to remain competitive.

Whether it's cutting-edge innovations or changing customer expectations, the industry is entering a dynamic phase of growth and reinvention. To stay competitive, businesses must be ready to embrace new trends, adapt core processes, and explore smarter ways to operate. Knowing what's coming and understanding how to respond is key to staying ahead in this rapidly changing landscape.

This year's trends reveal not only how the industry is shifting, but also how manufacturers in New Jersey can lead the charge by turning disruption into opportunity.

### Workforce AI Integration

The rise of artificial intelligence is ushering in a new era of collaboration between people and technology. In 2025, the conversation has moved beyond whether AI belongs in manufacturing—now the focus is on how to integrate it effectively into everyday operations.

From intelligent scheduling and resource planning to AI-enhanced quality checks and predictive insights, manufacturers are using AI to support faster, smarter decision-making. However, the most impactful change lies in how people and AI work together.

To fully realize these benefits, manufacturers must invest in AI-focused workforce development, equipping employees with the knowledge and confidence to

collaborate with digital tools. This means training shop floor workers, supervisors, and engineers alike to use AI as a complement to human expertise. The result? A more empowered, digitally fluent workforce and greater operational efficiency.

## Nearshoring & Supply Chain Resilience

Global uncertainty has accelerated a shift that was already underway: the move toward more regional, resilient supply chains. Manufacturers are increasingly turning to nearshoring—relocating suppliers and production closer to home—to reduce lead times, mitigate geopolitical risks, and manage the growing impact of tariffs and shifting trade policies.

This trend is particularly relevant for New Jersey manufacturers, many of whom are already embedded in critical regional supply chains across the East Coast. By working with domestic suppliers or reshoring select capabilities, businesses are regaining control over production timelines and improving overall agility.

Nearshoring isn't just about proximity; it's about transparency, flexibility, and collaboration. Manufacturers that embrace this model are finding they can better serve customers, reduce operational risk, and remain competitive even in volatile global markets.

## Digital Twins & Virtual Prototyping

The days of costly physical mockups and slow trial-and-error testing are fading fast. In 2025, digital twins are enabling manufacturers to simulate and optimize processes long before any real-world changes are made.

A digital twin is a virtual model of a physical object, system, or facility that mirrors its performance in real time. Manufacturers are using this technology to test factory layouts, troubleshoot production bottlenecks, evaluate energy usage, and even simulate new product designs.

By creating a digital replica of operations, businesses can spot inefficiencies, reduce downtime, and make smarter investment decisions, all without interrupting production. This kind of foresight is helping manufacturers maximize output and reduce costs, while creating a safer, more informed pathway to innovation.

## Next-Gen Robotics & Human-Robot Collaboration

Robotics continues to evolve—and so does the way manufacturers use it. The new wave of collaborative robots, or cobots, is designed to work safely alongside human workers, complementing their skills and handling repetitive or high-precision tasks with ease.

Unlike traditional robots, which often require separate enclosures

or programming experts, cobots are user-friendly, adaptable, and scalable for companies of all sizes. They're already being used to improve assembly line speed, enhance material handling, and reduce ergonomic strain on workers.

For manufacturers facing workforce shortages or trying to maximize limited labor, cobots offer a smart solution: one that supports productivity without compromising safety or quality. In 2025, collaborative robotics is no longer a future investment; it's a practical tool for building more flexible, efficient operations.

These four trends—AI workforce integration, nearshoring strategies, digital twin technology, and collaborative robotics—are helping shape the future of manufacturing right now. By understanding and engaging with these trends, New Jersey manufacturers can stay ahead of the curve and position themselves for growth in a highly competitive, fast-moving environment. 🌐

**Follow the latest from New Jersey manufacturing by following @NJMEP on X, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Stay engaged all year long to help protect and support the industry.**



## All Roads Lead to Freehold: Get Ready for 2025's 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day

On October 3, 2025, New Jersey's manufacturing community will once again unite for the state's most anticipated industry event—'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day. Now in its 13th year, this one-of-a-kind celebration will be held at iPlay America in Freehold, where over 1,000 manufacturers, students, government officials, and industry partners are expected to gather for a day of connection, recognition, and forward-looking collaboration.

Each year, the event continues to evolve—but the mission stays the same: to spotlight the strength of New Jersey manufacturing and provide a platform where innovation, talent, and leadership intersect. And this year's edition is shaping up to be the most impactful one yet.

### An Event Designed For Manufacturers

Whether you're looking to explore new technologies, expand your network, or engage in conversations that could shape the future of manufacturing in New Jersey, 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day delivers it all under one roof.

The event will feature a dynamic exhibit floor, packed with companies showcasing New Jersey-made products, service providers offering strategic support, and state agencies standing by with valuable resources. It's a live, hands-on display of what makes the Garden State a powerhouse in manufacturing.

#### This year's agenda also includes:

- ✓ Breakout sessions that explore the most pressing issues facing the industry.
- ✓ An exciting robotics showcase, highlighting student talent and the next generation of makers.
- ✓ Unmatched networking opportunities with peers, partners, and future collaborators.

- ✓ And one of the day's most anticipated highlights—the presence of both **New Jersey gubernatorial candidates Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill and former Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli**, who will speak directly to the manufacturing community and share how they plan to support industry growth across the state with the election just a month after 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day.

This unique opportunity to hear from the state's next potential leader is more than just symbolic. It ensures that the voices of manufacturers are heard at the highest level and reinforces the vital role this sector plays in shaping the state's economic future.

### Nominate Now Before It's Too Late

At the heart of 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day is a deep appreciation for the people and businesses that power the state's industrial engine. Each year, the event hosts a high-profile Awards Ceremony, honoring individuals and companies that exemplify excellence, leadership, and community impact.

#### Award categories include:

- ✓ Manufacturer of the Year – Small, Medium, and Large
- ✓ Rising Stars Award – A nod to



**new or emerging manufacturing leaders**

- ✓ **Leader in Life Sciences – Recognizing innovation and achievement in NJ's robust life science sector**
- ✓ **Innovator of the Year – Celebrating groundbreaking ideas or processes that are redefining what it means to manufacture in NJ**
- ✓ **Made in NJ Honor Roll – Recognizing long-standing champions of NJ manufacturing whose dedication has made a lasting impact on the industry**

The deadline to submit nominations is August 1, and time is running out. Whether you're nominating yourself, your business, or a peer, this is your chance to bring well-deserved recognition to those making a

difference in manufacturing.

## **Why It Matters: Today and Beyond**

More than just machines and materials, manufacturing is all about the people, progress, and the partnerships that keep our state moving forward. Events like 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day serve as a powerful reminder of what's possible when the public and private sectors come together to celebrate shared success.

For students, it's an invitation to explore a high-potential career path.

For business leaders, it's a rare chance to connect and collaborate.

For policymakers, it's a front-row seat to

the needs and innovations driving one of New Jersey's most critical industries.

And for manufacturers, it's a day to be seen, heard, and celebrated.

## **Be There with the Industry**

Whether you've attended before or this is your first time joining the celebration, the message is clear: You won't want to miss MADE in NJ Manufacturing Day 2025.

**Register today at <https://www.njmep.org/mfgday> and join us on October 3 in Freehold as we champion the people and products that are made to matter—right here in New Jersey.**

# **Gain more control of your manufacturing company's many moving parts.**

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New Jersey manufacturing is **Built to Last**.  
Come discover some of the featured manufacturers  
in this edition of *Manufacturing Matters*.

# Niehoff Endex North America & Sigma-Netics



## Niehoff Endex North America

For over three decades, Niehoff Endex North America (NENA) has been a driving force in the Wire and Cable industry. As the North American division of the globally recognized Niehoff Group, NENA brings German engineering and precision to manufacturers across the continent. From its Swedesboro, New Jersey headquarters, the company delivers advanced machinery and tailored solutions that help clients meet evolving demands with speed, efficiency, and consistency.

But excellence at scale doesn't happen by accident. To take its operations to the next level, NENA set out to strengthen internal processes, optimize workflows, and cultivate a company-wide culture of continuous improvement. The challenge? Turning that ambition into action without disrupting productivity. That's where NJMEP came in—helping NENA activate its Power+ Continuous Improvement Program through immersive Lean training and leadership development. Turn to page 9 to see how this strategic initiative resulted in more than \$1 million in combined sales impact and empowered NENA's team to lead lasting change

## Sigma-Netics

With a legacy dating back to 1966, Sigma-Netics has earned its place as a trusted partner in mission-critical markets like aerospace, aviation, and defense. From its headquarters in Riverdale, New Jersey, the company manufactures precision-engineered pressure switches relied on by some of the world's most demanding clients. A recent expansion into high-end pressure transducers pushed their expertise even further, into the fields of rockets, satellites, and space exploration.

But this growth came with a new set of expectations. Clients in defense and space began requiring strict cybersecurity compliance—mandating documentation, safeguards, and proof of readiness under frameworks like DFARS and NIST. For a lean operation focused on performance, navigating these complex regulations posed a real challenge. That's when Sigma-Netics partnered with NJMEP to build a path forward. Through assessments, system planning, and tailored guidance, they strengthened their cybersecurity posture without losing momentum. Flip to page 10 to discover how this investment not only satisfied client requirements—it unlocked over \$1 million in retained and new business.

*New Jersey manufacturing is Built to Last. These businesses and the employees that make it all possible are truly, 'Unsung Heroes.'*

**Check back in *Manufacturing Matters* every quarter to see the Built to Last manufacturing list.**  
**To be included, contact Mike Womack at [mwomack@njmep.org](mailto:mwomack@njmep.org) and show the world your company is Built to Last.**



# Niehoff Endex North America: Driving Operational Excellence Through Continuous Improvement



**SUCCESS STORY:**  
**OPERATIONAL  
EXCELLENCE**

## Background

Niehoff Endex North America (NENA) has been a leader in the Wire and Cable industry, providing state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment, spare parts, and services since establishing its U.S. presence in 1990. Headquartered in Swedesboro, New Jersey, NENA operates as the North American division of the German-based Niehoff Group, bringing European precision and innovation to the U.S. market. Their cutting-edge machinery and solutions support wire and cable manufacturers across various industries, ensuring efficiency, quality, and technological advancement.

Committed to continuous improvement, NENA sought to enhance its operations through Lean principles and strategies, aligning with its corporate Power+ Continuous Improvement Program to drive greater efficiency, productivity, and quality across the organization.

## Challenge

In the wire and cable manufacturing industry, efficiency, consistency, and innovation are critical to staying ahead of the competition. For Niehoff Endex North America (NENA), ensuring that operations ran as smoothly and productively as possible was not just an internal priority—it was a fundamental part of their ability to meet customer demands and maintain their reputation for quality. However, achieving sustainable process improvements required more than just

internal efforts.

As part of their global Power+ Continuous Improvement Program, NENA set ambitious goals to refine workflows, eliminate inefficiencies, and develop a culture of operational excellence. However, implementing Lean methodologies across an entire organization presented its own set of challenges. The company needed structured training, expert guidance, and a clear roadmap to ensure long-term success. While NENA had an internal team capable of driving change, they recognized the need for an external partner to provide specialized support in Lean implementation, data-driven decision-making, and an outside perspective.

To sustain and scale continuous improvement efforts, NENA sought a partner who could provide hands-on guidance, real-world application of Lean methodologies, and leadership training that would equip their teams with the skills necessary to drive lasting change. With these objectives in mind, NENA turned to NJMEP to support the execution of their continuous improvement initiatives and ensure they met their quality targets.

## Solution

To bring NENA's Power+ Continuous Improvement Program to life, NJMEP developed a structured, hands-on training

FLIP ►

“We really appreciate [NJMEP] – from the network you guys have to the flexibility in your training and consulting. We don't take a cookie-cutter approach; we listen, discuss with our [NJMEP] representatives, and you guys have always come up with good solutions,”

Andy Zinner, VP Operations & Service at Niehoff Endex North America

## Niehoff Endex North America: Driving Operational Excellence Through Continuous Improvement

(continued)

and implementation strategy designed to deliver both immediate and long-term impact. The program was planned for 18 full-day onsite sessions, totaling 144 hours, supplemented by 22 additional hours of offsite preparation and support, bringing the total to 166 hours of dedicated expertise. This approach ensured that continuous improvement efforts were seamlessly integrated into daily operations without disrupting productivity.

One of the key focuses of the initiative was 5S Workplace Organization, a fundamental Lean methodology aimed at creating a more efficient, structured, and organized work environment. In addition to workplace organization, NJMEP worked closely with NENA's team to refine operational workflows, improve warehouse management, and introduce Root Cause Analysis techniques to identify and eliminate recurring inefficiencies. These sessions provided employees with problem-solving frameworks that enabled them to take proactive steps in optimizing processes. The program also included Leadership Training and Coaching, equipping supervisors and management with the skills needed to sustain and build upon these improvements long after the training was completed.

This dynamic approach empowered employees at every level, reinforcing a culture of continuous improvement while aligning with NENA's corporate vision for operational excellence.

## Results

Over the past 12 months, the impact of this partnership has gone far beyond process adjustments and efficiency gains. According to an independent third-party survey, NENA reported the following results:

- ✓ **INCREASED SALES: \$400,000**
- ✓ **RETAINED SALES: \$650,000**
- ✓ **NEW PLANT EQUIPMENT INVESTMENTS: \$40,000**

# Sigma-Netics: Strengthening Cybersecurity Compliance to Support Mission-Critical Markets

## Background

Founded in 1966, Sigma-Netics is a privately held corporation headquartered in Riverdale, New Jersey, that has long been a trusted name in pressure switch manufacturing, serving high-demand sectors like aerospace, aviation, and military defense. Known for its precision-engineered components, the company has built its reputation by providing reliable pressure switches for mission-critical applications.

In 2018, Sigma-Netics expanded its footprint by launching a new division in Virginia, specializing in high-end pressure transducers designed for cutting-edge defense and space programs. Their customer base quickly evolved to include manufacturers of rockets, satellites, missiles, and other true space applications, creating a new tier of compliance expectations. With such a specialized and growing client base, maintaining a strong foundation of cybersecurity and regulatory adherence became more important than ever.

## Challenge

As Sigma-Netics expanded into highly sensitive markets—particularly space and defense—the pressure to meet evolving cybersecurity compliance requirements grew rapidly. Longstanding clients in the aerospace and military sectors began enforcing stricter standards, requesting detailed documentation around cybersecurity practices, risk management protocols, and data protection policies.

With requirements like DFARS 252.204-7021 and NIST SP 800-171 becoming increasingly non-negotiable, Sigma-Netics found itself fielding complex questions from clients: Where do you stand on compliance? What safeguards are in place? Is there a formal action plan?

As a small company with limited internal resources and a fast-paced operational environment, Sigma-Netics was not fully prepared to answer those questions—or to demonstrate the level of documentation and planning their customers were now demanding. The organization was focused on product quality and performance but lacked formalized cybersecurity protocols and awareness around compliance frameworks.





## SUCCESS STORY: **OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

Like many manufacturers, Sigma-Netics recognized the value of external support—not just to understand evolving requirements, but to develop a structured path forward that would address client needs, reduce risk, and position the company for confident growth.

### **Solution**

Recognizing the urgency and complexity of the challenge, NJMEP worked closely with Sigma-Netics to develop a phased approach that would lay a strong foundation for cybersecurity compliance. The immediate priority was to meet the requirements outlined in DFARS 252.204-7021, with a clear focus on documentation, risk assessment, and control implementation.

To support their needs, NJMEP helped connect Sigma-Netics with a resource that matched their goals—ensuring the project was both cost-effective and aligned with their timeline and technical requirements.

A full gap assessment was conducted to evaluate existing cybersecurity controls, identify deficiencies, and confirm the implementation of the 31 basic safeguards. NJMEP assisted in calculating the company's SPRS (Supplier Performance Risk System) score and submitting it to the Supplier Performance Risk System, a key milestone for defense-related business.

Sigma-Netics then worked to develop a comprehensive System Security Plan (SSP), which detailed their cybersecurity program, identified Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI), defined access permissions, and mapped out their IT system boundaries. NJMEP also supported the creation of a Plan of Action and Milestones (POAM) to guide the remediation of outstanding controls, ensuring the company had a clear, manageable path forward.

The entire process was completed over the course of four months, allowing Sigma-Netics to make significant progress without overextending its internal resources.

### **Results**

Through its partnership with NJMEP, Sigma-Netics was able to make significant strides in meeting critical cybersecurity compliance requirements—earning greater trust from clients and solidifying its position in highly sensitive markets.

According to a third-party survey, the company reported the following results:

- ✓ **INCREASED SALES: \$750,000**
- ✓ **RETAINED SALES: \$350,000**
- ✓ **INFORMATION SYSTEMS INVESTMENTS: \$10,000**

“The benefit of NJMEP is weeding through all the chaos. They had the background, the knowledge, and were able to point us in the right direction—fitting the support to our size, our company, and what we needed both today and for the years ahead.”

Rob Hishmeh, VP of Sales at Sigma-Netics Inc.



## 2025 State-of-the-State of Manufacturing: Industry Unites to Champion Manufacturing in New Jersey

On May 22, 2025, New Jersey's manufacturing community came together in force for the State-of-the-State of Manufacturing event, hosted by NJMEP and NJBIA. This year's gathering was more than just another industry event—it was a critical moment to stand united and advocate for the future of manufacturing in New Jersey.

As economic and political uncertainty looms, and with renewed state support for NJMEP's vital services and the industry as a whole at stake, this event became a platform for manufacturers to showcase their collective strength, resilience, and contributions to the state's economy.

### A Day of Advocacy and Industry Engagement

Held at the New Jersey State Capitol in Trenton, the event featured a robust agenda designed to connect manufacturers with legislators, policymakers, and fellow industry leaders.

The day began with a morning breakfast session, where participants networked with lawmakers, shared their experiences, and emphasized the

need for continued investment in manufacturing. This was followed by a planning session, committee hearing, and a Legislative Manufacturing Caucus meeting, providing an opportunity for manufacturers to express concerns, highlight achievements, and collaborate on strategies to strengthen the industry.

The atmosphere was one of unity, determination, and pride, as industry representatives voiced their unwavering commitment to keeping New Jersey at the forefront of American manufacturing.

As NJMEP CEO Peter Connolly reflected, "The sheer energy and engagement we saw today highlights the collective dedication of our industry. Together, we're not just reacting to uncertainty, we're shaping the path forward." Both Connolly and NJBIA CEO Michelle Siekerka expressed their appreciation for the overwhelming turnout and the meaningful connections made throughout the day.

### Partnering for Progress: The NJMEP-NJBIA Collaboration

The State-of-the-State of Manufacturing event was a testament to the power of collaboration that was made possible through "Manufacturing Counts", the partnership between NJMEP and NJBIA. This joint effort underscores both organizations' commitment to amplifying the voice of manufacturers and driving economic development in New Jersey.

"I like to think of NJBIA's partnership with NJMEP as an uber-partnership



where both organizations contribute to the industry in so many ways,” said Michele Siekerka, CEO of NJBIA. “Together, we’re ensuring that manufacturing remains a cornerstone of New Jersey’s economy.”

This multi-faceted partnership reflects a shared vision of a resilient, thriving manufacturing sector in New Jersey, one that’s ready to tackle challenges and seize opportunities for growth.



### Celebrating Innovation: The Coolest Thing MADE in NJ Winner

A highlight of the day was the presentation of the inaugural Makers Madness – Coolest Thing MADE in NJ award, celebrating manufacturing ingenuity and creativity. Geared Power, a Wayne-based healthcare technology innovator, was recognized for its groundbreaking BioGuard UVC product.

This PPE mask innovation utilizes UVC technology to neutralize viruses at the source, offering a significant advancement in preventing respiratory healthcare-associated infections. Geared Power CEO Gary Kellstrom was on hand to accept the award, which honored both his team’s ingenuity and the broader

impact of New Jersey’s manufacturing ecosystem.

The Coolest Thing MADE in NJ contest not only celebrated exceptional innovation but also spotlighted the talent and determination that drive local manufacturers to push boundaries and solve real-world challenges right here in the Garden State.

For more about the winning product, visit Manufacturing Counts.

### A Clear Message to Trenton

This year’s State-of-the-State event sent a resounding message to policymakers in Trenton: manufacturing matters. Manufacturers of all sizes and from every corner of the state came together to demonstrate not only the value NJMEP provides through consulting, training, and support services but also the indispensable role the industry plays in driving New Jersey’s economy.

The atmosphere was charged with purpose. Attendees made it clear that the manufacturing sector is not just an important contributor to economic vitality; it’s essential to innovation, workforce development, and long-term sustainability. The stakes were high, and the community responded with determination, clarity, and unity.

By uniting as one voice, manufacturers, NJMEP, and NJBIA effectively reinforced the urgency of sustained support and strategic investment in the sector.

### Looking Ahead: Strengthening

## the Foundation of Manufacturing

As we look back on this landmark event, it’s clear that the manufacturing industry’s strength lies in its people, its partnerships, and its shared commitment to progress. The conversations sparked, the connections forged, and the innovations celebrated will continue to fuel efforts to secure a prosperous future for New Jersey’s manufacturers.

While challenges remain—whether from global competition, economic uncertainty, or policy shifts—the industry has demonstrated its readiness to adapt, innovate, and lead. With the combined efforts of NJMEP, NJBIA, industry leaders, and dedicated manufacturers, the path forward is one of resilience and collaboration.

**This year’s State-of-the-State of Manufacturing was a powerful statement of unity and purpose, showcasing the industry’s unwavering determination to ensure that manufacturing in New Jersey remains a driver of economic strength and community prosperity.**





# Lean: Driving Efficiency on the Production Line and Beyond

by Joe Perez  
Content Marketing, NJMEP

In today's manufacturing landscape, achieving operational excellence isn't a one-time project; it's a continuous journey. Lean isn't just a toolkit for process improvement; it's a mindset of continuous improvement and relentless pursuit of value.

At its core, Lean encourages organizations to incrementally improve efficiency, reduce waste, and enhance customer satisfaction. But while many associate Lean primarily with the production floor, its principles apply just as powerfully to the back-office functions that support day-to-day operations.

## Lean in Action: More Than Just the Factory Floor

When most people think of Lean, they picture assembly lines running seamlessly, with minimal waste and high productivity. And while Lean has its roots in manufacturing, its principles apply far beyond the shop floor.

On the production line, Lean helps manufacturers:

- ✓ Reduce lead times by eliminating bottlenecks.
- ✓ Improve quality through error-proofing and root cause analysis.
- ✓ Streamline material flow with Kanban systems and just-in-time (JIT) production.
- ✓ Maximize equipment utilization by reducing downtime and unplanned maintenance.

But Lean also transforms the back office—the often-overlooked processes that support operations. **In areas like procurement, finance, HR, and customer service, Lean can:**

- ✓ Simplify workflows to reduce administrative waste.
- ✓ Streamline approval processes, cutting down on delays and errors.
- ✓ Standardize document handling and information management for clarity and consistency.
- ✓ Improve responsiveness to internal and external customers.

The result? An organization where every function operates more efficiently, supporting the goal of delivering value to the customer.

## Continuous Improvement as a Way of Working

Lean is built on the principle of continuous improvement—embracing small, incremental changes that lead to meaningful, long-term progress. Known as “Kaizen,” this philosophy encourages every member of an organization to identify inefficiencies and propose solutions, reinforcing a culture where improvement is everyone's



responsibility.

Beyond just reducing costs, continuous improvement fosters a deep sense of ownership among employees, builds organizational resilience, and strengthens customer relationships. By embedding this mindset into daily operations, companies cultivate an environment where learning, experimentation, and adaptability become second nature.

## Making Lean Work Across the Organization

What sets successful Lean organizations apart isn't just their use

of tools like 5S, value stream mapping, or standardized work. It's their ability to apply Lean thinking holistically and aligning every department around shared goals.

### In a Lean organization:

- ✓ **Production teams** continuously look for ways to reduce cycle times and defects.
- ✓ **Procurement teams** streamline supplier selection and materials flow.
- ✓ **Finance teams** simplify reporting processes and improve accuracy.
- ✓ **HR teams** enhance onboarding,

training, and performance management to support Lean initiatives.

- ✓ **Customer service teams** resolve issues faster by eliminating unnecessary steps and empowering frontline staff.

The impact is greater efficiency, higher quality, and stronger collaboration across both the production line and the back office.

## Lean as a Competitive Advantage

In a world where customer expectations, market conditions, and technologies

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### ALEX SMITH

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evolve rapidly, Lean gives manufacturers a sustainable competitive edge. **By embracing Lean principles across the entire organization, businesses can:**

- ✓ **Adapt faster to changing demands and disruptions.**
- ✓ **Deliver higher value to customers at lower cost.**
- ✓ **Engage and retain talent through a culture of empowerment and collaboration.**
- ✓ **Build resilience against economic uncertainty and operational challenges.**

The result is not just efficiency, it's a sustainable competitive advantage.

## **Lean Expertise to Support Your Journey**

While Lean principles may seem straightforward, implementing and sustaining them effectively requires guidance and expertise. This is where NJMEP's Lean experts come in.

With deep industry knowledge and practical experience, our team collaborates with manufacturers to identify areas for improvement across production and back-office functions. They work alongside teams to develop customized strategies that align with business goals, provide hands-on training, and establish a foundation for continuous improvement.

## **The Continuous Journey**

Lean is more than a methodology, it's a mindset. One that encourages organizations to look beyond the status quo, question assumptions, and seek better ways of doing business.

By embedding Lean principles into both production lines and back-office processes, manufacturers can achieve meaningful, lasting improvements that drive growth and customer satisfaction. And with the right guidance and commitment, the journey of continuous improvement never truly ends.

# Establishing Structure

**NJMEP provides expertise for small and medium-sized manufacturing businesses while investing in both industry professionals and the future.**

Connecting with the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP) means benefiting from its team's vast experience in the likes of working with a variety of manufacturing businesses and also supplying strategies shaped by personalized partnerships.

NJMEP's customized consulting services are designed to advocate for each business' unique path to success while focusing on those clients' core areas and principles.

**"We're held accountable by our results," says Michael Womack, director of marketing and communications at NJMEP. "Consulting sometimes has a connotation to it [in which] clients are given the information that they need, walk away and hope they get done what they need to get done—we're a little different. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) works with us to help offset some of our overhead so we can give small- to medium-sized manufacturers access to affordable consulting projects that normally wouldn't be obtainable if they go elsewhere."**

That accountability measure is substantiated by surveying clients through an independent organization that measures success in both retaining and increasing sales, saving costs and employees, and creating jobs. NJMEP has an inherent interest in the companies it consults: Its existence relies upon high customer satisfaction, so its approach focuses on actionable strategies rather than just offering advice.

"We can't take a one-size-fits all approach. We rely on our internal team to ensure that we're keeping up with the industry. We have an advocacy department that works

directly with the state and federal governments, so we stay akin to the biggest changes. We work closely with our partners—NJBIA (New Jersey Business & Industry Association), the Chamber of Commerce of Southern New Jersey, the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce—to ensure that the manufacturers' voices are heard," Womack explains.

**"The fact that we have all of those eyes looking for the state and federal changes, regulations and rules, allows NJMEP to pay attention to what's happening in the industry, compile that information, and ensure that we are keeping up with the changes and trends that we're seeing on the ground floor. We are on the front lines when it comes to both of those."**

Such an in-depth, multifactorial analysis of the manufacturing industry ensures methodology that reaches beyond the surface. NJMEP combines an impartial perspective with passionate experts to best support each business it works with and the employees within it. The impact of these actionable strategies is measured and proven by its ability to level the playing field for small and medium enterprises to keep up with larger competition. Due to its distinction as a training and consulting provider and not an association, NJMEP addresses any cost barriers that businesses may face elsewhere through its partnership with NIST and the State.

"You don't have a monthly fee for just having a relationship with us. You can reach out at any time, and we host networking events all over the state.

Our core business is for-fee consulting and training but another benefit of that state and federal support that we receive, is we can do these extra things besides just worrying about making as much money as we can off a single client," Womack says.

With such high stakes and standards, NJMEP always looks ahead while simultaneously considering the past and present. That dual perspective has inspired a number of programs, including its annual 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day spotlighting opportunities within the manufacturing industry with up-close sessions and education.

Reaching the future workforce is a critical mission for NJMEP. Its dedication to cultivating student interest led to hands-on, interactive outreach programs like the Future Makers & Creators Tour it runs in partnership with the NJEDA, which includes local industry leaders making themselves available at those visits that provide students with access to industry education and opportunities they might otherwise not have.

**"We have this new, beautiful, 38-foot RV decked out as a hands-on training classroom that we take to schools like the Scholastic Book Fair, to show advanced manufacturing technologies. Instead of books, we show them how all of this education can turn into a viable career path. We're getting local manufacturers actually on-site at those schools to show the students what they make," says Womack. "There's so many ways to engage, beyond just the consultative and training programs that**

**these manufacturers have access to just because of our existence."**

NJMEP has partnered with schools in almost every county so that the next generation can receive training, certifications, machinery knowledge, employment opportunities and more. Never forgetting to account for industry changes, NJMEP also recognizes the importance of longevity regardless of innovation.

**"We're watching automation and people work together. With AI, there needs to be a human there to make the programs and software run, and to tell the robot what to do and how," says Womack. "That human element is inherent. The doomsday articles of 2010 saying 'automation is coming to take your jobs' never panned out to be true. If anything, it's created more jobs."**

Through expertise, education, advocacy and humanity, NJMEP tirelessly works to support the new jobs that innovation creates while maintaining engagement and growth for the industry's seasoned professionals. Each client working with the organization receives the essential support necessary to compete and the tools for prolonged success.

NJMEP provides expertise for small and medium-sized manufacturing businesses while investing in both industry professionals and the future.

by Carly Murray  
SouthJerseyBiz.net





Bridging Gaps, Building Futures:

# How Automation Empowers Today's Manufacturing Workforce

As manufacturers continue to navigate one of the most complex workforce landscapes in recent memory, creating opportunities for open dialogue between industry and government has never been more critical. That mission took center stage at the Workforce Development Roundtable Discussion held at Sussex County Community College on February 21, 2025.

Bringing together manufacturers, educators, and workforce stakeholders from across the region, the event focused on tackling talent shortages, aligning training efforts with real-world demand, and exploring how legislative efforts can better support New Jersey's industrial base. A key presence at the roundtable was Assemblyman Mike Inganamort, who participated in a robust Q&A and provided direct insight into the role policy can play in strengthening the state's workforce pipeline.



## An Event Grounded in Purpose

The roundtable began with clear goals:

- ✓ Foster new connections between business and education
- ✓ Share best practices for recruiting, training, and retaining skilled workers
- ✓ Offer a forum for direct dialogue with policymakers

After introductions and a networking session, the conversation shifted to a panel discussion that explored what workforce development means in practice. Topics included recruiting younger generations, reskilling current employees, navigating available state resources, and building partnerships that last.

As the panel concluded, the focus turned toward public policy—setting the stage for Assemblyman Inganamort's address and Q&A session.

### Assemblyman Inganamort: A Direct Line to the Legislature

Assemblyman Mike Inganamort's participation marked a highlight of the event. His presence provided a rare opportunity for manufacturers to connect directly with a lawmaker actively engaged in shaping workforce policy.

The conversation addressed a range of timely topics, including:

- ✓ The status of current legislative initiatives aimed at bolstering workforce development through training grants, hiring incentives, and funding for apprenticeships

- ✓ The importance of simplifying access to state resources and streamlining regulatory barriers that often deter small and mid-sized manufacturers
- ✓ Strategies for better alignment between educational institutions and workforce needs, including support for career and technical education programs
- ✓ How manufacturers can engage more effectively with legislators, ensuring their needs are reflected in workforce planning efforts
- ✓ Additional legislative priorities that could impact manufacturing in 2025, such as infrastructure development, tax policy, and technology modernization

Assemblyman Inganamort encouraged continued collaboration between businesses and policymakers, emphasizing the value of two-way communication to shape smart, responsive legislation.

### From Policy to Practice: Building the Workforce Pipeline

Throughout the event, one message rang clear: there is no single solution to the workforce challenge, but strategic partnerships, open communication, and legislative support are essential parts of the path forward.

Panelists and attendees discussed the need for:

- ✓ More flexible training models that allow employees to learn while working
- ✓ Clearer career pathways that show younger talent what a future in manufacturing looks like

- ✓ Increased awareness around available workforce funding and support programs
- ✓ A continued push to modernize how workforce needs are communicated between industry and government

These insights helped frame the roundtable as part of an ongoing effort to connect workforce realities with legislative action.

### Next Steps: Building on Momentum

The roundtable wrapped with a collaborative group discussion focused on next steps. Several attendees expressed interest in continuing the conversation through future regional meetups, legislative roundtables, and industry-education partnerships.

The event also reinforced the value of cross-sector collaboration. No single organization can solve workforce challenges alone—but when manufacturers, schools, state agencies, and elected officials work together, progress becomes possible.

Events like this one at Sussex County Community College serve as proof that the will to collaborate is strong. What's needed now is continued engagement, measurable action, and support systems that can adapt as workforce needs evolve.

**Stay connected with NJMEP for updates on upcoming workforce roundtables and other events focused on strengthening New Jersey's manufacturing talent pipeline.**

Unpacking the 2025 Industry Report:

# A Data-Driven Look at Manufacturing in New Jersey

Understanding where we are is the first step to figuring out where we're going. That's the purpose behind the newly released 2025 New Jersey Manufacturing Industry Report: a comprehensive, data-backed snapshot of one of the state's most essential sectors. Developed through a first-of-its-kind collaboration between the New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOL) and the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP), this report brings together the most complete view available of the manufacturing landscape in the Garden State.

Whether you're a manufacturer, policymaker, educator, or economic developer, the insights in this report offer a deeper understanding of the challenges, trends, and opportunities that are shaping the industry's future.

## A Ground-Level View from the Top

The strength of New Jersey's manufacturing sector lies in its diversity—from life sciences and aerospace to food production and precision electronics. But without consistent, statewide data, it's difficult to see the full picture. This report fills that gap.

By aligning labor market intelligence from NJDOL with NJMEP's statewide insights and private sector engagement, the 2025 Industry Report presents an accurate reflection of where the sector stands—and where it's headed.

Among the key data points featured:

- ✓ **Employment and wage breakdowns by county and sector**
- ✓ **Economic output trends and industry contributions to state GDP**
- ✓ **Sector-specific performance across all major NAICS codes**
- ✓ **Hiring demands and skills gap analysis**
- ✓ **Training and workforce development needs**
- ✓ **Trends in automation, reshoring, and digital transformation**
- ✓ **Regional comparisons that help identify local opportunities and challenges**

This isn't just data for data's sake—it's information designed to drive better decision-making at every level of industry and government.

## Meeting the Moment: Why This Insight Matters

New Jersey's manufacturers are navigating a period of rapid change. Global supply chains continue to shift. Workforce dynamics are evolving. Policy decisions are being made at both the state and federal level that directly impact industrial operations.

Against that backdrop, the 2025 Industry Report serves as a vital planning tool. It helps:

- ✓ **Manufacturers benchmark their growth and workforce strategies**
- ✓ **Economic developers identify high-potential clusters for investment**
- ✓ **Policymakers understand where support is needed most**
- ✓ **Educators and training providers align programs with real employer demand**



As the manufacturing sector continues to prove its resilience, having access to clear, consistent, and contextualized data is key to staying competitive and future-ready.

### What Sets This Report Apart

While other industry snapshots and labor market summaries exist, this report goes a step further. It is grounded in real-time feedback from NJ manufacturers, enhanced by NJMEP's boots-on-the-ground experience, and elevated by NJDOL's powerful data infrastructure.

Each year, the report evolves based on feedback from users, shifts in the market, and the emergence of new economic priorities. The 2025 edition reflects several improvements and additions, including more detailed regional spotlights, clearer skills demand mapping, and expanded sections on the impact of technology and reshoring initiatives.

The result is a resource that reflects both quantitative performance and qualitative insight—the kind of information that can guide capital investments, talent acquisition strategies, and public policy agendas alike.

### Turning Insight Into Action

This year's report reinforces a consistent message: New Jersey manufacturing is strong, adaptive, and full of potential, but continued progress requires informed collaboration.

That's why this report is released annually—to ensure manufacturers, educators, and policymakers have the information they need to act with clarity and urgency. It's not just about identifying problems;

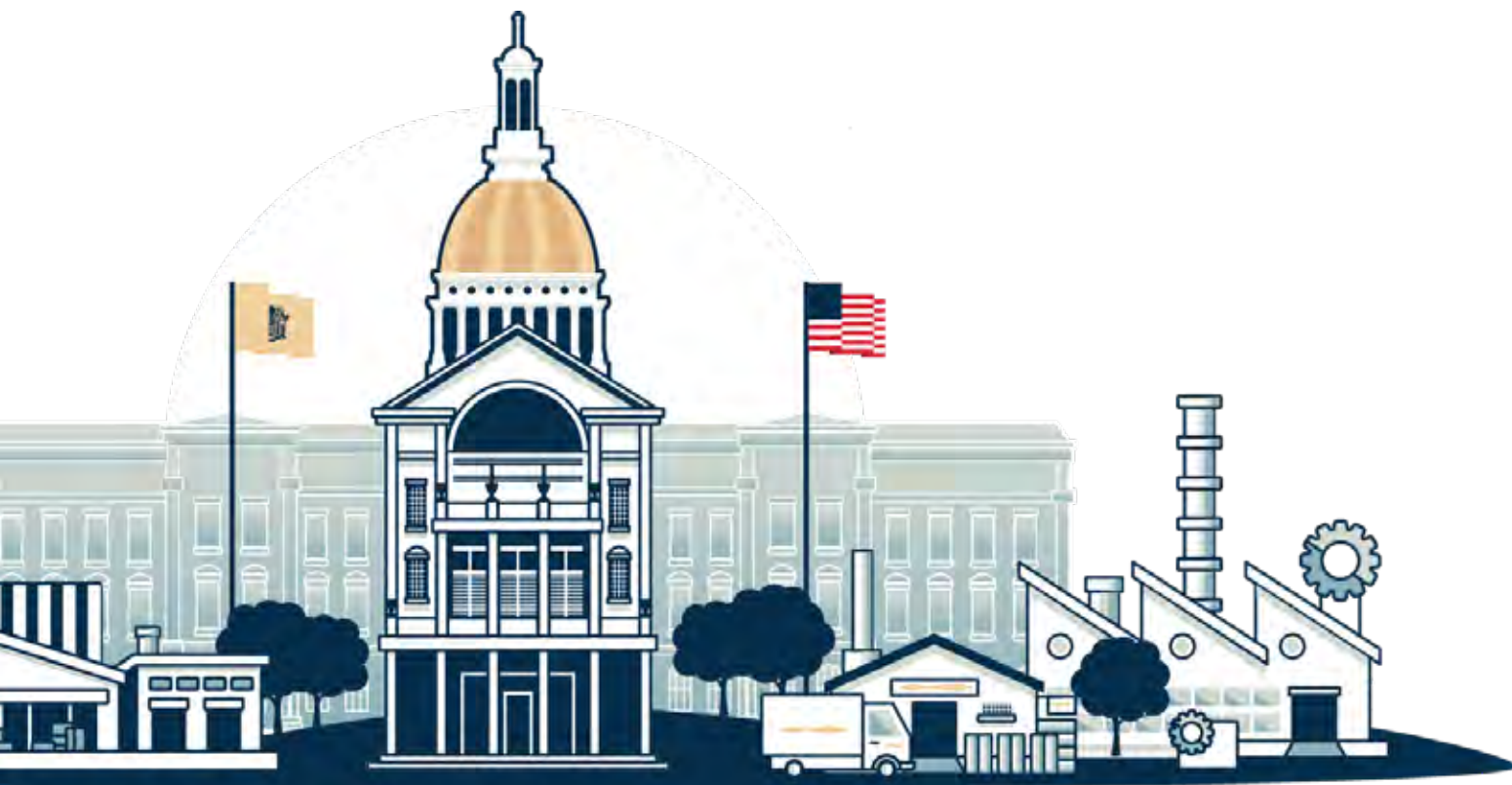
it's about creating a shared language to solve them.

If you're involved in any part of New Jersey's industrial ecosystem, the 2025 Industry Report is a tool you'll want to use.

**Explore the full report today and discover how data can power progress.**



# 2025 State of New Jersey Manufacturing Industry Report



Introducing the  
New Jersey Manufacturing Network:

# A Unified Hub for Industry Growth

New Jersey's manufacturing sector is an economic powerhouse, generating billions in output and supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs. Yet, until now, there had been no centralized hub where manufacturers could easily connect with the organizations, services, and opportunities that exist to support them. That's why the launch of the New Jersey Manufacturing Network marks a pivotal step forward.

Developed to unify the resources, expertise, and services available to manufacturers statewide, the New Jersey Manufacturing Network is a collaborative platform designed to simplify access to the tools manufacturers need to succeed. The initiative is led by the New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC) and built through close cooperation with key partners across the public and private sectors.

## A Network Built for Manufacturers

At its core, the New Jersey Manufacturing Network is about breaking down silos and building a shared infrastructure for industrial growth. Rather than expecting manufacturers to navigate dozens of disconnected support channels, this initiative brings everything together under one roof.

The platform allows users to:

- ✓ **Search for services by category, need, or location**
- ✓ **Connect directly with state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and workforce partners**
- ✓ **Explore resources related to training, business development, funding, compliance, and innovation**
- ✓ **Identify programs they may not even know exist**

The site is simple by design, allowing manufacturers to spend less time searching and more time engaging with the right opportunities.

## Who's Behind It? A Coalition of Support

With NJBAC spearheading this initiative, the Network itself is a collaborative effort between organizations that have long served New Jersey's manufacturing sector. Partners include:

- **New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP)**
- **New Jersey Small Business Development Centers (NJSBDC)**
- **NJ Council of County Colleges (NJCCC)**
- **NJ Council of County Vocational-Technical Schools (NJCCVTS)**
- **New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA)**
- **New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development (NJDOLE)**
- **New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)**
- **NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE)**
- **NJ Small Business Association (NJSBA)**

Each partner plays a distinct role in supporting , including workforce training, business consulting, and capital access. Under a unified platform these organizations can better align efforts and deliver seamless support to businesses of all sizes and sectors.

## Why a Unified Network Changes Everything

For manufacturers, time is everything. Between navigating supply chain issues, workforce development, regulatory compliance, and production demands, most leaders don't have the bandwidth to chase down fragmented support programs or figure out which organization does what.

The New Jersey Manufacturing Network eliminates that friction. It connects businesses with the right partners—seamlessly. More importantly, it sends a clear signal that the state and its industry advocates are not only listening, but they're also organizing.

This is especially important as manufacturers across New Jersey face:

- ✓ **A growing skills gap and rising demand for technical talent**
- ✓ **Increased pressure to adopt automation and sustainability practices**
- ✓ **New federal and state regulations that require compliance readiness**
- ✓ **Opportunities to enter emerging sectors like aerospace and defense**
- ✓ **A need to stay competitive in a high-cost, innovative market**

No single organization can address all of these areas alone. But with the right partners at the table, manufacturers can access the full range of resources

they need to stay agile and competitive.

## A Platform That Will Continue to Grow

The New Jersey Manufacturing Network is not a one-time rollout. It's an evolving platform that will continue to expand as new partners join, new resources are developed, and new challenges emerge.

Manufacturers are also encouraged to use the site as a starting point for deeper conversations. Many of the partner organizations listed offer no-cost consultations, site visits, or customized support pathways. The platform makes it easy to find and engage with them.

**If you're a manufacturer in New Jersey, whether a small shop with a handful of employees or a large-scale operation with global customers, the New Jersey Manufacturing Network was built for you. Start exploring the network and connect with the partners shaping NJ's industrial future. Visit [njmanufacturingnetwork.org](https://njmanufacturingnetwork.org) to get started.**





## EmpowerU: Skills for the Modern Workplace

After a successful first cohort, the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey (CCSNJ) is excited to open registration for our second workforce development program that is open to manufacturing companies and their employees across the state.

Launched January 1, the CCSNJ has entered into a premier partnership with Rowan College of South Jersey (RCSI) for EmpowerU: Skills for the Modern Workplace, a professional certificate program to help employees train on the soft skills needed to succeed in the workplace. Key takeaways from the training program include:

- ✓ **Self-Awareness:** Understanding your strengths, weaknesses, emotions, and how they affect your behavior and relationships.
- ✓ **Communication:** Effectively conveying ideas and actively listening, ensuring clarity and mutual understanding in interactions.
- ✓ **Teamwork:** Collaborating with others, valuing diverse perspectives, and contributing to group efforts to achieve common goals.
- ✓ **Problem-Solving:** Analyzing challenges and developing creative, practical solutions to overcome obstacles.
- ✓ **Time Management:** Prioritizing tasks, staying organized, and allocating time effectively to maximize productivity.
- ✓ **Leadership:** Inspiring and guiding others, making decisions, and motivating a team towards achieving goals while fostering a positive work environment.

The program welcomed its first student cohort in March with a second set to begin on September 23, 2025. Students will undertake a six-week training with three weeks of in-person classes at RCSI's campus in Sewell, NJ.

Employees can register on their own or at the suggestion of their employers. The sign-up may be part of a new employee's onboarding process but may also be used by employers to train some of their long-standing staff members. The program is funded by the tuition fees paid by participating chamber member businesses. **Those businesses pay \$150 per employee who is sent to the program.**

**For more information or to register, visit the CCSNJ website at: [www.chambersnj.com/empoweru/](http://www.chambersnj.com/empoweru/) or contact Nicole Pacera, Director of Education & Workforce Development at [npacera@chambersnj.com](mailto:npacera@chambersnj.com).**



**CHRISTINA RENNA**

PRESIDENT & CEO, CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY

# Putting Business at the Center for NJ's Next Governor

**A new administration in New Jersey** means new policies and priorities for our businesses and manufacturing sector.

At NJBIA, we're making sure both gubernatorial candidates put business at the center to help ensure an improved economy and increased productivity.

NJBIA has put New Jersey's job creators at the center of all we do – our outreach, our advocacy, our research, and our actions. And now we expect our state's elected leaders to do the same.

In June, NJBIA delivered our 2025 Blueprint for a Competitive New Jersey to gubernatorial candidates Mikie Sherrill (D) and Jack Ciattarelli (R).

This is an informative and highly digestible 28-page policy document, authored by NJBIA's skilled and tireless government affairs team, that offers elected officials and candidates a guide for how to drive innovation and prosperity in New Jersey and provides a roadmap to get there.

We're pleased to say that conversations with the candidates and their respective staff about the contents of our Blueprint have continued throughout the summer and they will go on well past inauguration day in January. That's what it's there for.

With NJBIA having roots in manufacturing going back 115 years, the Manufacturing and Innovation section of our Blueprint was greatly emphasized.

We know that manufacturing in New Jersey accounts for \$54 billion in GDP and employs hundreds of thousands of people in the state, very often with higher wages and benefits than other sectors. And we know manufacturers have a higher multiplier effect on job creation and the overall economy than other sectors.

But we also know that manufacturing has its challenges in workforce availability, overregulation and higher costs that severely impact our competitiveness in the U.S. and the world.

These headwinds are described in detail in the Blueprint to bring a better understanding of what our job creators face.

But so are potential solutions we offer, which include the development of more robust tax incentives for manufacturing and innovation, ideas for reducing regulatory burdens

on small and medium-sized manufacturing companies, the provision of a permanent state budget line-item or another permanent funding stream for NJMEP partners, and the expansion of career and technical STEM education and enhanced business-higher education partnerships.

One thing I'm particularly encouraged about is that both candidates recognize that New Jersey is overregulated.

We all recognize the need for regulations that are essential for safety and fairness. But overregulation and excessive mandates are a drag on business productivity, innovation, and growth in New Jersey. Overregulation increases costs, discourages startups and induces New Jersey job creators to plan their next expansion or new location in more pro-business states.

At our gubernatorial reception in June, where we first delivered the Blueprint to Ciattarelli and Sherrill, both candidates verbalized to our standing-room only crowd the importance of finding a balance that protects public interests without stifling economic growth and jeopardizing jobs.

All totaled, NJBIA's 2025 Blueprint for a Competitive New Jersey offers 65 solutions to New Jersey's various challenges in all sectors, with some overarching recommendations that would deliver even more impactful results.

One meaningful first step is to re-establish the Commerce Department that the state abolished in 1998, dispersing its functions across different state agencies. We are very much on the record with both gubernatorial candidates about the need for a cabinet-level commerce commissioner who has a seat at the governor's conference table to oversee a cohesive economic policy that attracts and retains businesses so they

can grow, innovate and help the state's economy flourish.

This is something that will undoubtedly help manufacturing in New Jersey and all businesses throughout the state.

Beyond manufacturing, the 2025 Blueprint discusses current challenges facing New Jersey and offers solutions organized by policy areas that include: budget and cost-saving reforms; consumer affairs, legal and insurance issues; education and

workforce development; employment and labor issues; energy; the environment; healthcare and life sciences; taxation and economic development; and transportation and infrastructure.

While the deep details are all there for lawmakers to understand, I'm proud to say the overarching objective of the document is always prominent: To put business at the center again in New Jersey.

Going forward, our next New Jersey

governor will not have to search far for how to do it.



**MICHELE SIEKERKA**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE NEW JERSEY  
BUSINESS & INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

## Why Elections Matter To The Business Community

New Jersey residents are poised to elect a new Governor on November 4 and they will also weigh in on the 80-member General Assembly as well. I am often asked by business owners, do elections matter to my business? Will our involvement impact the outcome? The answer is yes to both questions. No matter what business you are in, politics matter. From regulations to tax and energy policies, what our government does in Trenton will have a direct impact on your business and our economy - there is no doubt about it.

If politics matter to business, why don't we see record turnouts for our elections? New Jersey has 6.5 million registered voters. Approximately 2.4 million voters are registered democrats and 1.6 million are registered republicans with the remaining 2.5 million as unaffiliated or other party. What is interesting is historically, in a non-presidential ballot year, voter turnout drops to about 45%. That means less than half of the registered voters will decide who our next Governor will be - Is that a good thing? It depends on your perspective but the higher the turnout, the more confident we

can be that the people have weighed in and the more confident the winner can be that New Jersey residents have spoken. A silent, inactive voter base in elections is never a good thing. Your opinion and voice matters and you should be heard. Business owners have a voice on what matters to them and they should weigh in on everything from the taxes they pay, to the regulations they have to comply with to workforce development, and other costs. The jobs our businesses provide to our residents should be celebrated. A strong economy is good for everyone, including our government. The top three tax revenues (gross income tax, sales tax and corporate business tax) are directly related to employment and business. If our residents are working and our business are able to prosper, it is good for everyone. Our elected officials must do all they can to work with our businesses on assuring their success and growth. Government must view the business community as partners.

It is no secret that we live in a global economy. Technology has made the world smaller and the pace of business faster,

so our businesses are not only competing with other states but in many situations, other countries as well. These are the challenges confronting our businesses and that is why our elected officials cannot enact legislation, regulations or policies that place our businesses at a disadvantage. New Jersey is fortunate to have one of the largest ports in the country, a world class airport, a great educational system, and a diverse and educated workforce and that is why we need to be seen as the place to invest and grow your business. By increasing our tax base with new and expanded investments, we can set the pace for years to come. Be heard in November - it matters.



**ANTHONY RUSSO**  
PRESIDENT - COMMERCE AND  
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY  
CEO/PUBLISHER - COMMERCE MAGAZINE





# Medicine, Med Tech and Manufacturing – New Jersey 2025

“The mid-1800’s Industrial Revolution” isn’t the typical opening line of an article about New Jersey’s high-tech advanced manufacturing in 2025, so I won’t start there—which is good, because New Jersey’s role as a leading manufacturing hub doesn’t begin there either; it actually predates both the Industrial Revolution AND the 1800’s. To trace New Jersey’s manufacturing history, we’d have to go back even further.

“The mid-1800’s Industrial Revolution” isn’t the typical opening line of an article about New Jersey’s high-tech advanced manufacturing in 2025, so I won’t start there—which is good, because New Jersey’s role as a leading manufacturing hub doesn’t begin there either; it actually predates both the Industrial Revolution AND the 1800’s. To trace New Jersey’s manufacturing history, we’d have to go back even further.

In 1791 (there, that’s better), Alexander Hamilton founded the Society for the Establishment of Useful Manufacturers (SUM) and wisely chose Paterson, New Jersey, as the site from which to launch this national effort designed to promote and accelerate our young country’s industrial and manufacturing development capabilities. At that time, Paterson’s Great Falls served as a power source, and its proximity to New York City’s business and capital centers established New Jersey as one of the first industrial

and manufacturing hubs in America.

Newark, a vital port city, functioned as a major hub for manufacturing and commerce. Trenton, located on the Delaware River, was an ideal site for the production of clay, and later for iron, and subsequently for steel products.

Think about it – Paterson’s textiles. Trenton makes, the world takes. Camden’s Campbell’s Soup factories. Budweiser’s Newark brewery. Vineland’s glass manufacturing. That was the New Jersey of the 1800’s and early 1900’s.

Then came New Jersey’s inauguration as the Medicine Chest of the World, which transformed the definition of “manufacturing” and the fabric of our state’s manufacturing activity, reshaping our capabilities, economy, and global contributions for the 20th Century.

Today, manufacturing in New Jersey includes technologically advanced biopharmaceutical and medical device products that necessitate sophisticated training and certifications, state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities, and a highly skilled workforce. **Some of New Jersey’s advanced manufacturing products include:**

- ✓ **CAR-T therapy, which reengineers a patient’s own t-cells to treat diseases;**
- ✓ **Radioligand therapy (RLT) manufacturing involves binding radioactive isotopes to molecules, which are then sent to hospitals around the world for individualized cancer treatments.**

- ✓ Highly sophisticated packaging and shipping containers are manufactured under strict regulations to transport medications sensitive to temperature, sunlight, or water vapor.
- ✓ Innovative metallurgical processes that create porous, spongy metal implants for patients, enabling their bones to integrate with the implant itself;
- ✓ Regenerative medicine and tissue engineering.

All of these advanced, intricate – yet life-saving – manufacturing processes are currently occurring across New Jersey, making us the top state for life sciences manufacturing employees and the second-highest in the number of facilities manufacturing FDA-approved products, totaling 180 in 2024.

**These life sciences companies establish their manufacturing facilities in New Jersey due to our highly skilled, well-trained, and educated workforce that the state’s top-ranked education system supports. In collaboration with the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP), the New Jersey Department of Labor, the State Employment Training Commission, our career and technical schools, county colleges, and other organizations, the life sciences**

**industry offers training and certifications required for manufacturing these intricate products or enhances the skills of the current workforce to align with the latest manufacturing practices and technologies. Through these training programs, apprenticeships, partnerships, and other innovative initiatives, we are collectively preparing the next generation of workers to keep New Jersey at the forefront of manufacturing and bolster our reputation as a world-class manufacturing center.**

Our advanced manufacturing sector is an important – but not the only – part of New Jersey’s innovation ecosystem. Like much of our economy, New Jersey’s life sciences companies are at the center of our ability to retain and grow our advanced manufacturing sector. These biopharmaceutical and medical technology companies spend decades and billions of dollars researching, discovering, and delivering new cures for diseases and new treatments for health conditions to patients. A public policy environment – at both the federal and state levels – that fosters innovation and preserves New Jersey’s position as the Medicine Chest of the World is critical for advancing global human health and protecting New Jersey’s workforce and economy.

These companies are why New Jersey’s manufacturing sector no longer relies

solely on textiles, glass, clay, and soup factories. They also explain why we can now cure hepatitis C, vaccinate against cervical cancer, treat sickle cell disease, and free countless patients from many different types of cancer. So much goes into keeping patients alive—researching, discovering, manufacturing, and delivering care—and hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans work every day in diverse but critical ways to support that effort.

As Congress and the State Legislature explore ways to reduce costs for patients, it’s crucial that they implement sound public policies that don’t jeopardize New Jersey’s innovation ecosystem. There are balanced and efficient methods to lower healthcare costs without compromising the industry that advances global health while also supporting New Jersey’s workforce and economy. If done incorrectly, these policies would disproportionately affect our home state, its research activities, and its manufacturing sector. Much like Alexander Hamilton’s vision for establishing New Jersey as a national manufacturing hub, a thoughtful, rational, and long-term approach by today’s public policymakers can create an enduring and positive legacy for our state, our residents, and patients around the world.



**CHRISSY BUTEAS**

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, HEALTHCARE INSTITUTE OF NEW JERSEY (HINJ)



**In January 2025, Dr. Herb Conaway Jr. made history as the first Black physician with voting privileges to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.**

Representing New Jersey's 3rd Congressional District—which encompasses nearly all of Burlington County and parts of Mercer and Monmouth Counties—Congressman Conaway brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to public service.

Born in Trenton and raised in Bordentown, Congressman Conaway was inspired by his parents, a teacher and a nurse, to dedicate his life to serving others. He pursued higher education with determination, earning an undergraduate degree from Princeton University, a medical degree from Jefferson Medical College, and a law degree from Rutgers Law School in Camden. His diverse educational background has equipped him with a unique perspective on policy and governance.

After completing his education, Dr. Conaway served in the U.S. Air Force Medical Corps, achieving the rank of Captain at McGuire Air Force Base. During his four years of service, he worked as a general medical officer and advanced to assistant director of the primary care clinic. Following his military service, he practiced internal medicine and later became a clinical professor at an inner-city community hospital, mentoring the next generation of physicians.

For 25 years, Congressman Conaway served the residents of New Jersey's 7th Legislative District as an Assemblyman. In the New Jersey Legislature, he chaired the Health Committee and served on the Budget Committee and the Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. He played a pivotal role in advancing significant health legislation, sponsoring New Jersey's school funding formula, improving fiscal accountability within school districts, integrating technology into core curriculum standards, and modernizing public school nutritional policies. He also championed legislation addressing environmental protection, property tax relief, veterans' services, and public safety.

As a Member of the House of Representatives, Congressman Conaway is committed to advocating for an economy that benefits the families of New Jersey's 3rd Congressional District. He is dedicated to protecting access to healthcare, ensuring environmental protection, and supporting service members and their families while bolstering national security. For his first term, he was appointed to the Small Business Committee and the Veteran Affairs Committee where he serves as the Vice Ranking Member.

**Congressman Conaway's leadership and dedication to public service make him a valuable ally for the manufacturing community. He is committed to fostering economic growth and supporting local industries. In Congress he will continue to work with his colleagues to ensure every American, no matter their zip code, can achieve the American dream.**



**CONGRESSMAN  
HERB CONAWAY JR.**

NEW JERSEY'S  
3RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT





**I'm Congresswoman LaMonica McIver, and I'm proud to represent New Jersey's 10th Congressional District.** Our community is rooted in grit, innovation, and resilience. These attributes of my community are values I seek to emulate in all of the work I do on behalf of the 740,000 residents of New Jersey's 10th.

I am proud to be able to serve this community in Congress because I am of this community.

I was born and raised in Newark. From my childhood to my first steps on the path to service and through my work today, I have come to understand firsthand the challenges and opportunities that define our local economy—and I understand just how vital small businesses and manufacturers are to both our region and our country.

I've always strived to bring voices to the table so that everyone has a real shot at success.

That work has taken many forms. It also led me to public office.

I served as Newark's Central Ward council member and as president of the City Council, where I worked closely with entrepreneurs, local employers, and community leaders to address job creation, workforce development, and access to capital.

Helping give folks in Newark the tools they needed to thrive set me up for the work I do now. In Congress I serve on the House Small Business Committee and the Committee on Homeland Security—two places where I can advocate for the resources and policies our businesses need to compete, grow, and succeed in a global economy.

One of the first bills I helped move through the House is the Investing in Main Street Act, a bipartisan measure that would update an outdated rule and give banks more flexibility to invest in small businesses' success. This change unlocks additional capital for growing companies, particularly those that often struggle to get traditional funding. For manufacturers looking to expand or scale up, more access to capital can be the

difference between stalled growth and breaking into new markets.

What drives me is making sure that federal policy reflects the real-world needs of business owners and workers in our community. One of the best ways that I can connect with these needs and understand them is by connecting with all of you. I had the privilege of visiting Zago Manufacturing in Newark and Flow-Turn Inc. in Kenilworth. These visits help me ensure that I am meeting the needs of the businesses that fuel NJ-10.

**That's why the proposed elimination of the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program is so concerning. MEPs play a key role in helping small and medium-sized businesses be competitive and sustain quality jobs here at home. Undermining that support not only puts individual businesses at risk, but weakens the broader manufacturing ecosystem.**

My job is to listen, to lead, and to fight for policies that support job growth, innovation, and prosperity—for New Jersey's 10th District, and for the entire country.



**CONGRESSWOMAN  
LAMONICA MCIVER**

NEW JERSEY'S  
10TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT



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# Inspiring the Next Generation: **Future Makers & Creators Tour Continues Its Mission in 2025**

The Future Makers & Creators Tour, now well into its 2025 run, is proving to be one of the most engaging and impactful youth outreach initiatives in New Jersey manufacturing. This statewide tour, presented in partnership with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), continues to connect students with the world of advanced manufacturing, STEM, and hands-on innovation in ways that are inspiring both educators and industry leaders alike.

By bringing interactive experiences and real-world manufacturing insights directly into schools, the tour aims to spark curiosity, plant seeds of interest, and introduce students to career paths they may never have considered.

## **Schools We've Visited So Far in 2025**

Now well into its second year, the tour has already made stops at six schools across the state, including:

- ✓ **Hillsborough High School**  
(Somerset County)
- ✓ **Morristown High School**  
(Morris County)
- ✓ **Monmouth Regional High School**  
(Monmouth County)
- ✓ **Hunterdon Central Regional High School** (Hunterdon County)
- ✓ **Toms River East High School**  
(Ocean County)
- ✓ **Trenton Central High School**  
(Mercer County)

Each stop offers a tailored experience where students can interact with modern manufacturing equipment that includes CNC machines and 3D printers, engage in STEM-focused activities, and meet with real manufacturers, getting a first-hand look at how creativity, technology, and innovation power the industry today.

## **Spotlight: Trenton Declares "Makers and Creators Day"**

One of the most memorable stops in 2025 so far was Trenton Central High School. The impact of the tour was felt not just in the classroom, but across the entire community. The City of Trenton recognized the significance of the initiative by officially declaring February





powerful testament to the importance of workforce development, hands-on education, and early career exposure.

Mayor Reed Gusciora applauded the effort, stating, “The Makers and Creators Tour is a vital event that aims to expand students’ horizons and prepare them for the careers of tomorrow by giving them the chance to explore and connect with cutting-edge industries, while gaining insight into the rapidly evolving world of manufacturing.”

This proclamation highlighted not only the impact of the event on Trenton’s youth, but also the value of public-private partnerships in preparing the next generation of workers.

## A Special Collaboration with the New Jersey Devils

This year also featured an exciting collaboration between the Future Makers & Creators Tour and the New Jersey Devils. Held at the Prudential Center in Newark, STEM Day welcomed young students to learn how science, technology, engineering, and math concepts play a critical role in everything from hockey sticks to arena lighting. The NJMEP team helped bring these lessons to life by showcasing



the connection between STEM and manufacturing, making the experience fun, tangible, and unforgettable.

Even at the elementary school level, the goal of the tour is to expose students to the tools and technologies of modern industry. Whether it’s learning how a puck is made or seeing a CNC machine up close, these early impressions can shape lifelong interests.

## Stronger Together: NJEDA and NJMEP

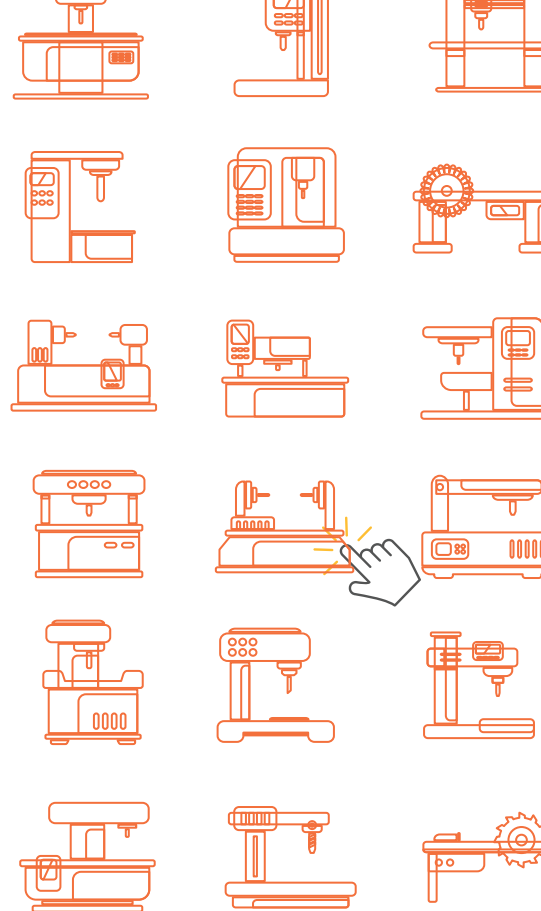
The tour would not be possible without the ongoing partnership between NJMEP and NJEDA. With a shared mission to strengthen New Jersey’s economy and prepare its workforce for the jobs of tomorrow, this collaboration ensures that every stop on the tour delivers real value to students, educators, and the local manufacturing community.

By leveraging NJEDA’s statewide resources and NJMEP’s industry expertise, the Future Makers & Creators Tour is building connections that will support economic growth for years to come.

## Year-End Outlook—Keep the Momentum Going

The momentum behind the Future Makers & Creators Tour shows no signs of slowing. More school visits are on the horizon, and the impact continues to ripple through the students, educators, and manufacturers who take part in each event.

**If your school, company, or community wants to get involved, there are plenty of ways to participate**—from hosting an event to volunteering, exhibiting, or helping shape the day’s programming. Together, we can keep building bridges between the classroom and the factory floor and empower the next generation of New Jersey makers and creators.



**Join us in making a difference. Visit [njmep.org/makersandcreators](http://njmep.org/makersandcreators) or contact NJMEP today to learn how you can support or participate in the Future Makers & Creators Tour.**





Built to Export:

# The Cargo Quietly Leaving New Jersey

*Why small and mid-sized manufacturers are central to the state's export future.*

If you want to understand the heart of New Jersey's manufacturing economy, don't start with a press release or a ribbon-cutting. Start at a loading dock at seven in the morning in Middlesex, Passaic, or Camden County. Not at a massive distribution center, but behind a 15,000-square-foot building where a small team keeps production moving as it has every morning for years. One dispatcher checks a clipboard. Forklifts shift wooden pallets. A line of trucks idles outside.



What those trucks carry matters less than what they represent. Each shipment is a piece of a much larger system. New Jersey's path to stronger export performance does not depend on the next billion-dollar facility. It depends on the small and mid-sized manufacturers that already make up the majority of exporters in this state.

## The Numbers Prove It.

Nine out of every ten exporters in New Jersey have fewer than 500 employees. There are over 17,000 of them, and together, they generated more than 40 percent of the \$43 billion worth of goods the state shipped in 2024.

The manufacturing sector alone exported \$38 billion worth of goods and supports an estimated 116,000 jobs—real jobs in real communities, often with higher-than-average wages and deep roots in the local economy.

The future of New Jersey exports doesn't depend on a prediction. It's already taking shape through the work of small and mid-sized manufacturers.

## Why Exports Matter

For small and mid-sized manufacturers, exporting should not be a side strategy. It offers stability, growth, and leverage. Selling into international markets can smooth out seasonal demand or soften

the impact of a domestic slowdown. It spreads risk, opens new revenue streams, and often extends the life of products that may be nearing saturation at home.

Exports also drive reinvestment. The prospect of securing a foreign customer can justify upgrading equipment, expanding production, or hiring specialized staff.

These decisions strengthen not just the manufacturer, but the entire supply chain. From machine shops in Bergen County to labeling firms in Mercer, the effects reach across the state.

For the companies already exporting, the opportunity is not to reinvent themselves. It is to build on what they are already doing.

## A State Built to Export

Few states are as well-positioned to support export growth. The Port of New York and New Jersey handles more than nine million containers a year. A dense network of freight rail and highways links factories to ports, airports, and customers. And with major financial and legal institutions nearby, firms have better access to the tools and advice they need to operate internationally.

While the foundations are strong, total exports have declined modestly each year since 2021. That doesn't signal a crisis, but it does suggest the state isn't reaching its full potential. More companies could be exporting, and with the right support, many more would.

## The Next Chapter

New Jersey's export growth won't come from a single moment or investment. It will come from steady, practical choices, built one shipment at a time, by firms that take the first step.

The infrastructure is in place. The support programs exist. The most effective path forward isn't chasing something new. It's investing in what already works. And much of that work is happening quietly, every morning, behind a line of trucks.





# How **Provident Bank** Earned the Designation as *New Jersey's First "Super Community" Banking Franchise*



When Provident Financial Services acquired Lakeland Bancorp in May of 2024, the landmark collaboration was appropriately defined as New Jersey's first "super community" banking franchise.

By combining the personalized customer experience, agility, and local presence of a community bank with the broader product range and resources of a larger institution, the merger yielded local expertise with expanded reach, more resources to invest in technology and innovation, and the ability to meet the needs of a wider customer base.

"We certainly don't put on a cape, but what does make this bank super is that we take on some of the scale and characteristics of a larger financial institution – offering a broader array of products and services – while staying true to our roots as a community bank," noted Anthony Labozzetta, president and CEO of Provident Bank. "We have the resources and technology of a larger company while still being very much in touch with the needs of our customers."

Labozzetta explained the move allows the bank to prioritize deep customer relationships through tailored solutions, ensuring Provident retains a community feel amid ongoing growth.

"Culture is everything; if you have the right culture, everything else builds from there," he continued, detailing how Provident has adopted three pillars to promote a positive workplace and an impactful customer experience, while cultivating trust and advocacy.

According to the banking leader, these pillars – Guiding Principles, Employee Experience, and Customer Experience – give Provident a sustainable competitive advantage. "Guiding Principles define our core values and vision, setting the tone for all company interactions, both internal and external," he said. "They include act with integrity, be accountable, promote teamwork, pursue excellence, and build for the future."

The bank's commitment to ethical business practices, along with a customer-centric approach, helps differentiate Provident from competitors, noted Labozzetta. Positive employee and customer experiences are crucial to Provident's culture.

"Our focus on employee and customer experiences fosters engagement and fulfillment on both

ends," he added. "This integrated approach allows Provident to stand out in our industry as a trustworthy, customer-centric institution that attracts and retains dedicated team members and seeks to create deep emotional connections with our customers."

Provident, which was founded in Jersey City in 1839, is considered the oldest and second largest community-focused financial institution based in New Jersey. With more than \$24 billion in assets and nearly 1,800 employees, the bank offers a wide range of customized financial solutions for businesses and consumers across its network of more than 140 branches throughout New Jersey and parts of New York and Pennsylvania.

The bank also provides fiduciary and wealth management services through its wholly owned subsidiary, Beacon Trust, and insurance services through its wholly owned subsidiary, Provident Protection Plus.

For Labozzetta, the success of all of Provident's integrated business lines begins with a "values-driven culture," one that fosters purpose, cohesion, and teamwork. "Provident's vision statement of 'creating advocates for life' reflects a commitment to building deep emotional connections with customers, employees, and the community," Labozzetta explained. "This approach goes beyond providing transactional banking services; it aims to foster deep loyalty, turning customers and employees into advocates who are willing to recommend Provident to others."

The bank has achieved this vision through referrals, focusing on a relationship-based banking model and emphasizing lifetime customer value over one-time transactions.

Enhanced employee engagement is also an integral part of the bank's commitment to excellence.

"Employees who feel valued and aligned with Provident's mission are more likely to deliver an exceptional customer experience, contributing to the creation of advocates," Labozzetta said.

"Engaged employees contribute to a positive workplace culture, which enhances overall performance."

Provident's commitment to employees' personal and professional success includes ongoing guidance and

career development in the form of training and mentorship. The bank also provides a suite of well-being services and initiatives, which Labozzetta said demonstrates Provident's care for employees beyond the confines of their roles.

As a super community bank, "Provident is actively invested in the well-being of the communities it serves," Labozzetta said, labeling the institution as a good corporate citizen. "By supporting charitable endeavors and participating in volunteer initiatives and educational programs, the bank creates a positive impact and reinforces its commitment, further attracting customers who value community engagement," he continued.

That's why Provident actively participates in local events, sponsors initiatives, and contributes to a myriad of charitable causes. Team members also participate in financial literacy programs and first-time homebuyer workshops to help customers feel prepared to make informed financial decisions.

Another way Provident invests in the growth and prosperity of its communities is by offering specialized products and services for local businesses. "Providing guidance, accessible financing, and advice to small-business owners allows Provident to foster a thriving local economy, directly benefiting the communities it serves," noted Labozzetta.

All these elements and initiatives reinforce Provident's mission statement of "deepening emotional connections with employees, customers, and the communities we serve."

**"Provident Bank is invested in understanding our customers' financial journeys, whether they're an individual or a business," Labozzetta explained. "And by focusing on accessibility and customer support, Provident demonstrates that it values the customer experience. That's what a super community bank is all about, after all!"**







# Leveling Up Small Business for Big Impact: Inside SHCCNJ's Innovation Hub at NJCU

The Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (SHCCNJ) is creating new pathways to business growth, innovation and opportunity through its Innovation Hub at New Jersey City University (NJCU).

Designed as a launchpad for entrepreneurs and business communities, the Innovation Hub is home to SHCCNJ's flagship programs—ETP (Entrepreneurship Training Program) and LETS (Level Up Entrepreneur Training Series)—as well as high-level networking opportunities, including the monthly Juntos: Chamber Talks and the exclusive donor initiative Visionary Circle.

To support its long-term impact, the Hub offers expert-led workshops, legal clinics, and bilingual mentorship, equipping small businesses with the tools to overcome real-time challenges and scale with confidence.

"The Innovation Hub at NJCU's School of Business represents a transformational opportunity for Hudson County and beyond. It will ignite collaboration, spark growth and connect small businesses with the resources they need to thrive," said SHCCNJ Vice President of Corporate and Entrepreneurial Programs Dr. Jairo Borja.

SHCCNJ's satellite office in Jersey City is made possible through a five-year partnership with NJCU. This partnership positions the Chamber at the center of commerce and influence—just minutes from Wall Street via the PATH Train—in the heart of Jersey City's economic engine.

"By increasing visibility, accessibility and direct access to resources, we're nurturing the next generation of entrepreneurs while laying the groundwork for long-term economic impact," said Innovation Hub Manager Daniela C. Velez.

## Juntos: Chamber Talks – Where Vision Meets Action

The Innovation Hub is more than a space—it is a business accelerator. Built for growth-minded entrepreneurs, it provides bilingual business services,



startup incubation, technical education and community mentorship. Whether it's navigating procurement, building a brand or accessing capital, the Innovation Hub is the go-to destination where entrepreneurs can elevate bold ideas into tangible results.

Juntos: Chamber Talks propels the mission forward. Held monthly in NJCU's Skyline Room, each roundtable invites 25 entrepreneurs into focused conversation with SHCCNJ leadership, expert guests and business leaders. Topics range from government contracts and AI to capital access and marketing strategy.

### LETS and ETP: No-Cost Signature Programs Igniting Opportunities

At the core of the Innovation Hub are SHCCNJ's signature no-cost programs—ETP and LETS.

Launched in 2014, ETP (formerly HETP) is a no-cost, award-winning training program that helps Hispanic entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses, access capital and plan for growth. Now in its 11th year, the program has supported entrepreneurs from 14 counties across a range of industries.

"It helped me refine my pitch, restructure my business and believe in my vision," said Juan, founder of Antojitos de Mi Tierra and an ETP graduate.

LETS, launched in 2020, is an eight-week accelerator tailored for Latina entrepreneurs. Its hands-on curriculum covers business planning, financial literacy, customer targeting, leadership,

legal basics and more.

"LETS felt like a \$10,000 masterclass I didn't have to pay for," said Nadya Ramos, brand strategist and alumna. "It was transformative—professionally and personally."

### From Classes to Contracts

The numbers tell the story. According to SHCCNJ, 100% of businesses that completed ETP and LETS remained open, and 35% hired new employees or secured contracts after the program. Participants leave with practical knowledge, a peer network and the confidence to grow.

"These aren't just workshops. They're launchpads for business owners to lead in their industries and their communities," said SHCCNJ President and CEO Carlos Medina.

By launching the Innovation Hub at NJCU, SHCCNJ has established a direct pathway for small businesses to transition from learning to leadership.

### Visionary Circle: An Opportunity to Invest in the Future of Small Business

To amplify this work, SHCCNJ invites corporate and community investors to join the Visionary Circle. Contributions fuel bilingual services, expert-led training, and a statewide ecosystem built to close opportunity gaps and spark lasting growth.

"From cybersecurity to supply chain, we're meeting businesses where they are and helping them go further. This is how we shape the future—together," said Medina.

To learn more about ETP, LETS, Juntos: Chamber Talks or the Visionary Circle, visit [shccnj.org](http://shccnj.org) or email [dvelez@shccnj.org](mailto:dvelez@shccnj.org).



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