



REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD  
OF HAMPDEN COUNTY, INC.

## ***Regional NetWorks (RENEW)***

***Pioneer Valley Region Precision Manufacturing Industry***

***Final Project Report***

***A New Way Forward***

## Introduction

**Regional NetWorks (RENEW)** was a strategic venture of the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc., in collaboration with the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the National Tooling and Machining Association (WMNTMA), and other industry companies, to build the capacity and profile of the high technology precision manufacturing industry in the Pioneer Valley Region.

This Report not only summarizes the findings, recommendations, and results of the project, but sets forth new goals and actions to assist the RENEW partners in moving their work forward in an intentional and systemic way.

The challenge going forward is not partnership sustainability or commitment to the mission- the partnership is strong, and the commitment is clear. The challenge for the companies is to remain agile, to look beyond their individual walls, to position themselves to respond appropriately to surges in demand from multiple sources, and to use their renewed confidence and current positive market position to spawn sectoral innovation that will allow them to perform more value-added work, move up the supply chain, retain existing jobs, generate new jobs, and create sectoral growth.

The challenge for the RENEW educational partners is to develop a flexible training/educational infrastructure, to implement education and training programs and courses that are industry aligned and competency focused, and to support programming that provides STEM education and career awareness information on precision manufacturing to educators, high and middle school students and parents.

This **Final Project Report** brings Regional NetWorks, the project, to an end. However, RENEW, has become more than a project-it has become a part of the culture of the precision manufacturing industry in the Pioneer Valley Region. The work will continue.

August 31, 2008

## ***OVERVIEW***

The **Final Project Report** presents a summary of the key components of the twenty-six (26) month project, and an analysis of the findings, recommendations, and results of this sectoral capacity building initiative. This Report can also be viewed on the web sites of the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County Inc. at [www.rebhc.org](http://www.rebhc.org) and the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the National Tooling and Machining Association at <http://www.wmntma.org/members-resources/industry-reports/>.

Regional NetWorks was funded by the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative-John Adams Innovation Institute, with additional funding from WMECO and the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the National Tooling and Machining Association (WMNTMA).

The implementation of the recommendations in this Report is on-going and will assist the precision manufacturing sector in the Pioneer Valley Region, and its partners, in achieving a new way forward.

## ***CONTACT INFORMATION***

For additional information on the **Final Project Report** or on Regional NetWorks (RENEW), please contact David M. Cruise at 413-755-1362 or [dcruise@rebhc.org](mailto:dcruise@rebhc.org).

For information on the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the National Tooling and Machining Association (WMNTMA), please visit their web site at [www.wmntma.org](http://www.wmntma.org).

For information on the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative-John Adams Innovation Institute, please visit their web site at [www.masstech.org](http://www.masstech.org).



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## **A New Way Forward**

### **I - The Industry Sector**

High technology precision manufacturing is one of the most important industry clusters in the Pioneer Valley Region. The high technology precision manufacturing companies in the Region, led by the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the National Tooling and Machining Association (WMNTMA), are contract manufacturers that are primarily engaged in supplying precision mechanical components and sub-assemblies to major commercial manufacturers, aircraft engine builders, and military equipment contractors in the United States and internationally.

The companies perform value-added precision manufacturing processes and operations utilizing high technology equipment and world class technology development. Currently, 90% of their business is located outside the Region, and 75% of their business is located outside Massachusetts.

### **II - The Project Goals**

1. Build capacity for training the workforce, both upgrade and replacement, with particular focus on linking training providers with industry needs, and securing alternate resources for co-investment in training. Capacity building will include developing educational linkages at points along the K-12 continuum and an information and awareness component that will inform parents and students of the viability of high technology precision machining as a career directed, financially rewarding profession.
2. Develop linkages with high technology precision machining companies and educational institutions along the Knowledge Corridor to develop a coordinated regional workforce development system that responds to the changing technological demands of the industry by creating a sustainable pipeline of future workers in the high technology precision machining cluster, resulting in employment retention and controlled industry cluster expansion.
3. Build a WMNTMA web site, and update and maintain a data base of high technology precision machining companies in the Pioneer Valley Region.
4. Build coherence within the high technology precision machining sector with particular emphasis on companies engaged in aerospace and defense related work that will create true cluster development, and allow for cluster-wide innovation and expansion that will result in increased market share on the regional, national and international levels.

5. Create partnerships with local economic development entities and state and federal agencies to leverage their expertise, support, and additional funding to strengthen the scope and direction of the project, and create a collaborative approach to planning, decision making and project implementation.

### **III-The Project Deliverables**

The following Project Deliverables for the grant are attached to this report. The WMNTMA Web site, designed in part with funding from the John Adams Innovation Institute can be viewed at [www.wmntma.org](http://www.wmntma.org).

1. WMNTMA Web Site [www.wmntma.org](http://www.wmntma.org)
2. Workforce Development Report-*The Way Forward*
3. Memorandum of Understanding among the Precision Manufacturing Companies
4. Memorandum of Understanding between the Precision Manufacturing Companies and Educational Institutions in the Pioneer Valley Region
5. Education Enhancement Compact
6. Market Opportunities Report- *Opportunities Going Forward*
7. WMNTMA Business Fact Sheets- CY 2005-2007
8. Implementation Replication Manual-*Thoughts Going Forward*

### **IV-The Project Framework**

RENEW used the following organizing principles to develop the operating framework to implement the work tasks and complete the project deliverables in support of attaining the project's goals.

#### **1. Plan Development**

##### **Develop the Plan**

1. Developed a plan that had measurable outcomes and was supported by relevant, current data.

##### **Implement the Plan**

1. Insured that the project partners clearly understand their role and had authority to commit the resources of their organizations.
2. Used the Project Deliverables to inform decision making and serve as the catalyst to implement the plan's strategies and work tasks going forward.

##### **Communicate the Plan**

1. Maintained on-going communication with industry leadership and other committed partners to insure that the plan's work tasks were accomplished in a practical and time sensitive manner, and to allow for any mid-course correction to the established plan.

## 2. Partnership Development

### Identify the Partners

1. Identified the partners during the project planning period, articulated clearly the mission of the project, asked them to commit to working collaboratively, and assured them that the results of their engagement would have significant benefits to their company and to the industry.

### Build the Partnership

1. Implemented a relationship development process that established a collaborative strategic partnership. The parties committed to achieving **incremental, measurable change** in the systems that shape each sector's landscape, and saw the partnership as the critical driver to insure the successful implementation of the projects goals.

## 3. Goals Development

### Identify the Goals

1. Identified measurable goals supported by real time data.

### Implement the Work Tasks

1. Aligned work tasks with the project's goals, and implemented specific, concrete, and measurable action initiatives that insured that the goals were achieved.

## 4. Sustainability Development

### Maintain the Partnership

1. Developed a shared belief that partnerships are built on trust, and maintaining the RENEW partnership beyond the life of the project was critical to any successful future sectoral initiatives.
2. Committed early in the grant cycle to expanding the partnership and leveraging new intellectual capital and resources that would add value to the project and help achieve the desired outcomes.

### Leverage Funding

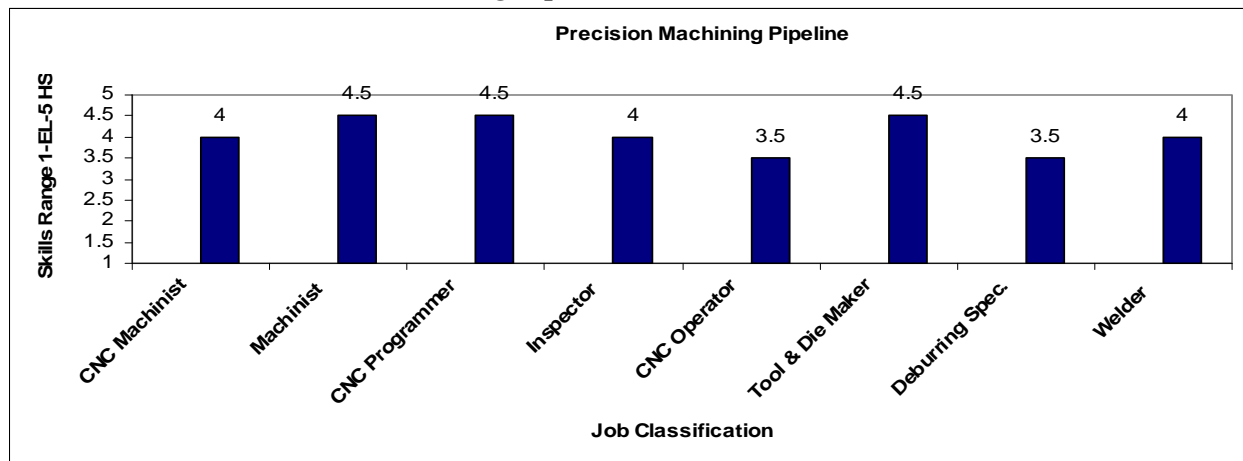
1. Presented data and evaluative documentation that documented RENEW's success in building sectoral strategies to enhance the precision manufacturing industry.
2. Leveraged co-investment from multiple sources to support the implementation of project activities that supported the project's goals and deliverables, and enjoined all investors as committed partners in the project going forward.

## V- The Findings, Recommendations and Results

### Findings

- ✚ The Regular member companies in the WMNTMA employ approximately 1281 people, and generated \$229 million in estimated gross sales in 2007.
- ✚ The current and projected trends indicate that 90% of the companies business is located outside the Pioneer Valley Region, and 75% of their business is located outside Massachusetts.
- ✚ Smaller companies looking to expand their production capacity in their present markets while simultaneously accessing new market opportunities will need to attract and retain sufficient qualified workers to insure that they can bring their production operations to the scale necessary to accommodate their business expansion plans.
- ✚ Identifying workers with the requisite skills to fill job classifications along the precision machining pipeline will continue to be a challenge, and will require that sector companies develop partnerships with educational institutions to train new pipeline employees, and offer skills enhancement courses to incumbent employees.

*Table 1- Precision Machining Pipeline*



- ✚ The jobs on the precision machining pipeline will require the development of competencies that **transcend entry level skills**, and will demand coordinated and collaborative planning by industry and the educational community to implement training and upgrading initiatives that move incrementally from entry level skills to a higher order of skills competencies.
- ✚ Wages and fringe benefits in the precision machining industry are significantly higher than those found in other industries. The wage scale, together with the continuous learning opportunities available to employees in the industry, should position the industry to attract individuals seeking a personally and professionally rewarding career.

- ✚ The companies believe that increasing **School, Student and Parent Awareness of Careers** in precision machining and changing the prevailing **Perception of Manufacturing/Precision Machining** will increase the availability and retention of qualified employees, and is a critical part of building capacity to develop a sustainable workforce development system.
- ✚ The companies are committed to assisting educational institutions in **Aligning Educational Programming with Industry Needs**, and believe that this work will assist both the companies and the students in the hiring and retention process.

## Recommendations

- ✚ Modify the Memorandum of Understanding executed among the WMNTMA companies and between the sector companies and the educational institutions to insure that the agreements reflect the agility necessary to remain innovative.
- ✚ Continually update the WMNTMA web site to insure that it remains the face of the industry, the preferred destination for sector job seekers, and an information channel to educate students, parents and educators on careers in precision manufacturing.
- ✚ Build a more responsive and flexible training infrastructure that can meet the technical skills needed by new technology, and can move training to an acceptable scale in response to surges in demand.
- ✚ Aggressively pursue funding opportunities that will expand competency based training programs to prepare **new and dislocated** workers for careers in precision manufacturing, similar to the programs being presently conducted through the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund. These programs must have clear career pathways that move new employees incrementally from entry level skills acquisition to a higher order of skills competencies.
- ✚ Aggressively pursue funding opportunities that will expand industry aligned training programs to provide opportunities for **incumbent** workers to upgrade their skills competencies in order to prepare them to perform more value-added manufacturing processes.
- ✚ Partner with educational/training institutions to implement career awareness activities, educational programming, and collaborative interventions that will boost student enrollment, and increase the graduation rate of students in the Machine Tool Technology programs.
- ✚ Develop an industry driven process to explore rates of growth, specific domestic and international market demands, competition, and market volatility in highly specialized and complementary markets including medical devices and alternative energy.
- ✚ Identify creative and flexible funding that would provide individual companies, and new business formations, with seed financing to launch new market opportunity ventures.
- ✚ Develop collaborative and practical sector cluster development initiatives that offer multiple sector companies new business strategies, and create collaborative business activities that will increase market penetration and result in sustainable growth in an innovation economy.

- ✦ Develop innovative ideas for new technology application, and improve manufacturing production operations by incorporating new processes that will enable them to move up the supply chain to become suppliers in new and emerging growth markets.

**Results**

Regional NetWorks conducted a **Project Results Survey** (See Attachment) of WMNTMA member precision machining companies to evaluate the success of the project in meeting its Goals and Objectives: Table 2 summarizes the results of the survey, and selected comments from industry owners:

*Table 2- Project Results Survey*

<b>Goals and Objectives</b>	<b>Survey Results</b>
Developing working partnerships with Pioneer Valley Region educational institutions.	<b>1.2</b>
Developing a framework for programs and initiatives to familiarize educators, students, and parents with careers in precision manufacturing.	<b>1.2</b>
Increasing and facilitating communication within the WMNTMA, and with other precision manufacturing companies in the Region through the launching of <a href="http://www.wmntma.org">www.wmntma.org</a>	<b>1.3</b>
Building relationships with legislators and elected public officials to leverage additional funding and resources for training programs and activities for new pipeline and incumbent employees.	<b>1.5</b>
Building relationships with local economic development entities and state and federal agencies to leverage resources and support to build capacity for collaborative ventures going forward.	<b>1.7</b>
Increasing communication and coherence among the precision manufacturing companies in the Region.	<b>1.2</b>
Developing linkages with other precision manufacturing companies and educational institutions in the Springfield- Hartford corridor.	1.5
Developing capacity building initiatives to create new training programs, and increase current enrollment in Machine Tool Technology programs in the Pioneer Valley Region.	1.1
Increasing awareness of precision manufacturing as a critical industry sector in the Region and throughout Massachusetts.	1.4

*Survey Scale Range: 1= Highly Successful to 4= Did Not Attain Goal*

**Comments from Industry Owners**

*“We have made excellent progress on the goals that are important to achieve first (getting our own industry focused, and forming alliances and working relationships with education and local economic groups has gone very well).”*

*“We are a traded cluster with a high manufacturing index which is creating highly paid jobs and could create more with a little help form the government with correct educational policies and funding.”*

*“Prime result is an increased awareness of our industry and its present and future potential for providing viable careers.”*

*“We have built a network.”*

*“I believe the awareness and opportunities of our industry is light years ahead of where it was prior to the initiation of the John Adams grant and the involvement of Regional NetWorks (RENEW). The grant monies have been well spent and needs to be extended.”*

*“We have heightened the awareness in the community of precision manufacturing and its importance to the area and the country. Middle school guidance counselors are becoming aware of our industry and the career possibilities for their students.”*

*“Even though our industry is expanding and is bringing considerable wealth and jobs to the Commonwealth (both of which are greatly needed), the realities of political survival still remain. Thus it is important to continue what was well begun so we can achieve political support we need to sustain and develop this highly valuable industry for the good of ourselves, the good of the Commonwealth, and the good of its people.”*

*“Our local chapter of the NTMA has come together, energized by this process and the potential to bring new talent to the employment pool. All this growth adds to our competitive position and supports our and industries growth in this area.”*

*“Perception of precision manufacturing has improved. Vocational schools are starting to work together. State legislators are starting to listen and support.”*

*“The visibility and publicity created through the efforts of RENEW and the WMNTMA have given everyone a sense of pride. Among owners, the effort has created a “can do spirit” and a positive view of the future for the industry in the Pioneer Valley.”*

*“When I attend meetings in the defense and aerospace industries and talk about our initiatives and accomplishments, people from all over the country react by saying we are where they want to be and that we may be able to provide a model for them to follow.”*

## **VI - Analysis of Project Findings, Recommendations and Results**

Prior to presenting an analysis of the findings, recommendations and results of the RENEW project, it is important to establish the following statements of fact about the precision manufacturing companies in the Pioneer Valley Region as context to the ensuing analysis.

- ✚ The companies are contract manufacturers that perform value-added precision manufacturing processes and operations utilizing high technology equipment and world class technology development. They are primarily engaged in supplying precision mechanical components and sub-assemblies to major commercial manufacturers, aircraft engine builders, and military equipment contractors in the United States and internationally.
- ✚ The workforce development issue continues to be a critical barrier to the sustained growth of multiple industry sector companies.
- ✚ The companies are committed to innovation and transformation, and partnering for solutions and results.

## A New Way Forward

The following analysis provides some strategic guidance for the development and implementation of predictable and sustainable initiatives to continue to position high technology precision manufacturing as a critical high growth industry that is committed to job retention, wealth creation, and being a partner in the economic development of the Pioneer Valle Region and the State.

- ✦ Regional NetWorks has created a true partnership among the sector companies, the educational institutions, and local economic development agencies.
- ✦ The WMNTMA web site [www.wmntma.org](http://www.wmntma.org) is becoming the face of the industry, and its sphere of influence continues to mature. The site must continue its commitment to be a source of information for job seekers, a destination for educators, students and parents seeking education and career awareness information, and a central depot where companies migrate daily to increase business intelligence, and obtain information that will inform their decision-making.
- ✦ The area companies are presently experiencing significant growth in their principal market areas of aerospace and defense. Consequently, their ability to respond to potential new product and market opportunities, both domestically and internationally is being fueled from a platform of strength and confidence.
- ✦ The companies realize they need to be agile. Their ability to respond to surges in demand in their present markets, and their capacity for product and market diversification and expansion are directly tied to their access to new technology and the ability to provide applications engineering support that will reduce cost, improve lead time and enhance the quality of their parts and components.
- ✦ The ability of the companies to consider new market opportunities and benefit from any transformative capabilities to improve their manufacturing operations, however is predicated on having an appropriately sized workforce, and one with the appropriate, often diverse, skill sets that meet their need to be innovative.
- ✦ A shrinking deployable skilled workforce and growing competition for talent across multiple industry sectors is a major challenge for the industry. The companies understand this, and have been very aggressive in building relationships and implementing programs and activities that will create sustainable capacity going forward.
- ✦ Responding to the workforce development issue in a practical and visionary way will require building a more responsive and integrated training infrastructure that can meet the technical skills needed by our new technology. The industry-education partnership developed in RENEW is strong, and all parties are committed to implementing comprehensive, coordinated and industry aligned programs and skills standards.
- ✦ The partnership developed with the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts (EDC) will become a value-added to the companies in exploring complementary or new market opportunities, both domestically and internationally.

- ✦ The emerging relationship with representatives from the Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering at the University of Massachusetts- Amherst, developed during the project’s extension period, has the potential to improve interested companies competitiveness through application of new technologies, developing ways to move up the supply chain and into new growth markets, and sharing technical resources.
- ✦ The Memorandum of Agreement between STCC, the WMNTNA and the REB has resulted in the development of a strong and emerging relationship between the companies and the college that will allow for the development of programs, events, and activities that will be mutually beneficial to the parties going forward.
- ✦ Leveraging additional financial resources from multiple public and private sources is critical to continuing the work begun by the RENEW initiative. The partnership is committed to finding ways to leverage downfield investment, and believes that it can make a significant business case, supported by real time data and measurable results, for predictable funding going forward.

## VII -Leveraged Funding

As a direct result of the Regional NetWorks initiative, the REB leveraged the following public and private funds during the project time period of **May 1, 2006- August 31, 2008**.

Leveraged Funding	Public	Private	Total
E. Herbert Burk Fund		\$600,000	\$600,000
Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME)		\$500	\$500
Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund	\$409,000		\$409,000
Massachusetts State Budget Line Item FY 2007	\$150,000		\$150,000
Massachusetts State Budget Line Item FY 2008	\$75,000		\$75,000
Massachusetts State Budget Line Item FY 2009	\$75,000		\$75,000
Springfield Public Schools	\$3,654		\$3,654
Chicopee Public Schools	\$1,218		\$1,218
Holyoke Public Schools	\$618		\$618
Dick Sunderland Memorial Scholarship		\$5,000	\$5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$714,490</b>	<b>\$605,500</b>	<b>\$1,319,990</b>

This leveraged funding allowed RENEW to strengthen its capacity building initiatives, implement specific workforce development programs, conduct career awareness activities for educators, middle and high school students and parents throughout the Pioneer Valley Region, and increase the profile of the precision manufacturing sector.

## VIII - Technical Difficulties

RENEW did not experience any technical difficulties or administrative issues that resulted in any delay, or difficulty in implementing the project’s goals. The John Adams Innovation Institute staff was supportive and accessible throughout both the original eighteen month grant cycle, and the eight month no-cost extension time period. Their guidance and direction was critical in the start-up phase, and continued throughout the life of the project.

## **IX- Recommendations for Modifications**

The REB has no specific recommendations for modifications to this project. We believe that the project achieved its goals, and resulted in the development and implementation of a series of capacity building initiatives that strengthened the precision manufacturing sector, positioned them to grow their book of business in a practical and responsible manner, and increased their willingness and commitment to partner for results going forward.

## **X- Next Steps-A New Way Forward**

In a changing market place and economic landscape, the cluster companies have embraced the importance of social capital- the value of who they know and what they do with those relationships. They are committed to creating a set of operating conditions and building a workforce development infrastructure that will allow them to achieve success in the innovation economy.

Finding strategic solutions that make good business sense is important to the RENEW partnership. The partnership has given serious thought to the way forward, and has developed the following goals and actions. Attainment of these goals is critical for the ability of the precision manufacturing sector in the Pioneer Valley Region to move the work started by RENEW to the next level. This work will be hard, will take time, and will require leadership, commitment, patience and a renewed passion to create meaningful and constructive sectoral change.

### **Goal 1. Build a well-educated, technologically skilled and highly adaptable STEM workforce.**

Action 1.1: Strengthen and expand working relationships between high technology precision manufacturing companies and educational institutions.

Action 1.2: Build a more responsive and flexible education and training infrastructure that can meet the technical skills needed by new technology, and can move education and training to an acceptable scale in response to surges in demand.

Action 1.3: Increase student enrollment and graduation rate in Manufacturing Technology Programs.

Action 1.4: Expand career ladder training programs and courses for incumbent employees.

Action 1.5: Support the implementation of education and career awareness programs that will inform educators, parents and students of the viability of precision manufacturing as a career- directed, financially rewarding profession.

## **Goal 2. Develop a Marketing Plan to Promote the Economic Viability of the Precision Manufacturing Industry.**

Action 2.1: Collaborate with state and local officials to develop and fund a Marketing Plan for the Precision Manufacturing industry.

Action 2.2: Implement multi-media marketing campaign focused on identified target audiences.

Action 2.3: Establish measurable metrics to evaluate the success of the marketing campaign and return on investment.

## **Goal 3. Transform Industry Capability to Improve Manufacturing Processes and Operations**

Action 3.1: Hire a Technology Innovation and Applications Engineer who will provide small companies with value-added applications engineering support.

Action 3.2: Develop a partnership with a research university/college to investigate new technology development that will improve the companies' productivity and competitiveness as suppliers in their present markets, and position them to commercialize work in the design and manufacturing stages in growth markets.

Action 3.3: Study the feasibility of establishing a Center for Advanced Precision Manufacturing Technology which would become the convening venue for growth initiatives aimed at the infusion of new technology development and manufacturing applications, diversification of market opportunities, and implementation of various workforce development initiatives.

## **Goal 4. Strengthen Cluster Development and Increase Business Competitiveness**

Action 4.1: Implement initiatives, activities and events that will strengthen companies' position in present markets, and identify new collaborative business strategies to increase penetration in new and emerging markets.

Action 4.2: Develop a Precision Manufacturing Legislative Agenda that defines sector needs and concerns, and advocate for State legislature support and action.

Action 4.3: Enhance [www.wmntma.org](http://www.wmntma.org) content to increase sector coherence, and improve and broaden company involvement and communication.

**The Invoice for final payment is attached to this report.**

## Conclusion

In May 2006, Regional NetWorks (RENEW) committed to implementing a set of interrelated goals and producing specific project deliverables that would achieve its desired outcomes. The project gathered the right mix of industry owners, educational institutions, economic development organizations, and other collaborators, who shared a common vision, and were willing to commit their time, energy and professional expertise to develop a partnership that would drive the work of the project.

Regional NetWorks was successful in completing the project's capacity building work tasks, and implementing the project deliverables by achieving the following:

- ✚ Developing a comprehensive plan with clear goals, measurable outcomes and implementable deliverables.
- ✚ Building relationships with committed and caring partners.
- ✚ Creating a culture of on-going and open communication that valued input and encouraged constructive dialogue and reflective deliberation.
- ✚ Developing a shared belief among the partners that the body of work will add value to the industry sector.
- ✚ Taking strategic risks, and engaging in aggressive decision making.

The project partners learned a great deal together, created some positive sectoral change, achieved significant measurable outcomes, established a realistic operational plan to sustain the project's work going forward, and positioned the high technology precision manufacturing sector in the Region to achieve greater success in the innovation economy.

The partners are committed to continuing this work, and believe that their participation in Regional NetWorks has positioned the precision manufacturing industry to move forward to produce demanding, creative and innovative solutions that will insure that our best days lie ahead.

## Attachments

- ✚ WMNTMA Web Site [www.wmntma.org](http://www.wmntma.org)
- ✚ Workforce Development Report-*The Way Forward*
- ✚ Memorandum of Understanding among the Precision Manufacturing Companies
- ✚ Memorandum of Understanding between the Precision Manufacturing Companies and Educational Institutions in the Pioneer Valley Region
- ✚ Education Enhancement Compact
- ✚ Market Opportunities Report- *Opportunities Going Forward*
- ✚ WMNTMA Business Fact Sheets- CY 2005-2007
- ✚ Implementation Replication Manual-*Thoughts Going Forward*
- ✚ Project Results Survey Summary
- ✚ Memorandum of Agreement between Springfield Technical Community College, the WMNTMA and the REB
- ✚ WMNTMA-EDC of Western Massachusetts Marketing Profiles