Puerto Rico Manufacturing Extension Inc
The Puerto Rico Manufacturing Extension Inc. (PRiMEX) is a private non-profit organization, organized in 1996 through the initiative of Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company (PRIDCO) and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), a program under the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). As part of a national network, PRiMEX supports the needs of all Puerto Rico’s small and medium enterprises (SME’s) by providing services to improve their business processes. The national network allows us to leverage nationwide resources that previously had not been accessible to our industrial base. These “partnerships” includes research laboratories for technology transfers and knowledge sharing, national associations and industry related organizations.

PRiMEX has focused on increasing the competitiveness of PR’s industrial base by bridging the productivity gap for companies, identifying opportunities for growth, and encouraging technology deployment. We provide our customers with a wide array of fundamental services in business and process improvements helping them to stay strong and ready to compete in the global market. We focus on the future of PR’s companies by making advanced technology adoption a reality for any-sized business.

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ECONOMIC IMPACT
 MEP Center impacts are based on clients surveyed in FY2017

$87.8 Million
Total Increased/Retained Sales

2,220
Total Increased/Retained Jobs

$19.7 Million
New Client Investments

$6 Million
Cost Savings
“PRiMEX’s support to Bluewater Defense in achieving and maintaining a Quality Management System compliant to the ISO 9001:2008 Standard has contributed to opening opportunities for Bluewater Defense to pursue more business and has the potential to increase the labor force in Puerto Rico.” Erika Lopez, Manager of Product Development

**STRENGTHENING SUPPLIERS FOR THE US DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

**ABOUT.** Bluewater Defense, Inc. is located in Corozal, Puerto Rico and has been in operation since 1987. Dedicated to the manufacturing of military apparel and equipment for the U.S. Department of Defense, Bluewater Defense has around 500 employees.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Bluewater Defense’s key customer is the U.S. Department of Defense, which demands high standards from suppliers and expects operations to run under a formal quality system. Bluewater Defense realized its Quality Management System would benefit from being upgraded to a standard recognized by the U.S. Department of Defense and thus began its certification process towards ISO 9001:2008 Standard two years ago. PRiMEX (NIST MEP affiliate) was contacted to provide additional support to help the organization reach its goal of certification.

**MEP’S ROLE.** PRiMEX conducted a Gap Analysis for Bluewater Defense to identify modifications required to the existing Quality Management System in order to meet the ISO 9001:2008 requirements for certification. As a result of this assessment, PRiMEX was able to help identify necessary changes to Bluewater Defense Quality Management System to meet the ISO 9001:2008 Standard. A detailed report was prepared and discussed with the implementation team. Training was provided to internal auditors. Additional time was dedicated to provide coaching to internal auditors and management to ensure the organization was prepared for a certification audit under the ISO 9001:2008 Standard. Bluewater Defense was successful in obtaining its certification status to ISO 9001:2008 Standard.

**RESULTS**

- Job growth of over 50 employees
- Certification under the ISO 9001:2008 Standards
- Improvement in operational efficiency
- Increased awareness in the organization on the need to maintain certification