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Finger Lakes Textiles Secures FuzeHub Grant to Accelerate Face Mask Production

\$15,000 grant will help fund new equipment to meet surging demand, foster sustained growth

WATERLOO, N.Y. – FuzeHub, the statewide center for the New York Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NY MEP), announced it has awarded \$15,000 in grant funding to Finger Lakes Textiles (FLT), an inclusive textile and knitting factory and a division of [Mozaic](#), to help it expand and accelerate its manufacturing of face masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“Finger Lakes Textiles quickly pivoted to produce face masks to help keep people safe amid the coronavirus pandemic. It was an inspiring undertaking, and FuzeHub is excited to help them increase production,” said FuzeHub Executive Director Elena Garuc.

“Even before this crisis hit New York State, Finger Lakes Textiles had a remarkable story,” said Everton H. Henriques, NY MEP Solutions Director for FuzeHub. “As an inclusive workplace, they provide rewarding employment opportunities for people with disabilities. These jobs foster inclusion and offer a pathway for individuals of all abilities to make a difference in our community — something we’ve certainly seen in recent weeks when their workforce stepped up to manufacture face masks.”

The \$15,000 FuzeHub grant helped fund the purchase of new equipment that will triple FLT’s weekly production of washable 0.5 micron filter face masks. The five industrial sewing machines that FLT has added to its facility will also help diversify its product mix once the surging demand for face masks begins to subside.

“When we recognized our community’s need for more face masks, we were eager to help. This grant from FuzeHub helped us secure the equipment we needed to significantly ramp up production, and it served as a catalyst for job creation,” said Edward Sayles, Mozaic’s Director of Development. “We hope our team’s response to the pandemic will further demonstrate that every person, regardless of any perceived disability, can make an impact and contribute to our community in so many different ways.”

Mozaic, FLT’s parent organization, was formed in January 2020 through the merger of the Arc of Seneca Cayuga and Arc of Yates. The combined organization serves about 2,000 people and their families throughout the Finger Lakes region.

For over 25 years, FLT has produced winter hats worn by members of the U.S. Armed Forces through a contract with the Department of Defense. In 2018, it launched the Artic Gear brand to sell its winter headwear on the consumer market. With its versatile equipment and deep expertise, FLT quickly adapted during the pandemic and retooled part of its facility to manufacture face masks.

Its first large order for masks came through the [Cornell Prison Education Program](#), which organized peer institutions involved in the New York Consortium for Higher Education in Prison to provide masks for the state's incarcerated population. FLT is producing 43,000 masks to protect one of New York's most vulnerable populations.

"We are a mission-driven business with a social purpose," said Mozaic CEO Allen Connelly. "Everything we do at Mozaic, especially our work at Finger Lakes Textiles, drives back to our mission of providing vital services to people with intellectual and development disabilities and their families."

The pandemic has disrupted manufacturing supply chains around the world, creating an opportunity for FLT – which provides low-cost, high-quality textiles solutions – to become a supplier of choice for manufacturers that want to reduce their reliance on overseas suppliers and expand their U.S.-based supply chain. The new machinery acquired with FuzeHub's funding support will help FLT capitalize on this opportunity to foster sustained growth.

FLT currently employs about 87 workers. It recently added five new employees to assist with face mask manufacturing. Deemed an essential business because of its work for the Department of Defense, FLT has implemented enhanced health and safety procedures to keep employees safe.

FuzeHub and the [regional NY MEP centers](#) across the state have been working closely with manufacturers to help them pivot to produce supplies needed in the fight against COVID-19. In addition to its [COVID-19 Manufacturing Grants](#) program designed to accelerate production of ventilators and N-95 respirators, FuzeHub set aside a small pot of funds to support a limited number of manufacturers already engaged with FuzeHub through existing requests for assistance.

About FuzeHub

FuzeHub is a nonprofit organization that connects New York's small and mid-sized manufacturing companies to the resources, programs and expertise they need for technology commercialization, innovation, and business growth. Through its custom assessment, matching, and referral platform, FuzeHub helps companies navigate New York's robust network of industry experts at Manufacturing Extension Partnership centers, universities, economic development organizations, and other providers. FuzeHub is the statewide New York Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program center, supported by Empire State Development's Division of Science, Technology & Innovation (NYSTAR). For more information, visit www.fuzehub.com.

About Finger Lakes Textiles

Based in Waterloo, N.Y., Finger Lakes Textiles is an inclusive textile and knitting factory and a division of Mozaic, a nonprofit provider of services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Finger Lakes region. It provides employment and training opportunities to people with disabilities and manufactures winter headwear for the defense industry, consumer market and corporate clients. The factory also offers contract sewing services. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Finger Lakes Textiles began producing .5 micron filter reusable face masks. For more information, visit www.mozaic.org or www.arcticgear.org.

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