



# The Manufacturing Institute

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▶ 2025 Annual Report



## › A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Manufacturing continues to drive innovation, growth and opportunity across the United States. As the industry evolves, so do the challenges of developing a workforce that is skilled, adaptable and prepared to meet changing demands. The Manufacturing Institute is the authority in manufacturing workforce development and education, sought out by manufacturers of all sizes for solutions that empower individuals, strengthen businesses and support the industry's long-term competitiveness.

The MI convenes manufacturers, educators, economic development leaders and communities nationwide to develop and strengthen the manufacturing workforce. These collaborations are critical to building a durable talent pipeline and expanding opportunity across the industry. With the support of corporate and philanthropic partners, this work continues to scale, delivering long-term value for manufacturers and the communities they serve. In 2025, a strategic growth assessment conducted by McKinsey & Company reinforced the effectiveness of this approach, finding that every dollar invested in the MI yields a 4.5 times return in economic impact.

As the 501(c)(3) nonprofit workforce development and education affiliate of the National Association of Manufacturers, the MI serves as a trusted adviser—equipping manufacturers with solutions to address their toughest workforce challenges. Through initiatives such as FAME USA and Heroes MAKE America, leadership programs including STEP Ahead, insights generated through Workforce Innovation, and convenings like the Solution Series and the Workforce Summit, this work supports employer-driven training, leadership development, career awareness and policy engagement.

These efforts, combined with policy advancements, leadership recognition and employer-led workforce strategies, reflect the industry's shared commitment to building a skilled, resilient and future-ready workforce. The progress achieved in 2025 underscores the power of collaboration—among manufacturers, educators, communities and policymakers—to sustain America's competitive advantage in manufacturing.

Thank you to everyone whose dedication, partnership and innovation make this work possible. Together, we are creating meaningful career opportunities, strengthening the workforce and securing a bright future for the industry, our communities and our nation.



**Carolyn Lee**  
President  
The Manufacturing Institute



## › DEVELOPING GLOBAL-BEST TALENT

The Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME USA) strengthened its position as the gold standard for employer-driven manufacturing workforce development. Across 45 chapters in 17 states, FAME now boasts over 2,700 graduates and over 1,300 current students and expanded participation to nearly 500 manufacturing companies nationwide, delivering a reliable, job-ready talent pipeline aligned directly to industry demand.

Under the stewardship of the MI, the FAME network has continued to scale rapidly and responsibly, addressing a critical skills gap while protecting the integrity of its proven model.

- FAME launched a national Quality Assurance framework, reinforcing consistent, high-quality implementation across chapters and positioning the network for long-term growth.
- Five chapters were piloted through the process, with two earning Top Performer status, underscoring the strength of employer leadership and program execution across the network.

FAME's expansion reflected growing demand from manufacturers seeking sustainable workforce solutions. In fall 2025, five new chapters welcomed students, including the launch of California's first FAME chapter—marking FAME's first expansion west of the Rockies. An additional three chapters entered FAME Academy and will welcome students in 2026, including expansion into Iowa, further extending the program's geographic reach.

### New Chapters:

- AL FAME – Built by Baldwin
- AL FAME – Huntsville Tech
- AL FAME – Magic City
- CA FAME – Central Valley (new state; first chapter west of the Rockies)
- IL FAME – Prairie Land

### Chapters in FAME Academy:

- KS FAME – Top City
- TX FAME – Navarro
- IA FAME – Riverbend (new state)



**FAME allows us as an employer to have a voice in the development of our future talent—and importantly, builds not just really great technical skills, but individuals who think critically and exhibit the kind of professionalism that will serve them well for their entire career.”**

– Amy Arnette, Corporate Manager of Workforce Engagement, Coca-Cola Bottling Company United



## › CONNECTING MANUFACTURERS WITH MILITARY TALENT

Heroes MAKE America continued to deliver exceptional outcomes for manufacturers in 2025 by connecting employers with job-ready military talent through accelerated training, industry-recognized credentials and modern hiring tools. HMA holds a 92% placement rate across more than 500 companies in 49 states.

HMA's SkillBridge in-person training programs operated at several sites in Kansas, Texas, Georgia and North Carolina, in partnership with military installations and local technical and community colleges.

- In 2025, HMA's SkillBridge enrollment grew by 6%, with graduates earning an average salary of \$77,524. To date, HMA has graduated 2,003 participants and issued 9,820 industry-recognized certifications, demonstrating sustained value for both employers and transitioning service members.

To further streamline employer hiring, the MI created additional Military Readiness Badges, translating military experience into competencies recognized by manufacturers.

- In 2025, two new badge series in Leadership and Logistics were introduced, bringing the total to 23 foundational skills-focused badges, with 9,183 issued to date.

Employer engagement was further strengthened through the HMA Talent Network and seven Military-to-Manufacturing Career Fairs, enabling real-time connections nationwide.

HMA expanded into one of manufacturing's most critical high-skilled talent needs: aviation maintenance. The launch of accelerated FAA Airframe & Powerplant programs in Kansas and Georgia created new pathways into safety-critical, high-wage careers. Graduates of the A&P program earned average salaries exceeding \$117,000, supplying employers with credentialed talent for hard-to-fill roles.



**Heroes MAKE America reflects our shared commitment to the U.S. military community and to building a strong, skilled aviation technician pipeline for the industry. In North Carolina, we're proud to back the A&P preparation program, creating clear pathways into high-demand roles that strengthen safety, quality and long-term industry resilience."**

– Meghan Thurlow, Global Head of Public Affairs, GE Aerospace & President, GE Aerospace Foundation





## ➤ ELEVATING LEADERS

The MI hosted the 14th annual Women MAKE Awards gala, honoring leaders who drive innovation, strengthen communities and shape the future of manufacturing. These awardees are recognized for their leadership and mentorship and also serve as role models for the next generation. To date, the Awards have recognized roughly 1,700 individuals.

- The Awards elevate stories that inspire others to see a future for themselves in manufacturing—stories like Gina’s, which highlight the breadth of opportunity across the industry.
  - “There are so many different functions, and so many important people when it comes to making something—there’s something for everyone. Sometimes you just have to raise your hand and say ‘yes.’”  
– Gina Govojean, Vice President, Sales and Supply, Howmet Aerospace and 2025 Honoree

2025 marked the introduction of the Champion Award, honoring a transformative executive who has advanced manufacturing talent meaningfully.

- Cargill Senior Vice President of Manufacturing and Supply Chain Food North America Matt Pearson, who was the inaugural recipient, was selected for his impact on employee development and long-standing dedication to mentorship.

After three years of mentorship programs, the MI has trained and matched more than 800 individuals at all levels of their career, equipping them with the professional development, guidance and connections needed to thrive in the field.



**Receiving this award for me is a lot of recognition of the hard work. So much in manufacturing feels like you are working in a silo. It feels like you are working by yourself. ... This award helped me take a step back and realize that people were seeing the impact I was having in the work that I was doing.”**

– Marissa Rubino, Manufacturing Area Manager, The Timken Company and 2025 Emerging Leader



## › ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

In 2025, the MI expanded tools and resources that help manufacturers inspire the next generation of talent.

- The Quest for the Crystal of Innovation (Innovators Quest), a turnkey, hands-on engagement activity for students in grades 4–9, officially launched as a scalable engagement tool.
  - Manufacturers, associations and economic development partners across multiple states used Innovators Quest as a solution and support tool to bolster their student engagement activities.

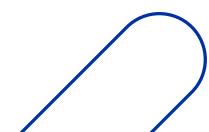
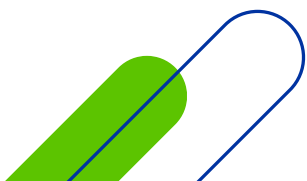


**It's hard for a student to articulate, 'I like blueprint reading,' if they don't know what that is. But when they're using a 3D pen or wiring a controller, they start to see how they learn and engage. That opens the door to conversations about welding, engineering, marketing, communications or even human resources."**

– Kristen McMains, Talent Outreach Specialist, Musco Lighting

Manufacturing Day (MFG Day) remained a cornerstone of national outreach. To help manufacturers and communities prepare, the MI hosted informational webinars and provided tools to federal and state officials to elevate MFG Day awareness locally.

- Novonosis served as the platinum sponsor of MFG Day 2025, hosting the national flagship event in Franklinton, North Carolina, where more than 300 students and community leaders participated in immersive tours highlighting real-world manufacturing careers. Student interest in manufacturing increased by 158%, with 93% reporting exposure to new career pathways.
- This momentum carried into a nationwide MFG Day on Oct. 3, with events held across 44 states. Twenty states issued proclamations, and the White House formally recognized National Manufacturing Day. Digital engagement reached 32 million interactions, generating an estimated \$1.4 million in earned media value.



## ➤ **ADVOCATING FOR MANUFACTURER-DRIVEN WORKFORCE POLICY**

The MI continued to lead and advance key workforce policy priorities in 2025 by grounding its advocacy in direct input from manufacturers and decades of experience designing and implementing workforce solutions nationwide.

In response to President Trump’s executive order on workforce development and apprenticeships, the MI released “Manufacturing America’s Talent,” a national workforce policy blueprint informed by manufacturers’ input and lessons learned through FAME USA.

- The MI elevated these recommendations directly with federal leaders, with MI President Carolyn Lee and Chief Program Officer Gardner Carrick bringing these recommendations to Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer and Deputy Secretary Keith Sonderling.
- The recommendations included centering employer leadership in workforce program design and delivery; expanding incumbent worker training support; prioritizing multi-employer partnerships; creating an apprenticeship system that promotes flexible program models; incentivizing employer-responsive apprenticeship intermediaries; and expanding financial incentives for employers to create and operate apprenticeships.
- These priorities were reflected subsequently in the administration’s “America’s Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age.”

Additionally, the MI provided expert testimony before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions with Carrick providing testimony on how the Department of Labor’s Registered Apprenticeship program can be streamlined and strengthened to better meet manufacturers’ workforce needs.

## ➤ **CONVENING EXPERTS FOR WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS**

The MI’s Solution Center advanced practical, manufacturer-driven workforce solutions by convening employers and partners to share proven strategies that address the industry’s most pressing talent challenges.

- The MI refined its Solution Series, hosting seven virtual convenings that elevated employer voices and enabled real-time peer learning.
- The annual Workforce Summit, held in Charlotte, North Carolina, convened a record number of workforce leaders from across manufacturing, education and association communities. Centered on “Manufacturing America’s Talent,” the Summit fostered collaboration, surfaced best practices and advanced scalable solutions that employers are implementing actively nationwide.

### **PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK**



**The whole summit was amazing. I thought the sessions were well curated and executed. I have tons of ideas to bring back to my team and am excited to share what I learned.”**



**This is one of the best conferences I have been to. All of the speakers were dynamic and engaging. I left feeling energized about my role and ready to implement new things I picked up at the conference.”**



## › PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

Advancing the MI's workforce initiatives requires collaboration across industry, education and philanthropy. In 2025, philanthropic support played an important role in strengthening programs, expanding access and accelerating impact across key initiatives.

This support helped expand the reach and impact of FAME USA. Support from both new and returning partners enabled continued growth of the model—connecting individuals to in-demand manufacturing careers, helping employers meet workforce needs and strengthening regional economies. This allowed for program expansion, enhanced student experiences and increased employer engagement across communities.

Heroes MAKE America advanced its work in 2025 thanks to philanthropic support that strengthened training delivery, expanded access for transitioning service members and deepened employer connections. This investment helped more members of the military community translate their skills into civilian manufacturing careers, while providing manufacturers with job-ready, highly skilled talent. Support in 2025 positioned the initiative to reach additional military installations and scale proven pathways in the year ahead.

The 2025 Women MAKE Awards were supported by industry and philanthropic partners committed to developing and elevating leadership across manufacturing. Their investment made it possible to celebrate excellence, amplify role models and create space for mentorship and connection. By supporting this work, partners helped reinforce clear pathways for advancement and leadership development across the industry.

Once again, the 2025 Workforce Summit was made possible through industry sponsorship and partnership, which helped convene employers and workforce leaders to address shared talent challenges. This support ensured strong programming, practical tools and meaningful peer exchange. The Summit continues to serve as a platform for collaboration and action across the manufacturing ecosystem.

**Throughout 2025, the MI continued to lead, support, evolve and foster learning pathways, tools and solutions to enable manufacturers throughout the U.S. to meet one of their most pressing competitiveness challenges: their talent pool.**



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