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## PRESS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release*

### **STEP Ahead and the Women in Manufacturing® Association Collaborate to Close the Gender Gap**

*New Collaboration Will Engage Women Across the United States to Discuss Opportunities and Navigate Their Careers*

**Washington, D.C., May 10, 2018:** Two leading organizations for women in the U.S. manufacturing sector are collaborating to combat challenges and seize opportunities for women in the industry. The Manufacturing Institute's STEP (Science, Technology, Engineering and Production) Ahead Program and the Women in Manufacturing® (WiM) Association today announced a unique collaboration that will serve to change perceptions of the modern manufacturing sector and promote its many career possibilities for women workers.

This new strategic partnership between STEP Ahead and WiM is particularly important now as the American manufacturing sector works to address the pressing problem of a widening skills gap. According to [a report by Deloitte and the Institute](#), 84 percent of manufacturing executives agree there is a talent shortage in the U.S. manufacturing sector. Despite the industry's willingness to pay more than market-rate salaries and wages to secure qualified talent, six out of 10 positions remain unfilled because companies cannot find workers with the right skills.

STEP Ahead and WiM are united in their efforts to raise attention about the opportunities in manufacturing. As part of this partnership, the two organizations will support each other's initiatives and programming as they seek to increase women's representation in the industry and to strengthen the industry as a whole. The two groups will endeavor together to connect women job seekers with the skills training, network building, and mentoring opportunities they need to qualify for a long-term career in this growing sector of the economy.

"This announcement is indicative of the reality that our industry has arrived at a critical crossroads," said Carolyn Lee, executive director of The Manufacturing Institute. "The skills gap problem is significant, but it can be addressed through an industry-wide commitment to recruiting and retaining talented women. While women make up about 47 percent of the labor force, they represent only 29 percent of the manufacturing workforce. Working together, we can change that number and demonstrate what modern manufacturing careers are all

about: making an impact in their communities with meaningful careers that offer significant opportunities for growth.”

STEP Ahead is the premier program honoring and advocating for the role of women in the manufacturing industry and offering companies a unique opportunity to strengthen their diversity strategies and develop new concepts for advancing and retaining female talent. With more than 2,150 national alumnae and regional participants, STEP Ahead draws public attention to manufacturing’s present-day reality and works to attract more women into the industry.

WiM is the only national trade association dedicated to year-round support for women in manufacturing. Its more than 1,000 members benefit from regular regional and national programming, networking opportunities, mentoring and sponsoring programs, bimonthly professional development webinars, a customized employment tool called WiMWorks, online discussion communities, the quarterly *Impact* e-newsletter and a robust searchable online directory.

“WiM’s research has found a strong correlation between what women are seeking in careers and what modern manufacturing offers,” said WiM President Allison Grealis. “WiM members are examples of what success in manufacturing looks like and proof of the many challenging and rewarding careers available in manufacturing today. In collaboration with The Manufacturing Institute, we will continue our commitment to supporting top female talent in manufacturing and connecting women with each other and with opportunities in a thriving industry.”

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#### ***About The Manufacturing Institute***

*The Manufacturing Institute (the Institute) is the 501(c)(3) affiliate of the National Association of Manufacturers. As a non-partisan organization, the Institute is committed to delivering leading-edge information and services to the nation's manufacturers. The Institute is the authority on the attraction, qualification and development of world-class manufacturing talent. For more information, please visit [www.themanufacturinginstitute.org](http://www.themanufacturinginstitute.org).*

#### ***About the Women in Manufacturing (WiM) Association***

*Women in Manufacturing® (WiM) is a national association dedicated to supporting, promoting and inspiring women who are pursuing or have chosen a career in the manufacturing industry. WiM encompasses manufacturers of all types and welcomes individuals from every job function – from the shop floor to the C-Suite. This group encourages the engagement of women who want*

*to share perspectives, gain cutting-edge industry information, improve leadership and communication skills, participate in partner programs and network with peers. For more information, please visit [www.womeninmanufacturing.org](http://www.womeninmanufacturing.org).*