

Women MAKE America Initiative Overview



Manufacturing faces a serious skills gap. Part of this gap comes from an underrepresentation of women in the industry. In fact, women account for less than one-third of the manufacturing workforce despite representing nearly half of all workers.

The Manufacturing Institute's **Women MAKE America Initiative** (formerly the STEP Ahead Initiative) is the nation's marquee program devoted to closing the gender gap in manufacturing. The initiative aims to foster a 21st-century manufacturing workforce by inspiring women in the manufacturing industry through recognition, empowerment, mentoring, company engagement, leadership and professional training and community building.

**Manufacturers can
close the skills
gap by 50%**

**simply by bringing 10% more
women into the industry.**

FLAGSHIP PROGRAMS

Within the past decade, the MI launched two programs that continue to inspire, educate and empower women in the manufacturing industry.

Women MAKE America Awards

The Women MAKE America Awards (formerly the STEP Ahead Awards) recognize women and their achievements at all levels of a manufacturing organization, from the factory floor to the C-suite. Each year, 100 Honorees and 30 Emerging Leaders are nominated by their companies as leaders in the manufacturing industry. Emerging Leaders are accomplished professionals under 30 years of age. Award recipients attend a two-day leadership program before celebrating their successes with friends and families at an evening gala. Honorees and Emerging Leaders join more than 1,100 women as Award Alumnae. Through their commitment to “pay it forward,” these leaders and their example help to inspire a new generation of creators and innovators.

Women MAKE America Awards Leadership and Professional Training

The two-day leadership program includes presentations and panels featuring best-in-class speakers and leaders in various fields, including the Harvard Kennedy School, Chicago School of Professional Psychology and more. Honorees and Emerging Leaders explore their professional working styles, learn how they can advance their careers and identify ways to develop their colleagues and future manufacturing talent.

Women Connect

The Women MAKE America Initiative offers regional and virtual events so that women can hear from and connect with each other. Each session is tailored to achieve a specific goal, whether it's hearing perspectives of women in the manufacturing industry, learning new methods or tools to apply to personal and professional development or simply bringing together women to meet other women in the manufacturing space.

35X30 CAMPAIGN

In March 2022, Women MAKE America launched the 35x30 campaign to increase the percentage of women in the manufacturing workforce to 35% by 2030. This industry-wide, action-oriented campaign features a best-in-class female-to-female mentoring program, increased company engagement and expanded access to professional development and training.

... The campaign aims to add half a million women to the manufacturing industry by 2030.

WOMEN MAKE AMERICA OFFICIAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Research has found that mentorship programs drive retention, yet only 31% of companies provide that offering. Further evidence demonstrates that women value female-to-female mentorships within the manufacturing industry, though these connections are not always easy to form. The Official Women MAKE America Mentorship Program trains mentors and mentees before matching them based on more than two dozen criteria to maximize their relationship.

... The WMA Mentorship Program will train 1,000 mentors by 2030.

COMPANY ENGAGEMENT AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Through the Women MAKE America Initiative, companies can access the latest research and best practices and identify partnerships/external support. New research is currently underway that will dive deeper into the challenges women are facing in the workplace as well as ascertain what companies are doing to address those challenges.

EDUCATION ADVANCEMENT

Over the next several years, Women MAKE America will expand educational opportunities and support to women and young girls to help broaden the pipeline. Building upon the leadership program pioneered by the Women MAKE America Awards, training will be expanded to reach more women in the industry. A scholarship fund will also be established to support young women interested in a career in manufacturing.

