



# COUNCIL MEMBERS

- STEVE HEETHUIS  
COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON  
*PRAECO SKILLS*
- MICKALA VANDOP  
*SCHERDEL*
- JAY DUNWELL  
*WOLVERINE COIL SPRING CO.*
- KRISTEN TJALSMA  
*MILLERKNOLL*
- KACEY REGAN  
*DEWYS METAL SOLUTIONS*
- STEPHANIE BRIGGS  
*MUSKEGON COMMUNITY COLLEGE*
- SARAH GARNER  
*NN INC.*
- JAKE VANDERKOLK  
*GENTEX*
- VICTOR JOAQUIN  
*THE RIGHT PLACE*
- RYAN GRAHAM  
*KENT ISD*
- AMY LEBEDNICK  
*WEST MICHIGAN WORKS!*

# FUNDERS

- MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT  
OF LABOR AND ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY
- WEST MICHIGAN WORKS!
- THE RIGHT PLACE  
MANUFACTURERS COUNCIL
- BRADFORD WHITE CORPORATION
- WOLVERINE COIL SPRING CO
- AUTOCAM MEDICAL
- MERSEN
- GR TOOLING AND AUTOMATION
- GVSU PADNOS COLLEGE OF  
ENGINEERING
- FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY WELDING  
ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY
- GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- MUSKEGON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- MONTCALM COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- KENT ISD
- MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION
- THE MANUFACTURING MILLENNIAL

**DISCOVER**  
MANUFACTURING™



West Michigan Works! is a division of ACSET, an equal opportunity employer/program and a proud partner of the American Job Center network. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. West Michigan Works! is supported by state and federal funds; more details at [westmiworks.org/about/](http://westmiworks.org/about/).



# 2025

## COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

**DISCOVER**  
MANUFACTURING™



# ABOUT THE COUNCIL



## MISSION AND VISION

Discover Manufacturing is a regional network of hundreds of manufacturers dedicated to addressing both the current and future talent needs of West Michigan’s manufacturing industry. In collaboration with partners in education, workforce development and economic development, we are focused on training the current workforce, promoting the industry to future generations, and sharing opportunities and best practices within the sector.

## INDUSTRY IMPACT

Michigan’s manufacturing sector leads the state’s economy with \$100 billion in output and employs nearly 510,000 people. Projected to grow by more than 10% by 2030, it offers competitive salaries of around \$91,162 per year, surpassing statewide averages.



Discover Manufacturing is proud to serve as the connective tissue uniting West Michigan’s manufacturers, educators, economic developers and workforce development leaders. Over the past year, we have worked to strengthen skill development, deepen collaboration, align training with industry needs and help build a resilient, future-ready talent pipeline.

- Steve Heethuis, Praeco Skills

## MICAREERQUEST

At MiCareerQuest this year, sixth-ninth grade students learned about 59 manufacturing occupations through hands-on activities. These included welding, running an assembly line, performing quality control checks, engineering solutions to manufacturing challenges and more. Students were left inspired to be future manufacturers because they experienced a day in the life of these roles.

«**MiCareerQuest is a powerful event that helps students connect the dots between education and their future. It’s equally impactful for employers, who have the opportunity to spark interest in their industries and inspire the next generation of talent.**»

- Ryan Graham, Kent ISD



**24**  
MANUFACTURING  
EXHIBITORS

**8,500+**  
STUDENTS

**345**  
TEACHERS





# BE THE DIFFERENCE

## DM SCHOLARSHIPS

Discover Manufacturing has awarded \$64,500 in scholarships since 2018. These directly impact the lives of local students, helping them pursue education and careers in manufacturing and in skilled trades. Scholarship recipients are selected for their ambition, work ethic and commitment to building a career in manufacturing.



« I always loved math and science studies from a young age. The world is changing a lot and there is a need for more advanced technology. I am going to Lawrence Technological University where I will be studying mechanical engineering. I think that manufacturing is the right career path for me because I really enjoy being in a hands-on environment. »

- Kaden Perkins, 2025 scholarship award winner



7  
FIRST TIME  
SCHOLARSHIPS

3  
RENEWAL  
SCHOLARSHIPS

\$11,500  
AWARDED

# OUR STRATEGY

TRAIN • PROMOTE • COMMUNICATE



## DEVELOP TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Informing curriculum development and spearheading initiatives that provide ongoing training for incumbent workers and introductory training for new manufacturers.



## PROMOTE MANUFACTURING CAREERS

Executing initiatives to promote advanced manufacturing careers to students and young adults showcasing career paths and growth.



## SHARE BEST PRACTICES ACROSS WEST MICHIGAN

Creating initiatives aimed at informing our membership of the best practical strategies to attract and maintain a skilled workforce.





# BE THE CHANGE

## DISCOVER MANUFACTURING WEEK

In 2024, 6,449 students from across the region participated in Discover Manufacturing Week tours, getting an up-close look at careers in manufacturing. Educators, students and employers shared overwhelmingly positive feedback. Plans are underway to expand the program and give even more students the chance to explore West Michigan's diverse manufacturing career pathways to meet growing demand from schools.

We have participated in hosting students since Discover Manufacturing Week originated. This event is pivotal in opening young minds to all the career opportunities in manufacturing, such as advanced machining, machine maintenance, human resources, sales, marketing, etc.

- Sarah Garner, NN Inc.

82  
EMPLOYERS

6,449  
STUDENTS

251  
TEACHERS

## CAREER READINESS CONFERENCE

Leaders from manufacturing, construction, economic development, workforce development and education met this year for the third annual Career Readiness Conference, discussing the talent shortage and building career pathways between education and industry. The event focused on the region's talent shortage, and leaders emphasized how partnerships between educators and employers help students connect classroom learning to real-world careers.

We don't have to teach you how to collaborate when we come to West Michigan like we do in other parts of the state. You are already doing it. This conference is one example; Discover Manufacturing Week is another. You've found the benefits of collaboration and leverage them to support manufacturing.

- Bill Rayl, Michigan Manufacturers Association

175  
ATTENDEES

11  
PLANNING  
ORGANIZATIONS


12  
BREAKOUT  
SESSIONS

  
\$9,684,288.47  
TRAINING  
DOLLARS  
INVESTED

  
4,385  
PROFESSIONALS  
TRAINED

  
249  
ENGAGED  
BUSINESSES

  
252  
PROJECT  
VOLUNTEERS

  
14,946  
K-12 STUDENTS  
EXPLORED  
CAREERS

  
1,331  
LINKEDIN AND  
NEWSLETTER  
FOLLOWERS

