

Youth Outreach



AMP Program Celebrates Largest Cohort Yet

Manufacturing careers in Lawrence and Mercer County are within

reach for more students than ever before, and a recent recognition ceremony marked just how far that work has come.

The Advanced Manufacturing Pre-Apprenticeship Program (AMP), facilitated by Pennsylvania College of Technology (PCT), gathered its largest Lawrence County cohort yet to celebrate program completion.

Of the 45 students enrolled this year, 42 completed the program, making it the third and largest cohort since AMP launched in the region.

PCT provides the program at no cost to schools or students, made possible through a Build Back Better grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, covering access to lessons and three hands-on labs.

Students also have the opportunity to earn up to \$1,000 in stipends and an industry credential from the Society of Manufacturing Engineers as a Certified Manufacturing-Associate.

Forward Lawrence first brought AMP to Lawrence County in 2024. LMMC joined those efforts in 2025, providing funding through the PA Industry Partnership grant to support program management and stipends.

This year, the program expanded into Mercer County for the first time, with a pilot cohort of eight students at Farrell High School facilitated by Penn-Northwest Development Corporation. Additional support came through continued PA Industry Partnership funding and a grant from the Hoyt Foundation.

At the ceremony, LMMC member manufacturers met directly

with students, including [Flowline Fittings](#), [Berner Air Curtains](#), [G.W. Becker Inc.](#) and [FirmaPak](#), all of which have positions available now.

“The AMP program is an opportunity for young people to explore manufacturing careers and see what it entails,” said Autumn Bonzo, director of HR at Flowline Fittings. “The program allows Flowline and other employers to get in front of the students who have a general interest in manufacturing and determine if our employment opportunities align with their goals to help them build a meaningful career.”

With the program returning next school year, the region's manufacturing workforce pipeline continues to grow.

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Workforce

Frontline Leadership Training Course Starts Aug. 4

Investing in the people leading on the manufacturing floor strengthens the entire operation. Starting this August, LMMC is making that investment easier to access.

LMMC is offering a Frontline Leadership and Supervisory Training program in partnership with Butler County Community College (BC3).

The eight-week course runs August 4 through September 22, meeting every Tuesday from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. at

BC3@Lawrence in the Shenango Commons, New Castle.



Topics covered throughout the program include managing conflict, inspiring motivation, ethics, teambuilding and collaboration.

The course is led by an experienced leadership trainer and is restricted to manufacturing companies, with industry case studies and peer engagement woven into each in-person session.

Whether you're looking to strengthen an existing supervisor or invest in someone stepping into a leadership role for the first time, this program offers a practical framework grounded in real manufacturing environments.

As a membership benefit, LMMC manufacturing members are entitled to one free seat. Additional seats for members and seats for non-members are available at \$250 each.

Not yet an LMMC member? Join now and take advantage of your complimentary seat. Visit Membership or reach out directly to Julie Michael Smith to learn more.

Space is limited to 20 participants and registration closes July 24. Click here to access the registration.



Focus Groups Reveal What Students Really Think

This spring, student focus groups revealed a clear assumption gap around manufacturing careers. Students are not turning away from manufacturing. Many are still figuring out what it is and what it could mean for their future.

LMMC's Youth-Informed Outreach Committee hosted conversations at Farrell, Shenango and Wilmington high schools this spring to better understand how students view manufacturing.

Students were generally open to manufacturing careers and often spoke positively about friends choosing that path. They just lacked the exposure and information needed to understand the opportunities available.

In one telling moment, a student said they wanted a future job that would allow them to get their kids on the bus in the morning before heading to work.

It was a simple comment, but it showed how students think about careers in real-life terms: family, flexibility, stability and the kind of life they want to build.

Across all three schools, students described manufacturing in familiar ways: factories, steel, machines and assembly lines. Those images are not wrong, but they're incomplete. They show only a narrow slice of the industry.

Many students were unaware of the range of roles available in manufacturing and had limited knowledge of manufacturers operating in their own communities.

That is the assumption gap. Students are supportive of manufacturing as a pathway, but many lack direct exposure to local manufacturers, personal connections to the industry and a clear understanding of what modern manufacturing looks like.

"What surprised me most wasn't a negative perception of manufacturing, but rather how deeply students value real-world stability," said Dr. Emily Clare, supervisor of curriculum and instruction at Farrell Area School District. "They are looking for careers that support family life, flexibility, and long-term growth. For educators and employers, the takeaway is clear: the interest is there, but we must bridge the assumption gap by showing them what modern, local manufacturing actually looks like beyond the traditional assembly line."

Students also raised concerns about workplace safety, career

advancement and how artificial intelligence might shape future jobs. At the same time, they were clear about what matters most: good pay, financial security, work-life balance, meaningful work and the chance to grow.

The challenge is not overcoming negative perceptions. It's helping students see the full picture.

This summer, the Youth-Informed Outreach Committee will create a broader survey for students across Lawrence and Mercer counties, which is set to be released in the fall. The results, combined with the focus group feedback, will help shape LMMC's outreach strategy, messaging and future career awareness efforts.

Membership

New Member Profile: PSU Beaver

Building a strong manufacturing workforce requires more than employers alone. It takes education partners that can help workers build new skills throughout their careers.

[Penn State Beaver Continuing Education and Workforce Development at Penn State Beaver](#) has joined LMMC as its newest



Education member, adding decades of experience in workforce training, professional development and customized employer support.

For more than 40 years, Penn State Continuing Education and Workforce Development has worked with employers to deliver industry-relevant training that helps organizations develop their workforce and remain competitive.

Its programs are designed to address skill gaps, support employee onboarding and succession planning, meet compliance requirements and enhance technical and operational performance through flexible, customized training delivered either on-site or at a Penn State campus.

That employer-focused approach aligns closely with LMMC's mission to connect manufacturers with education and workforce partners that can help address shared workforce challenges.

"We're excited to join LMMC because strong workforce development starts with listening to employers," said Jill Valentine, director of continuing education and workforce development at Penn State Beaver. "This partnership helps us stay connected to the evolving needs of manufacturers so we can provide relevant training, develop talent, and support the long-term success of our region's manufacturing community."

Beyond Beaver County, Penn State Continuing Education and Workforce Development serves employers across Pennsylvania by providing professional development, leadership training, customized workforce solutions and certificate programs that can be tailored to meet an organization's specific needs.

Among Penn State Beaver's offerings are customizable leadership development programs that help organizations

strengthen communication, emotional intelligence, change management, conflict resolution and other essential supervisory skills.

As an Education member, Penn State Beaver Continuing Education and Workforce Development brings valuable expertise that complements LMMC's focus on workforce development, career pathways and industry-driven training.

Youth Outreach

Educators Discover New Ways to Bring Manufacturing the Classroom

Area educators recently gathered at Mercer County Career Center for LMMC's Ready or Not educator training, a professional development session designed to help teachers introduce students to modern manufacturing careers through an engaging business simulation.



Facilitated by educational consultant Diane McGaffic of Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV, the training introduced participants to Ready or Not, an interactive manufacturing business game that places students in leadership roles as they work together to operate a company.

Along the way, students make authentic business decisions quickly, from addressing equipment failures to evaluating new products and navigating inventory management challenges, all while balancing projects that compete for capital and operating dollars.

Those decisions span production, supply chain management, human resources, sales, cybersecurity and other business functions, giving them a firsthand look at the many careers that contribute to a successful manufacturing operation.

Unlike traditional classroom lessons, Ready or Not allows students to experience the challenges and rewards of running a business in a collaborative, fast-paced environment.

The simulation aligns with Pennsylvania Career Education and Work Standards while helping students strengthen communication, teamwork, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

The educator training reflects LMMC's commitment to increasing awareness of manufacturing careers by equipping teachers with engaging resources they can easily incorporate into their classrooms.

Participants in the training also received free access to the program through May 2027, allowing them to bring the simulation to students for the next school year. Educators who are interested, but missed this training session, will have the opportunity to attend another session in September.

"Ready or Not creates opportunities for students to demonstrate and hone communication, collaboration, and

problem-solving skills in manufacturing career scenarios," said Ed MacElroy, principal at Keystone Education Charter Middle School. "These real-world situations encourage participants to delve to the depths of their knowledge with purpose."

By giving educators practical tools to connect classroom learning with real-world careers, the training helps students better understand the wide variety of opportunities available in modern manufacturing.

It's another step toward building a stronger future workforce by introducing young people to rewarding careers that are available right here in Lawrence and Mercer counties.

Calendar

- Frontline Leadership Training Course: August 4 at BC3@Lawrence