

# MANUFACTURING MATTERS

## Regional Manufacturing Companies Mark One Year Anniversary of the Innovative Safety Pledge Program in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

One year ago, MACNY and a small group of manufacturing leaders met to form a consortium and outline a process of “Keeping People Safe and Factories Running” amid a global pandemic. From these discussions, the manufacturer’s pledge was developed.

Supported by a peer-to-peer review process, the manufacturer’s pledge utilizes the collective skills and knowledge of the founding organizations, including experience from those who have overcome previous infectious episodes like the SARS outbreak. The process leverages best practices aligned with the NYS Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the World Health Organization guidelines. The process includes controlling site traffic, enhancing hygiene protocols, social distancing, onsite emergency response, and increased communication.

One year later the pledge has proven to be successful with 23 companies taking the pledge. As a result, more than 2,400 individuals are employed in a safe environment at these companies. Plus, there is increased communication and collaboration among manufacturing companies in the region to address the most critical issues facing the industry.

MACNY President and CEO Randy Wolken said, “Throughout the pandemic, our manufacturers have worked together to put

a comprehensive list of safety measures in place to help keep their workforce healthy and safe and the industry productive. This has been a challenging year, but manufacturers have proven to be resilient. I commend all the cohorts that have completed the innovative pledge program.”

Among the founding organizations, Indium Corporation was deemed an essential manufacturer when New York State entered a shutdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The company continued to produce materials for some of the nation’s most urgent needs, such as ventilators and first responder networks. Ross Berntson, President and COO, was instrumental in designing the consortium and completing the pledge.

“I am thankful to the other local manufacturing leaders for coming together to tackle this challenge and collectively develop a process that has allowed us to keep our employees, families, and communities safe,” Berntson said. “Our actions have helped ensure that critical industries are supplied and that innovation and growth has continued. We need to remain disciplined in following the guidelines we have set to continue to operate safely.”

For more information about “Keeping People Safe and Factories Running,” visit <https://www.macny.org/keep-people-safe-and-factories-running/>.

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Randy Wolken  
President & CEO

## Workforce, Entrepreneurship, Research and Community (WERC)

Rebuilding after a pandemic is difficult work. Our recovery will require us all to pull together and address our challenges, unlike any time in our lifetimes. The challenge ahead is on par with post-WWII. We need a laser-like focus on growth. How should we proceed?

Four critical elements are necessary for our recovery as we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis. We need to get people back to work quickly (workforce development). We need companies and organizations to grow (entrepreneurship). Investment in next-generation technologies is a must (research). And finally, building communities of mutual respect and opportunity is the foundation that supports all of our other efforts. Millions of Americans are unemployed and underemployed. Like following WWII, rebuilding our country and world is what lies ahead.

Individuals need to have jobs for us to recover - and they need them quickly. Workforce development efforts must include rapid upskilling, tech employment preparation, on-the-job training, and continued learning while working like registered apprenticeships. These are vital if we are to quickly get people back into family-supporting careers. Although traditional approaches like community colleges and universities will play a role, millions cannot afford to go to school full-time. They need good-paying jobs to support their lives and their families now. Work is required to provide each person the dignity and resources they deserve. We need to rapidly get people back to work.

We also need to foster entrepreneurship. Small businesses are the great engine of growth and employment within our economy. This is true of all the economic sectors.

The technology and manufacturing sectors, despite popular opinion, are dominated by small and medium-sized businesses. Nearly all large companies started small and grew into the household names we know today. Through growth and acquisitions, large companies are formed. However, they are not where most people work. We need to create new businesses to recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19. People, with the help of the community and investors, start new companies. We need millions of new companies to form quickly.

The third element of our recovery involves research. The U.S. is falling behind the world when developing the next generation of technologies. Our economic and national interests are enhanced by being a leader in critical technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, high-performance computing, robotics, automation, advanced manufacturing, quantum computing, cybersecurity, biotechnology, and semiconductors. These key areas we must invest in and make sure that the research results get commercialized. Many of these new businesses will start small. If we do not, other countries like China will become the world leader in these areas. This threatens both our national security and our economic vitality. We cannot let this happen.

Finally, we must build up our communities after this pandemic. We are a country divided. We must work together to overcome the challenges of our time. We must address economic and international conflict, income inequality, and equal opportunity, to mention only a few. We need to build local, regional, national, and global communities of opportunity and peaceful existence. This is probably the most difficult of the tasks that lie ahead. This is why we are confronted with a challenge similar to what we experienced after WWII. We need to rebuild the domestic and international economy in a way that all people can prosper. It's a huge task. We will need to rise to the challenge ahead.

I hope you will join me in creating new initiatives that get people back to work quickly, encourage entrepreneurship, invest in next-generation technology research, and build better communities with abundant opportunities. Together, and only together, we can tackle these challenging tasks. I remain hopeful we will rise to the occasion. Why? We have done so before. We can reach deep within ourselves and muster the courage, strength, and perseverance we will need. I believe we can – and will – do so.



James Shomar  
Chief Growth Officer

## Why You Should Charge For Your Minimal Viable Product

When you're launching something new, be it an entirely new business or simply a new product, market, or business model within an existing business, there comes a time when need to figure out how to get it into the marketplace. Some people will call this a "beta product" or a "pilot" or a "trial," etc. For our purposes let's assume they're all close enough to being synonyms and call it a Minimal Viable Product or MVP. To some this may seem like a "been there done that" business school topic but I'll tell you as an entrepreneur myself and in my experience working with other entrepreneurs and CEOs of established companies, deciding what your MVP should be is a lot less obvious than it may seem. Experienced people get this wrong all the time! Adding complication, is deciding whether to charge customers for it and if so, how much?

When "lean startup" was just starting to gain popularity, Steve Blank wrote a now famous article about how an MVP is not just a simple version of the product. It is first and foremost a learning experience. If you want a new venture to be successful, what you're ultimately looking for in the early days, in addition to market validation, is knowledge that you can leverage to scale. In other words, you are investing your energy into learning as much as you can about your market (from first-hand customer engagement) so that you can figure out how to position your brand, who your initial target customers really are, what their problem is, how valuable that problem is to solve, what they've looked for as a solution, how they've looked for a solution, whether you have a value proposition for them, how you will go about finding those customers, selling them, delivering and servicing them, and furthermore, how to repeat that process in a way that's scalable.

So, if we really embrace the fact that your MVP is a learning experience, then your goal is not to just create a simpler version of the product. Your goal is to test hypotheses. What you believe your brand to be, your value proposition, the best business model, these are all just hypotheses when you first start. We need data from customers to support that those are valid assumptions, and we gain that data by getting the MVP in the customers' hands. This is not a process to be led by the engineering department. The goal is not a product with fewer features that tests the technical viability of the concept. For an MVP to be effective, the goal must be to create a simple way for you to test whether you are actually delivering the value proposition you think you are to your customers. As Steve illustrates in his article, the goal of an MVP for a drone company for farmers is not testing whether a drone can carry a hyper-spectral camera and integrate with automated image processing software. The goal is to figure out whether farmers value visual data about their farms or not.

Once you've figured out what your MVP really should be, the next logical questions are: 1) do we charge for it? and 2) if so, how much? My answers are: 1) yes and 2) as much as the market will bear.

Remember, the MVP is a learning experience. What have you learned if you give the product away for free? You've learned the same thing as anyone who has given out free merch at conferences; people will take free stuff just because it's free. Will they actually use that stuff? Does it create value for them? Would they ever be willing to pay for it and if so, how much? You have no data to answer any of these critical questions. You haven't created a business; you've created a non-profit just not on purpose.



Tiffany Latino-Gerlock

Director of Government Relations & Communications

## Pivoting Production to Meet the Challenges of a Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant challenges, but the manufacturing industry has remained resilient. Many MACNY member companies have met these challenges head on, learning to retool to produce Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and/or other medical supplies to improve the safety of New York frontline workers and the public. They also have instituted a long list of operating enhancements to mitigate any workplace risks associated with the spread of the virus.

The proposed Medical Supplies Act, which would prioritize buying American-made PPE and medical supplies, would help create and retain local jobs while ensuring the dependability of the manufacturing sector.

MACNY recently surveyed our members on the Medical Supplies Act. The survey found that while not all member companies would directly benefit from the policy, the vast majority of our companies strongly support and promote Buy-American policies that would help retain New York jobs. We know that when the pandemic began many hardworking and dedicated manufacturers responded quickly and pivoted their production to meet the demand of necessary goods. For example, Tessy Plastics started making COVID-19 testing kits, Cascade switched from making lacrosse helmets to face shields for the medical community, and Feldmeier Equipment began making tanks for the development of certain vaccines. Armoured One began producing optical grade face shields, and Healthway has been meeting worldwide demand for its air purifiers. There are many more companies with similar stories in Central New York and throughout the state.

New York will need to be prepared for what could likely be a near constant demand for PPE and other supplies, as New York continues reopening the economy. Our manufacturers are ready and willing to meet this demand.

The Medical Supplies Act would prioritize buying local and provide companies statewide with incentives to help them increase the production of such essential goods. It also would align with President Biden's executive order that aims to promote Buy-American policies and boost U.S. manufacturing through the federal procurement process. The executive order directs agencies to strengthen requirements about purchasing products and services from U.S. workers and businesses.

For more information on these measures, please email me directly at [tiffanylatinog@macny.org](mailto:tiffanylatinog@macny.org).



Cindy Oehmigen

Director of Energy & Corporate Services

## When Two Worlds Collide

There are two topics that almost always capture my attention: Anything animal related and technology advances. So, when the two intersect, I am doubly interested. My most recent World Wildlife magazine (spring 2021) had an article<sup>1</sup> explaining how, “Technology is changing how we protect the planet.” The article divided the discussion into four categories: Protecting wildlife, surveying and monitoring wildlife, surveying and monitoring habitats, and improving supply chain transparency. Here’s a summary of what I learned from the article.

### Protecting

- 200 solar-powered LED lights that flicker erratically around livestock pens to scare off predators, keeping livestock and lions safe.
- Thermal imaging to detect poachers in Kafue National Park, protecting the park’s 6,500 elephants.

### Surveying/Monitoring Wildlife

- 300 endangered black-footed ferrets live in the Great Plains. They feed on prairie dogs. Both are susceptible to sylvatic plague that can wipe out a colony of prairie dogs. Drones are being used to deliver peanut-butter flavored vaccines to prairie dogs to inoculate them.
- Satellite based telemetry and light weight ear tags are being tested to track polar bears and gather data.
- Utilizing environmental DNA to locate endangered Sumatran rhinos for captive breeding programs

### Surveying /Monitoring Habitat

- Web-based apps are enabling scientists to gather and share data more efficiently on the health of worldwide coral reefs.
- Monitoring illicit deforestation activities in Brazil’s rainforest using drones.

- Taking drone surveillance to the next level, machine learning is helping scientists predict where deforestation is at risk for illegal logging while there is still time to intervene. Feeding big data, such as satellite images, into the Early Warning System (EWS) is being tested in Borneo to preserve the forests for up to six months in advance.

### Supply Chain Transparency

- Utilizing blockchain technology (tamper-proof digital ledger), Pacific Island tuna is tagged (RFID) with where, when, and how the fish is caught. Once the fish is processed, a QR code takes the place of the RFID and the products movement is then tracked all along the supply chain.
- Gathering data to assure food production practices are environmentally and socially sound for farmed seafood has traditionally been accomplished with written documentation—the cheapest until now. TruTrace, a free, open-source, cloud-based smartphone app allows farmers, buyers, and businesses to prove products have been responsibly sourced.

While the specifics of the aforementioned article were about conservation, the technologies and applications are not limited to conservation. How can these technologies be applied within additional industries? Some of the more obvious applications came to my mind. The use of drones to conduct observation and gather data can make protecting assets, monitoring, and maintaining equipment more effective, more efficient, and less costly. Or the use of sensors to determine the ‘health’ of equipment and then sharing that data to a cloud-based system. Potentially creating a new service revenue stream for those who produce capital equipment. I can see it now, “Hey customer, your motor is in trouble, your filter needs replacing, your system is running hot.”

Traceability is important for many industries for many reasons. Use of RFID and QR codes, tied to cloud enabled databases has potential to make these requirements more timely, more comprehensive, provide greater safety, and less costly.

And for those of you who are in the sensor business, the ability to produce components for these applications may just be the next big opportunity.

<sup>1</sup>World Wildlife Spring 2021, An Eye on the Future, by Carter Roberts



# Healthcare Consortium

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## A NEW APPROACH TO CONTROL THE COST OF HEALTH INSURANCE

Healthcare costs continue to be a financial challenge for MACNY members. In response, we are very excited to offer the manufacturing community the opportunity to participate in this money saving program. The Healthcare Consortium is available to manufacturers with over 100 full time equivalents.

- A fully-insured solution operated by participating members
- Members pool their health insurance programs together for long-term cost control
- Through the “law of large numbers” participating members can receive greater predictability, less risk, and less fluctuation from year-to-year
- Estimated premium savings over the past three years of \$1.8 million

**CONTACT PATTY CLARK TO GET STARTED:  
PCLARK@MACNY.ORG | 315.474.4201 EXT. 10**

Applications are currently being accepted for the 2022 plan year with a deadline for submission of May 15, 2021.



**Taylor Hodge**  
Workforce Development Specialist

## How Engaging Our Youth Can Benefit Higher Education

A partnership lends itself to unique collaborations, shared resources, and benefits for its stakeholders. Coming from the continuing higher education landscape, I experienced early on how diverse offerings enabled us to create additional enrollment and revenue pipelines for not only the college, but for our partner institutions. While working to get up to speed in my role with MACNY, I found myself quickly making a connection to the collaboration between high schools, postsecondary institutions, and business partners in support of the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) programs. I believe that attracting youth to sustainable career opportunities with clearly defined pathways may help to address some of the current challenges faced by our higher education partners.

The current challenges faced by colleges and universities have been amplified by the pandemic. The already declining number of traditional aged college students has spurred competition among two- and four-year institutions, leading many to seek out other sources of revenue and adapting programming to fit the demands of today's workforce. Additionally, the pandemic has increased barriers that already existed for many students, especially among first-generation college students, leaving this same demographic to consider entering the workforce sooner. Many students lacked the at-home infrastructure to support online engagement with the quick pivot from in-person to online learning a year ago. This led to increased operational spending in the new academic year for our higher education partners on regular COVID testing for students, faculty, and staff to remain on-campus safely, new or upgraded learning management systems, and ramped up student support services. Higher education administrators and faculty are undoubtedly working tirelessly to keep students engaged and healthy.

Introducing careers at a young age, through a program such as P-TECH, allows students to be exposed to opportunities outside of their immediate circles. Having clearly defined education-to-career pathways with advocates from schools and businesses every step of the way will allow dreams to be turned into actionable goals. I would be remiss to note, that we are actively recruiting volunteers to participate in coaching sessions. You could be the connection that ignites the flame for these students to pursue their passion, providing them with the confidence and courage to do so. Through P-TECH, students engage in career readiness activities to learn valuable soft skills needed for any job and their work preferences, building a foundation for entry into the workforce and future educational or training opportunities.

A pipeline of college ready students is available for our higher education partners, year after year. The P-TECH programs introduce students to college-level coursework by their junior year of high school. Whether a student completes the Associate degree as part of their pathway or decides to move directly into a Bachelor's degree program, colleges are admitting students who have completed the pre-requisites and maintained the necessary grades. The students being admitted to four-year colleges or universities have the foundation to continue to be successful in their selected majors perhaps leading to increased retention and graduation rates for our higher education partners in desirable and in-demand degrees by employers.

Not only have P-TECH students been introduced to college-level coursework, but they have been exposed to a variety of opportunities with wonderful companies right here in Central New York. The internship and summer job opportunities offered by business partners leave students motivated to finish their coursework and return after graduation for potential full-time employment. This leads to increased job placement rates after college, another benefit for our higher education partners as they track outcomes and engage alumni in various career or networking events.

The students we are helping to serve need to be inspired and have more advocates along their path, now more than ever in a world where many are struggling to stay connected to their goals. As a community we must continue to work together through partnership in order to close the gaps between education and career. Attracting our youth to accessible career pathways, such as P-TECH, can continue to serve our higher education partners as students have been able to make informed decisions about their education and career early on.

Email me at [thodge@macny.org](mailto:thodge@macny.org) to find out how you can get involved and make a difference in the lives of our youth today.





Eileen Donovan  
Workforce Development Specialist

## New Talent Pipelines

In July 2019, the number of U.S. manufacturing job openings reached an incredible high of 522,000. That statistic, coupled with the following findings of a 2017 industry needs assessment report—prepared by a collaborative group of stakeholders, including Jobs for the Future (JFF), the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP), and the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute—revealed the broad scope of needs for today’s manufacturing workforce:

- 75 percent of surveyed manufacturers said they were planning to hire workers in the next two years. Of those, about 48 percent said they needed to hire people to replace retirees and 41 percent attributed their hiring needs to business growth.
- 56 percent of the respondents said external factors adversely influenced their business growth, and 69 percent said finding qualified workers hindered their ability to grow, add more product lines, or accept new contracts.
- Nearly 81 percent of the manufacturers polled said that a limited supply of people with the right skills was the most significant reason why they had difficulty replacing retirees. More than half said difficulty finding people with technical skills was the problem, and 48 percent said the skills gap was due to a lack of math, reading, and writing competencies, as well as softer skills and character traits like teamwork, initiative, attendance, and problem-solving\*.

Now that we’re approaching a post-COVID world, we recognize the need to widen the workforce to include previously untapped talent pipelines; the status quo is not going to fill these jobs. For our part, MACNY is a JFF partner; we leverage JFF incentive funding to expand and diversify the workforce, offering opportunities to previously

untapped populations, such as minorities, people with disabilities, and youth.

I recently had the chance to chat with youth (registered between the ages of 18 – 23 in NYS) apprentice Toolmaker, Greg Reals, of PPC Broadband in Syracuse. Greg is just finishing his first year in the program; I wanted to know what made him choose this path. What he told me made me think that we have some work to do to get the word out.

Greg said that he was unaware of apprenticeship when he was in high school, that he heard about the learn-while-you-earn pathway after he’d already spent two years at community college, on his own dime. The opportunity to pursue an apprenticeship right out of high school would have been desirable to him. Greg’s advice to current high schoolers is to get involved in STEM clubs, not only to win contests, but to learn about the careers available to students interested in working with their hands. Don’t be afraid to talk to people who are doing work that you might enjoy; ask them how they got there.

My conversation with Greg has inspired me to think about ways that we could better promote apprenticeship at the high school level.

Visit [macny.org](http://macny.org) to learn about career exploration events that enlighten our students about opportunities for them right here in Central New York. If your job involves technical expertise, make yourself available to speak at one of these events – you might just inspire the next youth apprentice.

\*Myriam Sullivan, JFF



David Freund  
Chief Leadership Officer

## Water

Last year's Live2Lead speaker, and Focus Brands COO, Kat Cole shared an experience she had while on a humanitarian trip to Africa. The team she was on asked the village elders what their greatest need was, and they responded, "clean, safe water." With excitement, the team then moved on to the next question, what is your next most important need? The village elders replied, "Water." Realizing that the team didn't understand their answer, the elders went on to say, "our third and fourth need is water. Without clean water, nothing else matters." Nothing else was important without water. Not schools, medical assistance, nothing at all. These village elders were not distracted by anything. They knew, without a doubt, what their priority was. How about us? Do we know what our water is?

Someone once said, "You can have anything you want in life, but you can't have everything you want." Life is full of choices, and unless we know what to choose, our efforts get diluted, and we end up never achieving much at all. Let's be honest with ourselves; our number one priority doesn't get done because the number two priority is easier. Rather than not accomplishing anything, we move to an easier task. We feel so good and, without much thought at all, move our number one priority on to the next day. The problem with this scenario is that without water, it really doesn't matter. We need to find our water. We need to find our organization's water. We need to help our team members discover their water.

Just think about the advantage of knowing your water. When decisions regarding capital spending need to be made, knowing our water brings clarity. When decisions about markets need to be made, knowing our water brings clarity. When our team is facing a decision, understanding their water brings clarity to their choices. When we don't have water, what good is a school, a road, or even a hospital?

I will be the first to admit that discovering our water is not an easy task, but just because it isn't easy doesn't mean that we shouldn't work on it. We need to realize that it might just be a life-sustaining task at that time, and failing to do so, may cause a serious outcome. Our goal is to find the one thing, that if addressed, would be most impactful on all the other needs we have at that time. Here are some tips that may help.

1. Schedule time to think. You have heard me say this before, but it is so critical. You need alone time to get your thoughts out on paper. Write out your competing priorities.
2. Engage a thinking partner. This can be a coach or a close friend. Talk through each of the priorities and discuss how they impact each other. The priority that has the greatest impact on all the other priorities is your number one priority, your water.
3. Schedule time to work on that priority. The most successful people don't make a to-do list; they schedule their tasks. Schedule the time to get the most important thing done first.

When you feel stressed, what's your water? When your team seems stressed, what's their water? When a team member is struggling, help them find their water. If we don't have water, nothing else matters.

# MEMBER UPDATE

## WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS...

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### **F.X. Matt Brewing Co.**

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Visit them at: <https://www.saranac.com/>

### **Taro Manufacturing Co., Inc.**

Taro Manufacturing Co., Inc is a custom compression and injection molding company with over 50 years in the automotive and marine aftermarket industry. Taro's core business has been focused on automotive and marine ignition parts, primarily distributor caps and rotors.

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Audience size:  
~ 13,000

- 51%** manufacturing
- 19%** economic development
- 16%** university / education
- 8%** state / federal government
- 6%** startups / entrepreneurs

### Major manufacturing industries:

agriculture, apparel,  
food and beverage,  
chemical, electronic,  
engineering services,  
machinery, packaging,  
plastics, metal, paper, & energy





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