

# Why Your Manufacturing Firm Needs AI Agentic Systems — Now

written by admin | March 23, 2026



Modern manufacturing is facing a perfect storm: retiring experts, widening skill gaps, rising complexity, and increasing pressure for efficiency. AI agentic systems offer a practical, immediate path to protect your knowledge, empower your workforce, and future-proof your operations. Early adopters are already gaining a competitive edge — and the window to build private, organization-specific agents is closing fast.

Below are the **10 most compelling reasons** to begin your AI agent journey today. For additional insights, attend our April 24th Webinar.

## **10 Reasons to Adopt AI Agentic Systems**

### **1. Protect Your Proprietary Know-How**

As open-agent ecosystems expand, generic AI will shape industry norms. Building private agents now ensures your unique processes, methods, and tribal knowledge remain protected and don't get diluted into public models.

### **2. Capture Tacit Knowledge Before It's Lost**

Retirements and turnover threaten decades of expertise. AI agents preserve critical insights, troubleshooting logic, and best practices that would otherwise disappear.

### **3. Accelerate New-Hire Productivity**

Agentic systems act as on-demand mentors, giving new workers instant access to expert guidance and reducing ramp-up time.

### **4. Reduce Training Costs and Skill Gaps**

AI agents deliver consistent, real-time instruction — lowering training hours, minimizing rework, and supporting upskilling without pulling senior staff off the floor.

### **5. Strengthen Safety and Compliance**

Agents reinforce correct procedures, monitor for deviations, and provide step-by-step support to reduce risk and maintain regulatory alignment.

### **6. Improve Process Consistency and Quality**

AI agents follow defined logic every time, reducing variability across shifts and helping teams hit higher first-pass yield.

### **7. Boost Workforce Efficiency Without Adding Headcount**

Agents automate repetitive tasks, documentation, troubleshooting, and decision

support — freeing your people to focus on higher-value work.

### **8. Increase Resilience Against Labor Shortages**

When staffing changes occur, AI agents maintain continuity, stability, and operational performance.

### **9. Unlock Continuous Improvement at Scale**

Agents learn from every interaction, surfacing improvement opportunities and standardizing best practices across teams and facilities.

### **10. Stay Competitive in a Rapidly Evolving Industry**

Manufacturers who adopt agentic systems now will outperform peers in agility, cost control, and workforce capability as AI becomes the new operational baseline.

## **Your Next Step**

AI agentic systems are no longer experimental — they're becoming essential infrastructure. The manufacturers who act now will own their knowledge, strengthen their workforce, and build a durable competitive advantage.

Join us April 24<sup>th</sup> for our 10 Reasons to Adopt AI Agent Systems webinar.

Download our 10 Reasons to Adopt AI Agentic Flyer

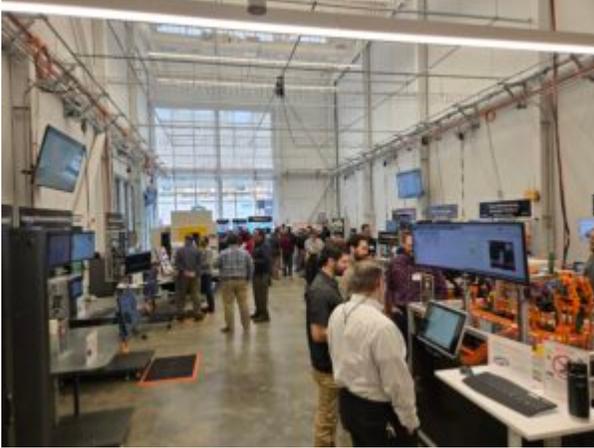
**This article was created with assistance from Microsoft Copilot and refined by the IMC team.**

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**IMC Joins CESMII Smart**

# Manufacturing Roadshow to Showcase Innovation Across Pennsylvania

written by Lauri Moon | March 23, 2026

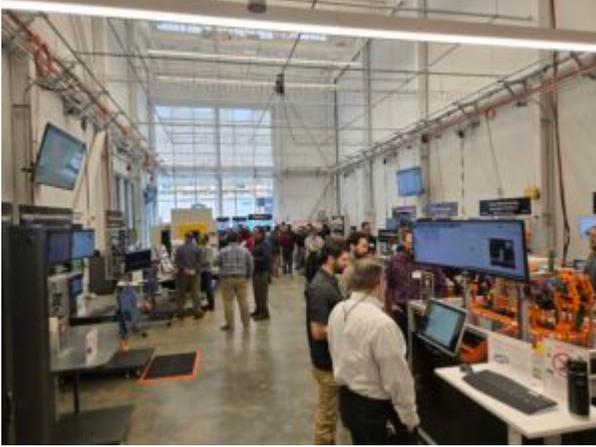


On December 11, 2025, the Innovative Manufacturers' Center (IMC) along with approximately 100 industry manufacturing professionals, attended the CESMII Smart Manufacturing Roadshow hosted by the Digital Foundry in New Kensington, PA, an event highlighting **the power of Smart Manufacturing** for small to large manufacturers across Pennsylvania.

Participants explored the latest technologies, heard real-world success stories, and learned how **Smart Manufacturing drives efficiency, growth, and competitiveness**. Industry leaders including JV Manufacturing, MSA Safety, Pulva Corporation, Zoll Medical Device Company, and Pittsburgh's iconic Mancini Bakery shared how assessing needs and applying Smart Manufacturing technologies helped them meet, and often **exceed, their operational goals**.

Experts from the Collaborative Ecosystems Smart Manufacturing Innovation Institute (CESMII) and other industry related representatives also outlined opportunities for manufacturers to assess their readiness and develop a customized Smart Manufacturing Roadmap with support from organizations like the IMC, Digital Foundry, and other CESMII-certified professionals.

**IMC is proud to be home to one of only six Certified Smart Manufacturing Roadmap Professionals** in Pennsylvania. Contact IMC Business Advisor, Rick Terry, to learn how Smart Manufacturing can benefit your operation or to schedule a consultation.



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# Happy Manufacturing Month!

written by Lauri Moon | March 23, 2026



# Celebrating Manufacturing: October Is Manufacturing Month & Friday Is National Manufacturing Day

Every October, manufacturers across the U.S. are spotlighted for their vital role in innovation, jobs, and regional growth. While *National Manufacturing Day* (this Friday) offers a special moment to rally attention to the sector, **Manufacturing Month** provides the entire span of October to highlight achievements, challenges, and opportunities across manufacturing.

At the **Innovative Manufacturers' Center (IMC)**, this observance resonates deeply. We partner with manufacturers in Central Pennsylvania to drive innovation, operational excellence, growth, and resiliency. As we mark this annual celebration, we want to reflect on why it matters — and how IMC helps regional manufacturers gain the competitive edge year-round.

## Why Manufacturing Month / Day Matters

- **Raise awareness:** Many don't realize how central manufacturing is to local and national economies — to supply chains, innovation, skill development, and exports. October gives us a focused moment to tell that story.
- **Inspire future talent:** Highlighting manufacturing helps attract students, career-changers, and underrepresented groups toward high-skill roles in advanced manufacturing.
- **Encourage continuous improvement:** The cadence of awareness spurs companies to review processes, adopt new technologies, and revisit training investments.
- **Strengthen collaboration:** It offers a chance for regional partners (economic development, education, workforce, government) to align better with manufacturers' needs.

As a public-private partnership, IMC is deeply committed to ensuring Central Pennsylvania manufacturers don't just survive — they thrive.

# IMC's Role in Supporting Manufacturers During & Beyond October

## 1. Continuous Improvement & Operational Excellence

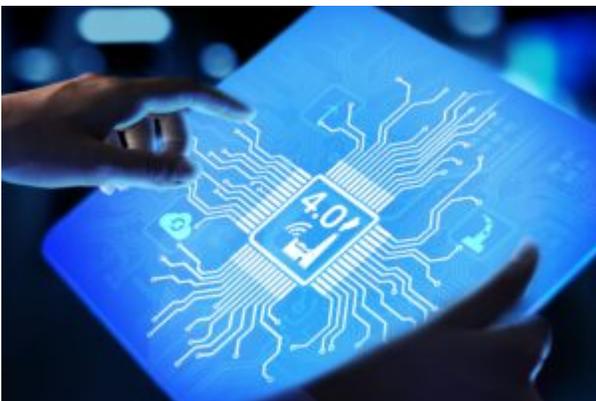


One of IMC's core pillars is helping manufacturers optimize process flows, reduce waste, and unlock productivity gains. Our offerings include, but are not limited to:

- **Lean Manufacturing Level One Practitioner Certification**
- **Transformation and deployment of Lean Systems**
- **Problem Solving with Root Cause Analysis (RCA)**
- **Supply Chain Optimization**

These tools help manufacturers move from reactive firefighting to strategic, sustainable performance improvement — a perfect theme for Manufacturing Month.

## 2. Innovation & Technology Enablement



Staying ahead in 21st-century manufacturing means embracing new tools and approaches. IMC provides:

- **Advanced Manufacturing Technologies**
- **Digital transformation / SMART-PA Programs**

- **Clean Energy Manufacturing Consulting**
- **Technology Scouting and Innovation Systems**

These help local manufacturers explore smarter production, energy efficiency, and R&D-driven differentiation.

### **3. Business Growth, Sales & Marketing**



Producing excellent goods is only half the battle — finding customers, scaling, and sustaining margins is equally critical. IMC assists with:

- **Sales development and marketing strategy**
- **Brand development**
- **Business continuity planning**
- **Export / international trade & compliance support**

By integrating growth strategies with operations, we help manufacturers translate capability into revenue and resilience.

### **4. People & Leadership Development**



Advanced processes and technologies require not just investment — but skilled people. IMC offers training in:

- **HR best practices tailored to manufacturing**
- **Supervisor & leadership development**
- **Change management and culture building (e.g., “Winning Teams” approach)**
- **Safety, environmental compliance, and certification readiness**

Manufacturing Month shines a light on training — a chance for organizations to close skill gaps and empower their teams.

## **Ideas for Manufacturers to Leverage the Month**

Here are a few ideas your operations or leadership teams could consider during October:

- Host a **shop floor open house** or virtual factory tour to show local schools, civic groups, or partners what modern manufacturing looks like.
- Run a **“continuous improvement blitz”** for a small but visible process (e.g., reduce setup time, streamline changeovers).
- Offer a **mini training or lunch-and-learn** (e.g. basic root cause analysis, 5S) to raise internal awareness of operational excellence.
- Conduct a **technology audit or pilot** — identify one small digital or automation upgrade you can trial before year’s end.
- Use the month as a **talent recruitment window** — promote manufacturing careers, internships, apprenticeships, or job shadow days.

If you’d like help designing or executing any of these ideas, IMC is ready to assist!

## **What’s Coming Up at IMC This October**

Here’s a snapshot of select upcoming training events you might find beneficial:

- **Manufacturing Your Way to a Pennsylvania Tax Credit** Webinar — October 8
- **Problem Solving with Root Cause Analysis** (Williamsport) — October 9

- **Problem Solving with Root Cause Analysis** (Altoona) — October 16
- **Strategic Succession Planning for Supervisors** — October 22
- **IMC & Tasseron Sensors PM Exchange** — October 23
- **OSHA 10-Hour Training** — October 29

These are just a few of the offerings scheduled throughout the month. Click [here](#) to visit the full schedule of IMC's upcoming training and events.

## A Call to Action

As we observe National Manufacturing Day and celebrate Manufacturing Month, we encourage you — whether as a manufacturing leader, employee, or community stakeholder — to reflect on how we can push the boundaries of what “manufacturing” means today.

Ask yourself:

- What process or system could we challenge or improve?
- Which new technology or automation could we pilot?
- What training does our workforce need to stay competitive?
- How can we better tell our manufacturing story to partners, young talent, or local communities?

If you'd like to meet with IMC to ideate, plan, or initiate any initiatives tied to Manufacturing Month (or beyond), we're here as your partner. Let's use this October momentum to build stronger, more innovative, and more resilient manufacturing in Central Pennsylvania. Contact IMC today by emailing [info@imcpa.com](mailto:info@imcpa.com) or calling 800-326-9467.

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# IMC Business Advisor, Rick Terry, Earns Smart Manufacturing Acceleration Roadmap Professional Certification

written by Lauri Moon | March 23, 2026



The Innovative Manufacturers Center (IMC) is proud to announce that Frederick (Rick) Terry, Business Advisor, has successfully earned the CESMII Smart Manufacturing Acceleration Roadmap Professional Certification from Rensselaer at Work, a division of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

The CESMII developed certification recognizes professionals who demonstrate advanced knowledge and practical skills in designing and implementing customizable strategies that accelerate digital transformation within manufacturing operations. Through the program, participants learn to align emerging technologies with business objectives, streamline production processes, and drive innovation across manufacturing systems.

“Rick’s achievement reflects not only a personal commitment to professional growth, but also IMC’s dedication to advancing modern manufacturing practices,” said

Dennis Gilbert, President at IMC. “This expertise will further strengthen IMC’s ability to deliver smarter, more efficient, and more resilient solutions for our partners and clients.”

Rensselaer at Work is recognized for its focus on equipping professionals with future-ready skills in engineering, science, and technology management. The Smart Manufacturing Acceleration Roadmap Certification is designed for leaders who are driving transformation in an increasingly data-driven and competitive industry.

Terry will apply this certification to enhance IMC’s initiatives in process optimization, data integration, automation strategies, and digital innovation, helping position the organization and our manufacturing clients at the forefront of smart manufacturing.

Contact Rick Terry at [rickt@imcpa.com](mailto:rickt@imcpa.com) or (570) 329-3200 and discover how this certification can help your company accelerate your digital transformation!

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# Who Owns the Ideas? AI, Intellectual Property, and the Future of Manufacturing

written by Tricia Carl | March 23, 2026



In today's world of manufacturing, artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer just the future—It's a current tool being used to design products, optimize supply chains, predict maintenance needs, and even generate new ideas. But as AI becomes more integrated into manufacturing, one question becomes critical: Who owns the ideas created by AI?

## **AI as a “Co-Inventor”**

Manufacturers using AI to assist in new product design or R&D may wonder whether the results generated can be protected with patents, copyrights, or trade secrets. And to make the issue even murkier: Intellectual property laws weren't built for machines that “think.”

## **What This Means**

Patents typically require a human inventor.

Copyrights require a human author.

And trade secrets require measures to keep something confidential—but what happens when AI develops something “new” without direct human involvement?

Who owns the design? If your AI system generates an innovative design, can you patent it? If AI writes a process manual or creates a visual model, can you copyright it?

Currently, in most jurisdictions, IP rights apply only to human creators. AI itself cannot own property rights or hold legal rights—at least not yet.

## **Practical Implications for Manufacturers**

Manufacturers can take practical steps to manage risk and capture value:

- Clarify roles: When using AI tools from vendors or cloud platforms, check who owns the results—some terms of service may give ownership to the provider.
- Human oversight: Ensure there's a human in the loop who can be clearly

identified as the contributor or author, especially for patentable ideas.

- **Data Protection:** Since AI relies heavily on training data, be cautious about feeding in sensitive or proprietary information that could become part of a shared model.
- **Auditability:** Keep clear records of how AI systems are used in the innovation process to support any future IP claims.

## Looking Ahead

This area is evolving fast. Courts and lawmakers do not have a definitive answer on whether AI-generated work is protected under traditional IP laws. For now, manufacturers should see AI as a powerful tool, but it should be carefully managed when it comes to IP rights.

**Disclaimer:** This content is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. If you have questions about intellectual property or the use of AI in your business, consult a qualified attorney.

Written by Tricia Carl, Business Advisor, Innovative Manufacturers Center (IMC)

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# Manufacturers Can Receive up to \$500K for Facility and Equipment Upgrades

written by Lauri Moon | March 23, 2026



A new federal initiative is creating powerful opportunities for Pennsylvania manufacturers to modernize their operations, reduce emissions, and strengthen competitiveness. Through the Reducing Industrial Sector Emissions in Pennsylvania (RISE PA) program, small and mid-sized manufacturers may be eligible for **grants of up to \$500,000** to cover **50% of total project costs**, including equipment, labor, and related costs. The application process for these funds requires a no-cost Energy Assessment by a qualified Assessor, provided by IMC.

Funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grants, RISE PA is designed to help manufacturers reduce greenhouse gas emissions while improving energy efficiency, and operational performance. With \$40 million allocated specifically to support manufacturers in Pennsylvania, the program will fund high-impact projects that advance sustainable manufacturing practices and drive long-term cost savings.

### **Who's Eligible?**

To qualify, manufacturers must operate active facilities in Pennsylvania with fewer than 500 employees. Projects must aim to reduce industrial emissions through strategies such as:

- Energy efficiency improvements
- Electrification of systems and processes
- Integration of low-carbon or renewable fuels
- On-site renewable energy installations

- Carbon capture technologies
- Reduction of fugitive or process-related emissions

### **What's Covered?**

Projects may focus on upgrading core energy systems such as boilers, compressed air, HVAC, motors, lighting, process heating, or refrigeration. Waste reduction and resource efficiency initiatives are also eligible—providing an added path to operational improvements and cost reductions.

### **Why Act Now?**

This is a **competitive grant program**, and funding will be awarded to applicants with the most compelling, impactful projects. A required first step is the completion of a qualified site assessment to identify energy savings and emissions reduction opportunities. These assessments also provide valuable insights that can help strengthen your grant application and prioritize investments that offer the greatest return.

### **Benefits of Participation**

- Up to \$500,000 in funding to support capital improvements
- Reduced energy and operational costs
- Enhanced environmental performance and compliance
- Increased market competitiveness and supply chain appeal
- Accelerated progress toward sustainability and carbon reduction goals

This grant opportunity comes at a critical time for manufacturers facing rising energy costs, increasing regulatory pressure, and growing customer demand for sustainable practices. RISE PA funding can help de-risk your next capital investment and ensure that your facility is equipped for the future of manufacturing.

### **Get Started**

The path to funding starts with a site-level assessment and strategic planning. Now is the time to identify potential projects and prepare for a strong application.

### **Don't leave money on the table.**

If you're planning facility upgrades, considering equipment modernization, or aiming to reduce your carbon footprint, this is the time to act.

For more details on how to qualify and prepare for the RISE PA Grant Program, contact IMC today at [info@imcpa.com](mailto:info@imcpa.com) or (570) 329-3200.

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# **IMC President is Guest Speaker on “Risk-Based Decision Making in a Time of Uncertainty” Podcast**

written by Lauri Moon | March 23, 2026





IMC President, Dennis Gilbert had the honor of joining the kickoff episode of Survive and Thrive—a timely podcast series featured on The Quality Hub.

In this first episode, Dennis joins hosts Xavier Francis and Scott Dawson, of Core Business Solutions, to dive into what it really takes for manufacturers and other businesses to stay resilient amid today’s economic uncertainty. From navigating shifting federal policies to managing supply chain disruptions, the conversation is packed with real-world insights and practical strategies that manufacturers can put into action immediately.

Whether you’re a business owner, manager, or contractor, this series will help you build a proactive mindset and stay ahead of the curve. [Click here to listen!](#)

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# Central Susquehanna WSCM School Honored at Statewide Manufacturing Awards

written by Lauri Moon | March 23, 2026



As Central Susquehanna WSCM's Best of PA nominees, Mount Carmel Area and Huntingdon Area Middle Schools recently joined IMC's Lauri Moon, Manager of the Central Susquehanna WSCM program, at the What's So Cool About Manufacturing® 7th Annual Statewide Awards held at the Whitaker Center in Harrisburg, PA. Mount Carmel was partnered regionally with Dyco, Inc. with Huntingdon partnered with Gardners Candies, Inc. This prestigious event celebrates student creativity, innovation, and storytelling in highlighting careers in manufacturing across the state.



Central Columbia Middle School featuring Strong Industries from the Central Susquehanna contest, was recognized for garnering the largest number of regional vote totals across the state, during three days of online voting where all Pennsylvania teams competed to win their regional Viewers Choice Award.

Also, in attendance from the Central Susquehanna region was Central Columbia Middle School who teamed up with Strong Industries, a leading local manufacturer, to create a compelling video that captured what makes manufacturing both cool and essential.

Their hard work paid off — the team was recognized for receiving the highest number of regional Viewers Choice votes in the entire state of Pennsylvania! Over a three-day online voting period, schools from across the commonwealth competed for this honor, and Central Columbia Middle School's entry stood out with the most enthusiastic support. This recognition not only highlights the talent and teamwork of the students but also shines a spotlight on the innovative work being done at Strong Industries and the vital role manufacturers play in our communities. We're incredibly proud of our students and grateful to Strong Industries for being a fantastic partner in this inspiring educational initiative.

Congratulations to the three teams representing the Central Susquehanna region!

[Click here](#) and visit our Facebook post for more pictures from the event.

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# What's So Cool About Manufacturing Video Contest Announces 2025 Central Susquehanna Awards

written by Lauri Moon | March 23, 2026



IMC is excited to announce the award recipients for the “What’s So Cool About Manufacturing?” (WSCM) Central Susquehanna student video contest awards. The annual awards ceremony was held April 23<sup>rd</sup> at The Venue at Liberty Valley in Danville, PA.

The WSCM contest partners students from middle schools in Central PA with regional manufacturers. Each student team scripted, shot, edited and promoted a short video that documents their experience highlighting what is “cool” about manufacturing and manufacturing careers. Two videos in the region will be moving on to represent Central Susquehanna at the annual statewide competition being held in Harrisburg on May 14<sup>th</sup> at the Whitaker Center.

The video with the most votes, during three days of online voting in March, received

the “Viewers’ Choice Award.” A panel of judges reviewed the videos for awards in three other categories including Outstanding Overall Program, Outstanding Team Spirit and Outstanding Brand Placement.

“We had a really great contest this year with students and their manufacturing partners working together to highlight what’s so cool about manufacturing in Central PA. In our fifth year of this contest, we had a record number of votes for the Viewers’ Choice award of over 104,000 votes,” said Lauri Moon, Manager of Outreach & Special Projects with IMC and Co-manager of the Central Susquehanna contest. “The students, teachers and manufacturers put in so much hard work, and it definitely showed in their final videos.”

This year’s awards and their winners are:

1. Outstanding Overall Program: Mount Carmel Area Middle School & Dyco, Inc.
2. Viewers’ Choice Award: Central Columbia Middle School & Strong Industries
3. Outstanding Team Spirit: Huntingdon Area Middle School & Gardners Candies, Inc.
4. Outstanding Brand Placement: Bloomsburg Area Middle School & GAF

Congratulations to the Mount Carmel Area Middle School/Dyco, Inc. and Huntingdon Area Middle School & Gardners Candies, Inc. teams who were nominated to move on to the statewide competition in Harrisburg next month. Central Columbia Middle School/Strong Industries will also be attending by special invitation.



Figure 1. Outstanding Overall Program & Outstanding Brand Placement: Mount Carmel Area Middle School



Figure 2. Outstanding Team Spirit: Huntingdon Area Middle School



Figure 3. Viewers' Choice Award: Central Columbia Middle School & Strong Industries

Partnering on this regional contest is the Innovative Manufacturers' Center, Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, Advance Central PA and The Foundation of the Columbia Montour Chamber of Commerce. Funding for the 2025 Central Susquehanna program was made possible by these organizations and EITC, PA Department of Labor & Industry Business & Education and ARC/Degenstein Foundation grants. Awards were generously created and donated by SUN Area Technical Institute.



To check out this year's Central Susquehanna What's So Cool About Manufacturing? videos, visit <https://www.whatssocool.org/contests/central-susquehanna/>.

Visit [WhatsSoCool.org](https://www.whatssocool.org) for more information and follow on [Facebook.com/WSCMCenSusq](https://www.facebook.com/WSCMCenSusq).

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# IMC Announces the Release of its

# Central Pennsylvania Manufacturing Tariff Poll Results

written by Lauri Moon | March 23, 2026



We are pleased to announce the results of our Central Pennsylvania Manufacturing Tariff Poll. This initiative aimed to gather insights from regional manufacturers regarding the potential impact of proposed tariffs on the region’s manufacturing sector. We extend our sincere gratitude to all participants for their valuable contributions.



## Key Takeaways:

- **Mixed Revenue Impact:** While nearly half of respondents foresee no change in revenue, **31% expect a decline**, indicating that some manufacturers anticipate financial challenges, while **23% expect an increase** in revenue.
- **Pricing Adjustments Are Likely:** The majority of respondents **plan to increase prices** for customers in response to tariffs, while a smaller portion intends to absorb the added costs, reflecting varied pricing strategies.
- **Supplier Diversification is a Common Strategy:** With **72% of respondents diversifying suppliers**, many manufacturers are exploring new sourcing strategies to adapt to potential supply chain disruptions. Twenty-nine percent foresee no significant impact.
- **Limited Workforce Impact Anticipated:** Despite potential cost pressures, most respondents do not expect to change their workforce size, suggesting **stable employment levels** across the region.
- **Few Formal Response Plans in Place:** Only **26% of respondents have created** or plan to create response teams, while the majority are either undecided or not pursuing formal strategies at this time.

Visit Central PA Manufacturing Tariff Survey Report for the full report.

IMC remains committed to supporting Central Pennsylvania manufacturers by providing resources and support based on these insights. We encourage industry stakeholders to stay engaged through our e-news and social media channels for ongoing updates and initiatives.

For further information or to discuss the report's implications, please contact IMC at (570) 329-3200 or email [info@imcpa.com](mailto:info@imcpa.com).

**This report was produced by the IMC (Innovative Manufacturers' Center), a non-partisan, public-private 501(c)(3) organization, dedicated solely to advancing the manufacturing sector in our 12-county region of Central Pennsylvania, USA. This report does not reflect or endorse any political opinions, positions, or affiliations.**