

IMEC Launches New Program to Invest in the Future of Illinois Manufacturers

*With over \$2.5 million of investments in R&D and technology, the **Illinois Manufacturing Innovation Voucher** program will help small & medium-sized manufacturers (SMMs) see measurable gains in productivity and competitiveness.*

Peoria, IL – November 6, 2019: Today, IMEC, a member of the MEP National Network, launched the **Illinois Manufacturing Innovation Voucher** for SMMs to accelerate technology adoption in their products and processes. Presented with \$25,000 matching fund awards, Illinois manufacturers will acquire knowledge from industry experts to help resolve minor technological issues or outline possible solutions for a more complex problem. Projects are expected to be practical in nature and focus on productivity improvements and/or product development that lead to substantive results.

Illinois is a U.S. manufacturing powerhouse that generates \$304.8 billion in annual output according to a recent Illinois Manufacturers' Association study. The manufacturing base is built on supply chains of small and mid-sized manufacturers, which represent 99% of the sector. These companies continue to be at the heart of communities across the state. Yet, many of these manufacturers are challenged to acquire the necessary expertise and funding to adopt new technologies. These same technologies are vital to transform and modernize their operations.

"Global trends like Industry 4.0 and the workforce skills gap are rapidly changing the manufacturing landscape. This is happening while we are witnessing slower productivity growth in small and mid-sized manufacturers. The timing of this program is critical for Illinois manufacturers to respond to this changing landscape." – David Boulay, Ph.D. President - IMEC.

The **Illinois Manufacturing Innovation Voucher** is a revolutionary program that will lead to a total investment of \$2.5 million in the upcoming year with approximately 50 projects expected to be completed. Existing Illinois manufacturers that employ between 5 and 500 people are encouraged to apply for the program. Selected projects must be conducted in Illinois and will be granted up to \$25,000 towards the cost of using external expertise to successfully complete and exceed project goals. Recipients are expected to pay half the project's eligible expenses.

"IMEC has been investing in the future of Illinois manufacturers by helping them break through growth barriers and sustain competitiveness. This is a great new opportunity for our small and medium-sized manufacturers to take control of their future and lead the way for Illinois to pioneer the next era of manufacturing." – Craig Zoberis, President - Fusion OEM

For more information about the program and to apply for the **Illinois Manufacturing Innovation Voucher**, visit www.imec.org/innovation/. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

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About IMEC

IMEC is a team of improvement specialists who are dedicated to changing lives and creating a positive impact on Illinois' workforce and economy. With a mission to drive growth through enterprise excellence, they help organizations become more effective and efficient by identifying issues, developing and implementing solutions and providing the necessary support that will allow them to excel in areas of leadership, strategy, customer engagement, operations, workforce, and measurement and results. In 2018, they assisted over 700 companies and created over 6700 jobs, resulting in over \$600M aggregate [impact](#) to the Illinois economy. IMEC has seven offices statewide and 48 full-time industry improvement specialists. For more information, visit www.imec.org.

IMEC is one of the 51 MEP Centers in the US and Puerto Rico. MEP Centers are part of the MEP National Network, which includes the National Institute of Standards and Technology Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NIST

MEP) and over 1000 manufacturing experts at over 400 service locations, with the tools and resources to help US manufacturers succeed and advance US Manufacturing. Being that each Center is a public-private partnership, they are able to connect manufacturers with government agencies, universities and research facilities, trade associations and many more resources that foster growth and innovation. In 2018, the MEP National Network helped over 2700 manufacturers and created over 122,000 jobs. Find your local MEP Center [here](#).

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