

Manufacturing Leadership Awards

2025 Nomination Guide

*For Technology and Consulting Partners and Noncorporate
Entities Nominating a Manufacturing Client, Partner, or Member*

Manufacturing Leadership Awards

2025 Nomination Guide

Welcome to the 2025 season of the Manufacturing Leadership Awards! We are excited to once again recognize world-class accomplishments in operational digital transformation, along with the leaders who bring Manufacturing 4.0 aspirations to reality.

This guide can assist you in better understanding the program’s objectives, rules, judging criteria, and how to create a successful nomination. We suggest giving it a careful review before submitting your entry.

If you have additional questions, we are happy to help. Please reach out to MLAwards@nam.org at any time.

Best of luck!

Penelope Brown

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Manufacturing Leadership Council

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About Partner Nominations

Technology and consulting partners are an important part of manufacturing's digital transformation. The expertise and knowledge shared by partners is essential to Manufacturing 4.0 success. Additionally, the collaboration and networking offered through professional societies, trade associations, and similar groups allows manufacturers to make the connections that they need to succeed. We are proud to recognize these important contributions in the Manufacturing Leadership Awards.

New for 2025: Technology and consulting partners and noncorporate entities can nominate their own individual leaders

In recognition of the role that partners and noncorporate entities play in Manufacturing 4.0 initiatives, we are excited to announce that these organizations are invited to nominate their own operations-focused leaders for the individual categories in the Manufacturing Leadership Awards. There is a limit of three (3) nominated individuals from any single enterprise per individual category. Be sure to review the eligibility requirements on page 10 of this guide.

How are partners recognized in the awards?

When a partner-submitted project is selected as a finalist, the partner that submitted that entry is also recognized as a Partner in Collaborative Innovation. Each partner is announced at the Manufacturing Leadership Awards Gala and invited to receive their trophy on stage. Partners are also included in the MLC's public awards announcements.

How many entries can a partner submit?

There are no limits on the total number of entries a partner company or organization can submit on behalf of its manufacturing clients or members, but there is a limit of one (1) partner-submitted project entry and one (1) partner-submitted individual entry per manufacturing client/partner enterprise. For example, if a partner has three manufacturing clients or members, the partner is welcome to submit one project and/or one individual entry per client or member.

Note that any single enterprise may have no more than five (5) project nominations total and is limited to three (3) project finalist selections per season, and a single enterprise may have no more than three (3) individuals nominated in a single individual category. If the number of nominations received exceeds that total, the nominated organization will be contacted to make a final determination on which entries will be submitted to the judges' panel. Refunds will be issued for nominations that are not submitted for judging.

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About Partner Nominations

What else should I know about partner nominations?

The Manufacturing Leadership Council will contact all nominees for entries that originate from partner organizations to verify that the organization or individual has given consent for the nomination. Partners will be copied on those communications. If we are unable to reach the nominee, or if they indicate that they did not consent to the nomination, the entry will be disqualified with no refund for entry fees.

Important Note: Manufacturers may also originate their own nominations for projects or individual leaders, or they may be nominated by other partners. If the number of entries received for a single enterprise exceeds the annual limit of five (5) total project nominations or three (3) individual nominations per category, the manufacturer will have final determination on which entries are submitted for judging. The partners who submitted the entries will be included on those communications. You may wish to ask manufacturing clients if they know of any other nominations originating from their organization or other partners.

If you collaborated with another technology/consulting organization on a project, you are encouraged to include them on the entry for recognition. The nomination form includes an area for adding an additional partner, if you worked with a collaborating organization.



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General Program Information

2025 Program Timeline

September 16, 2024 – January 17, 2025: Nomination application period

February 2025: Nominations go to judges' panel for scoring

March 3-7, 2025: Internal scoring analysis by MLC content team

March 14, 2025: Notifications sent to entrants for score results

April 7, 2025: Public finalist announcement

June 18, 2025: Manufacturing Leadership Awards Gala and Dinner – Marco Island, Florida

Entry Fees

The entry fee for 2025 is \$295 per nomination. Technology and consulting partners that are members of the Manufacturing Leadership Council are eligible for up to four (4) project and four (4) individual nominations. To learn how to redeem this benefit, reach out to your membership team contact or email MLAwards@nam.org.

Online Resources and Nomination Forms

Full program details are available at <https://manufacturingleadershipcouncil.com/leadership-awards/>

All nominations must be submitted through the online platform at <https://manufacturingleadership.awardsplatform.com/>



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Project Nomination Overview and Guidelines

Eligibility – Project Nominations

- Any manufacturer is eligible for a project nomination in the Manufacturing Leadership Awards, regardless of their location or membership status in the Manufacturing Leadership Council, Innovation Research Interchange (IRI) or National Association of Manufacturers.
- A manufacturer is defined as an organization that produces finished goods from raw materials and then sells those goods to consumers, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, or other manufacturers. Standalone products and equipment, software, transportation and logistics providers, distributors, wholesalers, and other service providers are not eligible for the awards.
- Noncorporate entities are defined as universities, government organizations, professional societies, trade associations, or similar.
- Projects must be directly tied to a company's manufacturing operations and illustrate how digital technology was integral to the project's success.
- Technology and consulting partners are permitted to submit one (1) project category entry or one (1) individual category entry per manufacturing client. Noncorporate entities that are submitting their own projects are welcome to submit up to five (5) project entries.
- Projects previously recognized by the Manufacturing Leadership Awards are not eligible for re-entry.
- A project must have reached a significant development or deployment milestone within the previous year starting with the season entry period to be eligible for the current awards season. For example, for the 2025 awards, a project should have been launched, scaled, or deployed sometime after September 1, 2023.



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Project Nomination Overview and Guidelines

Judging Criteria – Project Nominations

Project nominations are assessed on the following criteria. It is important to note that this is how the **manufacturer** will be assessed vs. the partner submitting the entry – keep that in mind when creating nominations.

Process Impact: Did the project transform a key process or processes that resulted in greater efficiency, speed, cost effectiveness, or an entirely new dimension of value for the company?

Business Impact: Did the project aid in the company's growth financially, in market share, in reputation, or in customer satisfaction?

Strategic Impact: Did the project help enable and advance the company's long-term business goals, further its digital transformation, and/or expand its future growth opportunities?

Use of Technology: To what extent was the use of advanced technology key to enabling the project?

Scale of Project: Did the project encompass or hold the potential to encompass a significant percentage of the company's operational footprint?



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Project Categories

Note that final determination on the appropriate category for a project entry is determined by the Manufacturing Leadership Council content team. Entrants will be contacted if the category under which they submitted their entry is changed.

Artificial Intelligence Vision and Strategy: Finalists in this category have developed operational and/or corporate strategies for the use of AI to advance business goals such as greater efficiency, speed, agility, and new product/service discovery. They have developed and communicated a future-focused vision for AI and have orchestrated AI strategy across the organization to achieve consistency and impact.

NEW! Business Model Transformation: This category recognizes outstanding achievement in using advanced technologies for strategic business model innovation such as discovering new products, creating service-based revenue opportunities, and deploying new business operating models and systems. Successful projects demonstrate leadership and business culture shifts, internal and external collaboration, metrics to measure success, and leverage core manufacturing strengths to maximize competitiveness.

Collaborative Ecosystems: This category recognizes organizational efforts at utilizing M4.0 technologies to enhance internal and external cross-functional collaboration to boost productivity, satisfy customer requirements, accelerate innovation, achieve greater speed and agility, or build strategies to further growth. Manufacturing organizations recognized with this award create corporate structures and policies that support a collaborative enterprise both internally and with partners, vendors, customers and other external entities.

Digital Supply Chains: This category honors those who have created digitally powered supply networks that are flexible, responsive, and resilient. Finalists in this category have developed strategies for predicting and minimizing disruptions, while also rethinking and reengineering how they source materials, manage suppliers, deliver products, and service customers. They demonstrate efficiency in managing the overall value chain and maximizing customer value. They have also developed or embraced best practices for sharing data across key suppliers, partners, and customers.

Engineering and Production Processes: Finalists in this category embrace new design and production approaches to drive game-changing process improvements. They adopt technologies such as advanced 3D modeling and simulation, sensor networks, advanced materials, process automation platforms, advanced robotics, additive/3D printing and/or other digital technologies for production applications. Successful projects improve efficiency and quality, increase responsiveness, and reduce costs.

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Project Categories

Enterprise Integration and Technology: Finalists in this category orchestrate innovative corporate IT, OT, engineering, and communications strategies and systems to integrate the shop floor to the top floor. Successful projects demonstrate a holistic approach to technology deployment to create common operating systems, platforms, and data sharing strategies to help establish an integrated enterprise.

Operational Excellence: Finalists in this category implement continuous improvement projects and harness M4.0 technologies and processes to reduce costs, streamline processes, reduce waste, improve quality, and enhance overall equipment effectiveness. Top-scoring projects demonstrate commitment over time, measurable results, and enhanced performance of the organization as a whole.

Sustainability and the Circular Economy: Finalists in this category have made significant progress in embracing manufacturing processes, supported by digital technologies, that minimize emissions, conserve energy, reduce waste, and are economically and environmentally safe and sound for employees, communities, and consumers. They undertake ambitious sustainability initiatives, seek innovative methods for product and materials reclamation, and show a broad and deep commitment to sustainability through product design and end-of-life strategies, meaningful metrics, and/or sustainable practices both internally and across supply networks. And they have demonstrated a commitment to help drive a more circular industrial economy.

Transformational Business Cultures: This category honors organizations that have reimagined traditional manufacturing organizational cultures to create a digital-first mentality in how they think, plan and act in managing operations. They create cultures that foster a continuous learning environment to leverage the potential of advanced technologies to improve the organization. Finalists in this category encourage decisions at the lowest level possible, demonstrate excellence in employee upskilling and reskilling, and cultivate a mindset of flexibility and ownership among the workforce.



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Individual Nomination Overview and Guidelines

Eligibility – Individual Nominations

- To be eligible for any category in the Manufacturing Leadership Awards, an individual leader must have a role directly tied to manufacturing operations. Nominations for individuals with roles tied to sales, marketing, business development, or similar will not be accepted.
- Individuals who have been awarded in prior seasons are not eligible for entry in the same category where they were previously recognized but are welcome to be nominated in a different individual category. (For example, a prior Next-Generation Leadership finalist or winner is eligible for entry in the Digital Transformation Leadership or Women in Manufacturing 4.0 categories.)
- Each enterprise can have up to three (3) individual nominees in each category. Technology and consulting partners may nominate one (1) individual per client organization, per category.
- An individual may be nominated in no more than one (1) category annually.
- Limit of one (1) individual per nomination.

Category Descriptions

Digital Transformation Leadership: Individual finalists in this category demonstrate excellence in their commitment to digital technology leadership to drive transformational change in their companies. Successful candidates transform their companies by helping to lead changes in culture, in how data is leveraged to improve decision-making, in how work is organized, and in how people are inspired to achieve excellence. They rise to become role models for other individuals and companies in the industry. They are experienced professionals at diverse levels of leadership within their organizations. *(Technology and consulting leaders are eligible for this category.)*

Next-Generation Leadership: This category honors remarkable manufacturing professionals 30 years old or younger as of December 31, 2024, who embody leadership qualities required in the Manufacturing 4.0 era. Finalists pioneer and execute winning strategies, inspire and manage high-performing teams, and raise awareness of the positive impacts of manufacturing on society. *(This category is limited to manufacturers only; technology and consulting partners may nominate individuals from client organizations.)*

NEW! Women in Manufacturing 4.0: This category honors women who have demonstrated noteworthy accomplishments in manufacturing operations leadership. They have been champions for digital transformation both inside and outside of their organizations; they have mentored or sponsored other women who are pursuing manufacturing operations careers; and they demonstrate personal commitment to excellence through continuous professional learning and development. *(Technology and consulting leaders are eligible for this category.)*

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Individual Nomination Overview and Guidelines

Judging Criteria – Individual Nominations

Nominations will be assessed on the following criteria:

Digital Transformation Leadership

Company Impact: Did the individual's achievement significantly advance his or her company's operational digital transformation?

Industry Impact: Did or should the individual's achievement serve as a role model for other manufacturing leaders?

Manufacturing impact: Did or should the individual's achievement serve as a model for how to conduct manufacturing operations at other companies?

Next-Generation Leadership

(Note: This category is for individuals who are age 30 or younger as of December 31, 2024.)

Disruptive Innovation Impact: Did the individual successfully promote ideas and lead projects that embodied new ways of thinking?

Collaborative Innovation Impact: Did the individual inspire others and play a significant role in creating new or unique organizational models, including cross-functional teams, that took a collaborative approach to solving problems or creating new ways of doing things?

Social Impact: Did the individual enhance the perception of manufacturing's value for other potential next-generation leaders?

Women in Manufacturing 4.0

Digital Transformation and Business Impact: Did this individual's experience and achievements impact digital transformation both inside and outside of their organization, in addition to impacting the company's strategy, business model, or other important overarching business goals?

Mentorship/Sponsorship Impact: Has this individual served as a mentor or sponsor to other women who are pursuing a career in manufacturing operations?

Continuous Learning Impact: Did this individual demonstrate a digital mindset and spirit of continuous professional learning to acquire new skills and knowledge?

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Program Overview and FAQ

Who judges the nominations?

The Manufacturing Leadership Awards judges' panel is comprised of industry experts with extensive knowledge and experience in digital manufacturing. The panel is generally comprised of MLC members and past award winners. Each entry is assessed by three judges.

Judges do not assess any entries from their own companies, direct competitors, or any other situation that would constitute a conflict of interest. They are required to sign a confidentiality agreement before assessing any nominations.

What does it mean to be an awards finalist?

First, congratulations! You have reason to celebrate. Selection as a finalist means that your client's project or individual nomination has been shortlisted as one of the best in the category. Being named a finalist is a mark of excellence that means the judges gave the entry a top score.

Is my entry confidential?

Be assured that each entry is seen only by the judges who assess it and the MLC content team. No part of any entry is shared publicly beyond the company name and project title or individual name.

How do I pick the right category?

Every nomination is reviewed by the MLC content team before it is sent for judging to assess if it is in the best-fit category, determined by the entry's theme and outcomes and where it will be most competitive with similar entries. If it is determined that the entry should be moved to a different category, you will be informed of this change. Determination on the correct category is at the sole discretion of the MLC content team.

What do award honorees receive?

Each award finalist is provided the following:

- Opportunity to attend the Manufacturing Leadership Awards Gala and Dinner, taking place June 18, 2025, in Marco Island, Florida. You will be seated with your manufacturing client for associated projects.
 - Passes are \$595 for team members, \$195 for spouses/personal guest or through custom sponsorships. Please email lbisset@nam.org for more information.
- A custom awards trophy, distributed at the awards gala.
- Recognition on the stage at the awards gala.
- Inclusion in public announcements via social media, email, and other communications channels from the MLC and the NAM.

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Program Overview and FAQ

What happens at the Manufacturing Leadership Awards Gala?

The gala is a fun and festive black-tie event that includes a cocktail reception, sit-down dinner, and full award ceremony. All finalists are invited to walk the stage to receive their trophy. Category winners are announced at the gala along with winners of the Future of Manufacturing Award, the Small/Medium Enterprise Manufacturer of the Year, Large Enterprise Manufacturer of the Year, and Manufacturing Leader of the Year.

Do I have to be present at the gala to receive an award?

While we would love to celebrate with you in person, attendance at the gala is not required for award recognition. For anyone who cannot attend the gala, we will ship your award trophy to you directly.

How can I promote my award?

Finalists will be given social graphics and a press release template that they may use to promote their recognition. Be sure to share the good news with your employees, executive leadership, customers and partners!

What is the Future of Manufacturing Award, and how can I submit a nomination for it?

The Future of Manufacturing Award, formerly known as the Manufacturing in 2030 Award, recognizes projects that are especially innovative or forward-thinking in their application. They could be seen as a role model for the manufacturing enterprise of the future.

Winners of this award are determined solely by the MLC content team. All finalist nominations are automatically entered for this award.

How are the Manufacturers of the Year and Manufacturing Leader of the Year determined?

All finalist nominations are automatically entered for these awards. Determination for the winners is made solely by the MLC content team based on scoring and judges' feedback.

My entry wasn't selected as a finalist. Now what?

The awards are a competitive program and, unfortunately, some entries do not make it through to the next round. You are welcome to contact the program director to discuss the judges' feedback on your entry. Note that if your project continues to reach additional milestones, it is eligible for re-entry the following season. Likewise, individuals who were not selected as finalists are eligible for re-entry.

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Tips for Success

The following tips can help with creating a successful partner-submitted project nomination:

- First and foremost, keep the focus on the manufacturer that is being nominated and the manufacturer's accomplishments. Create an entry that gives a holistic picture of the manufacturer's digital transformation accomplishments. Avoid excessive mentions of a specific product or service. While it is fine to mention a specific product or service as part of an overall digital transformation initiative, center the award nomination on the manufacturers' digital achievements and business improvements.
- Give as much detail as possible for projects so that the judges can make a thorough assessment of its performance and impact.
- Tell the whole story of how this has improved the manufacturer's operations and overall business. Ask the following questions:
 - What challenge is the project attempting to solve?
 - What impact has it made, especially in terms of measurable metrics and cost savings?
 - What is its realized or anticipated ROI?
 - What is its future, and how will it be scaled to other parts of the business, other operations, or other locations?
- It is understandable that financial details can be sensitive, but providing even a ballpark estimate of financial benefits can help the judges understand a project's true impact.
- You are welcome to include attachments including slide presentations, videos, etc. that can tell a fuller story about a project's implementation.

Consider the following with individual nominations:

- What specific things has this individual done to improve their organization and/or the manufacturing industry?
- When has this individual shown innovation, leadership, and/or inspiration to others?
- Again, give a complete picture of this individual's accomplishments. The more detail you can provide, the better for the judges to assess their achievements.

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How to Create a Nomination

Step 1: Create an Account

- Go to <https://manufacturingleadership.awardsplatform.com/>
- Create an account using your preferred email address. You will receive a confirmation email upon creating a new account. You will need to click the link in this email to confirm your account.

Step 2: Start Your Nomination

- Upon logging in, click the Start Entry button at the bottom
- You can save your work as you go – there is no need to complete a nomination in one sitting.
- You will be asked to identify the type of entry you are submitting (project or individual), the entry category, and the type of organization that you are representing. *(Note that the MLC content team makes final determination for an entry's appropriate category based on where the entry is most competitive. If an entry's category is changed, you will be notified.)*
- See the sample nomination forms at the end of this guide for a full list of information that is required on the entry form.

Step 3: Submit Your Completed Entry

- It is recommended that you click the “Preview” button before submitting to ensure your entries are final.
- You will receive a confirmation email automatically generated by Award Force when your entry is submitted.
- If you are paying with a credit card issued by a financial institution outside of the United States, we regret that Award Force cannot support those types of payments. Please contact MLAwards@nam.org to make payment arrangements.