Manufacturing

Jun 26, 2025

Executive Brief

Sauk County's manufacturing sector remains resilient, with strong potential for growth despite ongoing challenges. Sustained competitiveness and economic vitality will depend on strategic investments in infrastructure, workforce development, and technological innovation, supported by robust public-private partnerships.

Participants identified areas of **strategic focus** areas and **imperative actions.**

Strategic Focus Areas:

1. Sector Status & Outlook

- Manufacturing remains a cornerstone of Sauk County's economy, with stable operations demonstrating the sector's resilience and capacity for scale.
- Automotive and related industries face uncertainty as the market shifts toward electric and hybrid vehicles.
- A shift toward purposeful product development enables companies to streamline less profitable lines, ensuring sustainable growth.

2. Workforce & Labor Availability

- Persistent shortages in engineering, supervisory and skilled technical roles.
- Language, math and soft skills remain challenges, especially for Hispanic workers who make up a growing share of the workforce.
- Youth apprenticeships and skills-based wages show promise. However, requires scaling and stronger alignment with education partners.

---

3. Infrastructure & Capacity Constraints

- Roads, bridges and truck routes need upgrades to handle freight demand.
- Rail repairs in Reedsburg and expanded logistics infrastructure are essential.
- Increasing power grid capacity
- Ongoing water treatment facility projects are live, but more investment is needed.

---

4. Policy & Regulation

- Local policies are supportive, with strong collaboration (noted in Baraboo).
- State-level regulations, particularly DNR permitting and compliance, remain burdensome and resource-intensive.

---

5. Technology & Innovation

- High costs and operational complexity limit/hinder automation adoption.
- Apprenticeship and certification programs are advancing technical training but need regional expansion and more hands-on applications.
- AI and digital tools are recognized as future drivers of efficiency, quality control and data management.

---

6. Collaboration & Future Trends

- Cross-sector collaboration among industry, education and government is essential to address skills gaps and technology adoption.
- A growing focus on sustainable practices, including LED lighting, water recirculation and renewable energy.
- AI, data analytics and advanced manufacturing techniques will shape the next decade.

Imperative Actions:

1. Strengthen Workforce Development

- Expand partnerships with Madison College, UW institutions, and local high schools to deliver plastics, engineering and advanced manufacturing training.
- Scale apprenticeships and skills-based wage models to attract and retain talent.
- Provide targeted language, math and leadership training for underrepresented workforce segments.

---

2. Invest in Critical Infrastructure

- Advocate for upgrades to roads, truck routes and bridges to support freight.
- Advocate for expansion to rail infrastructure where needed.
- Advocate for power grid expansion and explore new energy sources.

---

3. Advance Technology Adoption

- Develop regional labs and shared training facilities to lower barriers to automation and advanced manufacturing.
- Support grants, financing, and incentives for firms to invest in AI, robotics, and digital technologies.
- Integrate simulation-based training and applied AI tools into workforce programs.

---

4. Streamline Regulatory Navigation

- Collaborate with state policymakers to reduce compliance burdens and streamline DNR permitting.
- Advocate for regulatory flexibility that supports innovation, workforce development, and expansion.

---

5. Foster Collaboration & Sustainability

- Establish a regional manufacturing alliance to convene industry, education, and workforce development stakeholders.
- Create shared spaces for dialogue and joint problem-solving.


LAND
HG
25
MADE