

NEW Manufacturing Alliance
Board of Directors Meeting
May 6, 2026
8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.
Duxxbak Composite Decking
Minutes

Attendees: Brandon Beard, Jeff Anderson, Scott Bean, Jeff Berg, Amy Bertram, Tad Campana, Brian Conrad, Kiley Eck Hayon, Kevin Ignacio, Aaron Janichuk, John Nundahl, Bryan Peters and Ann Franz

Topic 1: 2026 NEWMA Financials

Jeff will give an update on the 2026 financials, which are in good position even with the extra costs associated with the move to UW Green Bay.

Topic 2: Plan 20th anniversary celebration on 6/17/2026

The event will be held at Great North Commons from 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Event title: **Shaping the Future of Manufacturing in Northeast Wisconsin**

The program will be featuring:

- The past – testimonials/panel/video
- Present – Visual representation of events and programs
- Future – Polls and roundtable discussions

Agenda:

- **Welcome & Opening Video**
- There will be messaging on the image of manufacturing careers 20 years ago compared to now (media clippings and NEWI Vitality Study Index).
- **20 Years Overview with guest panel and/or speakers potential topics**
 - a. K-12/high education panel featuring: new degree programs such as engineering and training programs. Partnerships with K-12 such as Get Real Math, WTEA and Excellence Awards
 - b. All Stars past winners & Internship Draft Day interns
 - c. Taskforce chair panels
 - d. Past Board chairs

Poll questions: What should NEVER change about the Alliance?

- **Next section: “Designing the Next 20 Years” – potential topics**
 - a. Future Workforce needs
 - b. Technology & Industry 4.0
 - c. Manufacturing Image & Awareness
 - d.
 - e. Education Partnerships
 - f. Talent Attraction

Questions for Each Table

- What will manufacturing talent needs look like in 2031?
- What major workforce problem should NEWMA solve next?
- What program should exist that does NOT exist today?
- If resources were unlimited, what bold initiative should NEWMA launch?
- How are you using AI now and what are your future plans

6. Closing – cocktail reception

There will be a 20 year anniversary magazine that will be distributed to all members. As part of the magazine there are sponsorship opportunities:

\$1,000 sponsor for the Scholarship Fund

\$300 sponsor for the industrial maintenance/machining

Board members are highly encouraged to attend the June 17th event. After the event, the Board will take the information learned and have a one-day Strategic Planning meeting with facilitated by Dean Stewart. There will be a dinner the night before for those Board members that can join. Ann will look at an off-site location. She will follow up with Dean on his availability for a date in September.

Topic 3: Updates from NEWMA taskforces

Talent taskforce –On April 14th was the Future of Work – Employee Retention Summit at the Fox Valley Technical College. There were 214 people registered for the event. This event also serves as the Alliance’s Quarterly Membership meeting. There was a lot of great feedback regarding the event. The Board suggested some topics for next year’s event including recruitment and employee development.

Another idea generated from the Future of Work Summit was hosting a CEO level event focused on topics specific to this population. It was suggested hosting another CEO luncheon as part of Manufacturing First.

Communications – the kickoff to the Timber Rattlers promotion on Tuesday’s Bang for your Buck started on Opening Day on April 14. Plus there is another promotion for the 4 regional racetracks.

The 2026 All Star Awards & Future All Star YA Award dinner will be held on May 6 at the Timber Rattlers stadium. This is the first time that we are hosting an All Star award focused event. On June 1, will open All Star nominations for the 19th year.

K-12 – the 15th annual Excellence in Mfg./K-12 Partnerships Awards nominations were open early this week. The taskforce is working on a guide for successful engagement for industry at career fairs, plant tours and hands-on activities handbook. The goal is to work on the guide in the next 6-9 months and then have a special ½ day K-12 summit in 2027 in which the handbook would be distributed. The taskforce will work on topic ideas for the summit at a future meeting

Industry 4.0 –The 8th cohort of the AI training concluded last month with over 80 participants. The Data Analytics training will be offered again in the fall, however now the LinkedIn videos are subscription based. NEWMA has the Microsoft grant to pay for the fee, approximately \$100 per company. Most companies either have the subscription, or the investment is so little they do not ask for repayment. The AI course will also be offered in the fall. In total there have been over 2,300 people that have participated in the AI, Project Management and Data Analytics training over the past 5 years.

NCMMA – will be hosting a Tech Ed Teacher event called, All About Boats! On June 11. It will include a tour of Fincantieri Bay Shipbuilding and Burger Boat. Ann is working with the Department of Defense on a \$120,000 contract for 3 years to fund SeaPerch & a new high school ROV competition.

Topic 4: AI training program

Brandon led a discussion on an AI training grant idea for members working with a few NEWMA Associate members that have expertise in AI. The Northeastern Wisconsin Manufacturing AI Implementation Cohort is a **hands-on, cohort-based workforce development program** designed to help small and mid-sized manufacturers (10–150 employees) safely identify, design, test, and implement practical AI-enabled improvements using **technology they already own**.

Participants leave the program with:

- One **working AI-enabled process improvement**
- A **repeatable implementation playbook**
- Trained internal champions confident to continue independently

- Reduced reliance on outside vendors and SaaS sprawl

Program Structure & Duration

- **Total Length:** 12 weeks
- **Format:** Cohort-based, peer learning with applied work
- **Cadence:** Weekly facilitated sessions + between-session application
- **Methodology:** Lean Continuous Improvement, Human-Agency-first, Agile delivery model
- **Technology:** Microsoft 365 ecosystem (Power BI, Power Automate, Copilot, Fabric concepts)

Target Audience

- Manufacturing companies in Northeastern Wisconsin
- 25 – 250 employees, however companies of all sizes and maturity are welcome
- Existing Microsoft 365 environment
- Limited internal IT or data capacity
- Leadership committed to upskilling existing teams
- Each company enrolls **2–3 participants in addition to 1 executive/C-Suite leader**, typically including:
 - A process owner (operations, quality, scheduling, supply chain)
 - A daily user or supervisor
 - Optional IT or data-adjacent role (if available)

Program Objectives & Process

1. **Improve productivity and decision quality** in real manufacturing processes
2. **Build internal AI literacy and confidence**, not dependency
3. **Reduce wasted spending** on unnecessary AI tools and subscriptions
4. **Preserve human judgment and accountability** through human-in-the-loop design
5. Create a **repeatable, scalable AI capability** inside each organization
6. **Provide Technology Enablement Readiness** assessment
7. Prioritize improvements to remove data **inefficiencies** through application of technology
8. **Understand an AI Readiness Model** of what must take place before AI strategy implementation

The Board that this had great opportunity, but cyber security needs to be part of the program.

Topic 5: Hot topic

There was a discussion of the impact on fuel prices and tariff refunds. There was interest in a Lunch & Learn on the topic of tariff refunds.

Topic 6: Associate Member approval – all companies approved

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| 1. Vizance Inc. | 7. Godfrey & Kahn |
| 2. Federated Insurance | 8. Tanzmanian Freight Services |
| 3. Kapnick Insurance | 9. Rhino Tool House |
| 4. Morton Safety | 10. Ascent Leadership Group |
| 5. Ahead Staffing, HR & Payroll Services | 11. Brown & Brown of Wisconsin |
| 6. American Fidelity | |

Total new members is 21 for the year. The Board would like an analysis of investment Associate members have contributed to the organization outside of their membership dues. In addition, they would like to understand how the company was referred to the organization.

Topic 7: Next steps and next meeting

The next meeting will be virtual on 8/5/2026 at 8:30 a.m.