

BUILDFREEDOMSUMMIT

AGENDA | OCTOBER 19–22, 2026 | GALVESTON, TEXAS

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY
Monday, October 19	12:00–7:00 PM	Early Check-In & Registration
Tuesday, October 20	7:30–8:30 AM	Registration & Breakfast
	8:30–9:00 AM	Welcome Remarks & Summit Opening
	9:00–10:00 AM	Keynote Address
	10:00–10:50 AM	Coffee Break
	11:00–11:50 AM	Breakout Session 1
	12:00–1:00 PM	Lunch
	1:00–1:50 PM	Breakout Session 2
	2:00–2:50 PM	Breakout Session 3
	3:00–3:50 PM	Networking Break
	4:00–4:50 PM	Breakout Session 4
	5:00–7:00 PM	Networking Reception
Wednesday, October 21	7:30–8:30 AM	Registration & Breakfast
	8:30–9:00 AM	Welcome Remarks & Summit Opening
	9:00–10:00 AM	Keynote Address
	10:00–10:50 AM	Coffee Break
	11:00–11:50 AM	Breakout Session 5
	12:00–1:00 PM	Lunch
	1:00–1:50 PM	Breakout Session 6
	2:00–2:50 PM	Breakout Session 7
	3:00–3:50 PM	Networking Break
	4:00–4:50 PM	Breakout Session 8
Thursday, October 22	8:00 AM–12:00 PM	Career Expo — Invite Only
	12:00–1:00 PM	Lunch — Exhibitors Only
	1:00–5:00 PM	Job Fair

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20 BREAKOUT SESSIONS		
TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
11:00–11:50 AM	Scaling AI-Ready Talent: Building the Workforce for America's Smart Manufacturing Future	Chris Ing, NextFlex
	New Markets Tax Credits: A Capital Tool for Building American Manufacturing	Five Point Strategies
	Building the Ecosystem: Aligning Industry, Education, and Workforce	Paul Lynch, Penn State Behrend; Rebecca Knight, SRME
	America's Talent Pipeline Program Overview	Joey Pettit, TMG
	Talent by Design: Building Workforce Pipelines That Drive Opportunity, Prosperity, and Regional Growth	Amanda Hylton, Institute for Advanced Learning and Research
	Hawaii Working for Readiness	Pono Chong, Hawaii Military Affairs Council–Ku'i Hao
1:00–1:50 PM	Beyond the Hire: Building the Employer Framework That Sustains America's Manufacturing Workforce	Tim Kane, Freeport-McMoRan
	You Can't Recruit Talent That Never Saw the Opportunity	Stephanie Hajducek, This One's for the Gals
	SBA Made in America Manufacturing Initiative	Valerie Maher, U.S. Small Business Administration
	Manufacturing Smarter: Strategies to Improve Performance and Reliability	Daniel Robles, Haas Factory Outlet; Scott Lucas, WSU Tech; Joe Barto, TMG
	BuildFreedom.US Panel	Matt Draper, WIRE; IACMI; Project MFG; TECHnista; Cast in Steel; stem+M
	Have your CAKE and Eat it Too!	Sheila Siman, San Jacinto College
2:00–2:50 PM	The Cycle of Doom: Why Most Manufacturing Transformations Fail Before They Begin	Trent McJunkin, McJunkin Consulting Group
	Built to Scale: Creating the Workforce Manufacturing Growth Demands	Brittany Burton, Hill & Smith PLC
	Built to Lead: Preparing America's Workforce for AI-Driven Manufacturing	Lisa Masciantonio, ARM Institute
	ApprenticeshipWorks! No-Cost Initiative	Heather Cooper, Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center
	Building the Workforce You Need: A Local Solution to a National Challenge	Bill Padnos; Stephen DeWitt; Toni Neary; Scott Dietz; Sara Timm
	Workforce Recruitment	Oplign
4:00–4:50 PM	Keeping the Torch Alive Through Multi-Generational Shop Owners	Russell Winter; Tyler; John; Nubia Perez
	A Century of Career & Technical Education: Why it Matters for Defense Manufacturing Now	
	The Missing Semester: What Manufacturers Should be Demanding from Engineering Programs	Daren Davis, Davis Consulting
	Manufacturing in Houston: Real Estate, Talent & Infrastructure	Craig Rhodes; GHP; Galveston EDP; BAHEP
	The Second Welder Costs What the First One Did: Why “Scale” Is the Wrong Promise for the Skilled Trades	Michael Gilroy, CREC

Wednesday, October 21 Breakout Sessions		
Time	Session	Speakers
11:00–11:50 AM	From Workforce Crisis to Workforce Ecosystem: Building the Talent Pipeline that Sustains America's Fleet	Shawn Avery, <i>The Workforce Council</i>
	Making Skills Visible: Turning Military Experience into Manufacturing Talent	Sytease Geib, <i>Manufacturing Institute</i>
	Apprenticeship as Infrastructure: Building Durable Workforce Pipelines for Advanced Manufacturing and Defense	John Colborn; Michael Gilroy
	Five Years of Workforce Lessons: Breaking Talent Acquisition and Retention Myths	Kevin Barto, <i>TMG</i>
	K-12 Manufacturing Pathways Lightning Talks	Cathy Chen-Arriaga; Kyle Jordan; Samantha Trzinski; Greg Hayworth
	LaborUp Overview	Simba Jonga, <i>LaborUp</i>
	Industry Focused Engineering Pathway for Manufacturing	Dr. Timothy Cyders, <i>Ohio University</i>
1:00–1:50 PM	Alternative Capital for Texas Small Businesses	Five Point Strategies
	How the FAME Apprenticeship Model Creates Global Best Technicians	Gardner Carrick, <i>Manufacturing Institute</i>
	Telling the Story of Domestic Production in the U.S.	Donnie Rosie; Crystal Bentley; Robert Weiss
	Manufacturing Can't Grow What It Can't Staff	Sara Timm, <i>Timmco</i>
	Closing the Experience Gap: Internships, Externships, and Industry Readiness	Victor Okhuysen, <i>Cal Poly Pomona</i>
	Pilot to Pipeline: How JA Maritime Scaled an Industry-Driven Workforce Model	Nicole Diorio, <i>Junior Achievement</i>
	IACMI Workforce Panel	Andrew Pokelwaldt; Mike Kubacki; Greg Harrel; Greg Hayward; Elliot Keas
2:00–2:50 PM	When a Community Foundation Becomes the Developer: The DEPOT Defense Workforce Campus	Gil Gonzales, <i>Barberton Community Foundation</i>
	Project MFG Overview	Ray Dick, <i>Project MFG</i>
	Re-visioning and Implementing a Precision Machining Manufacturing Workforce Development Program	Scott Lucas, <i>WSU Tech</i>
	Built Not Born	Andrew “Drew” Crowe, <i>New American Manufacturing Renaissance</i>
	Investing Early, Hiring Strong: Electric Boat's K-12 to Workforce Ecosystem Across CT, RI & MA	Willie Barber, <i>General Dynamics Electric Boat</i>
4:00–4:50 PM	Don't Look at the Collar. Look at the Sleeves.	Andrew Wooley, <i>Fictiv</i>
	Finding and Growing the Next Generation of Skilled-Trades Talent	Dan Stiles, <i>Aerotek</i>
	Advancing Manufacturing and Digital Readiness	Amy Thompson, <i>Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology</i>
	Learn About Maritime Manufacturing and Supply Chain: A Hands-On Lesson for Grades 6 and Up	Katherine Sutton, <i>General Dynamics Electric Boat</i>
	Apprenticeships Unpacked: What Works and Why	Michael Gilroy; Robert Flores; John Colborn; Gardner Carrick; Heather Cooper