
2026 Virginia ManufacturHER Conference Agenda

8:00 – 9:00	Registration, Networking, Vendor Visits
9:00 – 9:15	Opening Remarks, Regina Cook
9:15 – 10:00	Keynote Address, Patricia “Patty” Davidson
10:00 – 10:15	Break, Vendor Visits
10:15 – 11:00	Breakout #1
11:00 – 11:15	Break, Vendor Visits
11:15 – 12:00	Breakout #2
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch with Plenary Presentation (Dr. Treanor)
1:00 – 1:15	Break, Vendor Visits
1:15 – 2:00	Breakout #3
2:00 – 2:15	Break, Vendor Visits
2:15 – 3:00	Moderated Panel, HR Officers – Amy White will moderate
3:00 – 3:15	Closing Remarks
3:15 – 3:30	Break, Vendor Visits
3:30 – 4:30	Networking, Vendor Visits, Optional STEM Tour

See Keynote and Breakout Descriptions on the Following Pages

Breakout #1

Future Disruption: The High Cost of Invalidation

***Regina Cook, MS, CPTM, Corporate Training Lead, Workforce Development Specialist,
and Organizational Development Strategist, Virginia Western Community College***

In fast-moving organizations, disruption isn't caused only by market shifts or emerging technologies — it's often triggered internally by subtle patterns of invalidation. When employees' ideas, concerns, or contributions are dismissed or minimized, the long-term cost is steep: disengagement, stalled innovation, eroded trust, and a culture where people stop speaking up. *Future Disruption – The High Cost of Invalidation* examines how these dynamics quietly undermine organizational resilience and what leaders can do to reverse the trend.

This session explores the mechanics of invalidation in professional environments — how it shows up in communication, decision-making, and leadership behaviors, and why it becomes more damaging during periods of rapid change. Participants will learn how to identify invalidating patterns early, respond with clarity and professionalism, and build cultures where people feel heard, valued, and empowered to contribute.

Attendees will gain:

- Insight into how invalidation impacts psychological safety, innovation, and retention
- Strategies for recognizing subtle invalidating behaviors in meetings, feedback, and leadership communication
- Tools for fostering constructive dialogue and inclusive decision-making
- Techniques for rebuilding trust and engagement after invalidation have occurred
- A framework for creating future-ready cultures where diverse perspectives fuel disruption rather than fear it

Breakout #2

Mentoring and Reverse Mentoring in a Rapidly Shifting Workforce

Jeanne Lewis, Corporate Trainer, Virginia Western Community College

Workforces are transforming at unprecedented speed — driven by technology, generational turnover, evolving employee expectations, and new models of leadership. In this environment, traditional mentoring alone is no longer enough. Organizations need dynamic, two-way learning structures that leverage the strengths of every generation. *Mentoring and Reverse Mentoring in a Rapidly Shifting Workforce* explores how modern mentorship models can accelerate adaptability, strengthen culture, and close critical skill gaps.

This session examines how mentoring and reverse mentoring create strategic value: senior employees gain fresh insight into emerging tools, trends, and cultural shifts, while newer professionals develop confidence, institutional knowledge, and leadership readiness. Participants will learn how to design mentoring systems that are equitable, intentional, and aligned with organizational goals — not just informal or ad-hoc.

Attendees will gain:

- Insight into how demographic and technological shifts are reshaping mentorship needs
- Strategies for building mentoring and reverse-mentoring programs that enhance agility and innovation
- Tools for pairing employees effectively across generations, roles, and skill sets
- Techniques for fostering psychological safety, trust, and mutual respect in two-way learning relationships
- A framework for measuring impact and sustaining mentorship as a core cultural competency

Breakout #3

Advancing Rosie’s Mission – Becoming the Most Sought-After Employer for Women in Manufacturing
Adam Messano, Corporate Trainer, Virginia Western Community College

Manufacturing is evolving, and so are the expectations of the workforce. To stay competitive, organizations must do more than modernize equipment — they must modernize culture. *Advancing Rosie’s Mission* explores how companies can become industry leaders in attracting, retaining, and advancing women by building workplaces where opportunity, respect, and innovation thrive.

Inspired by the iconic “Rosie the Riveter,” this session reframes her legacy for today’s rapidly shifting manufacturing landscape. Participants will examine the structural, cultural, and leadership practices that either accelerate or inhibit women’s success. Through data-driven insights and practical frameworks, attendees will learn how to create environments where women choose to work — and choose to stay.

Attendees will gain:

- Insight into current trends shaping women’s participation in manufacturing
- Strategies for designing workplaces that support safety, belonging, and equitable advancement
- Tools for strengthening leadership pipelines and removing barriers to career mobility
- Approaches for leveraging mentorship, reverse mentoring, and sponsorship to accelerate development
- A framework for building a brand identity that positions the organization as an employer of choice for women

Moderated Panel

Human Resource Directors Combatting Worker Development for the Future

Panelists' Names, Titles, and Organizations will be provided.

Moderator, Amy White, Dean of STEM & Workforce Solutions, Virginia Western Community College

As industries transform at unprecedented speed, HR leaders face a critical challenge: preparing today's workforce for tomorrow's demands while navigating talent shortages, shifting employee expectations, and rapid technological disruption. This moderated panel brings together seasoned Human Resource Directors who are on the front lines of workforce evolution, tackling the realities of upskilling, reskilling, and cultivating adaptable talent pipelines.

Panelists will explore the strategic, operational, and cultural barriers that hinder worker development — and the innovative approaches organizations are using to overcome them. From modern apprenticeship models and cross-generational learning to AI-supported training and competency-based career pathways, this conversation highlights what it truly takes to build a future-ready workforce.

Participants will gain:

- Insight into emerging workforce trends and the skills most at risk in the next decade
- Strategies HR leaders are using to accelerate development in high-demand roles
- Approaches for integrating technology without losing human-centered learning
- Tactics for engaging employees who are hesitant or overwhelmed by change
- A roadmap for building sustainable, scalable development programs that strengthen retention and organizational resilience

Keynote Address

State of Manufacturing 2026: Manufacturing, Good Jobs, and Working Families:

Manufacturing stands at a defining moment. After years of volatility, rapid technological acceleration, shifting workforce expectations, and global supply-chain recalibration, the sector is entering a new era—one shaped not only by innovation, but by the discipline to rethink how we operate, invest, and lead. This keynote delivers a clear, grounded state update on the manufacturing landscape, highlighting the trends reshaping production, workforce strategy, and competitive positioning, and how recent occurrences at the state level put working families first.