

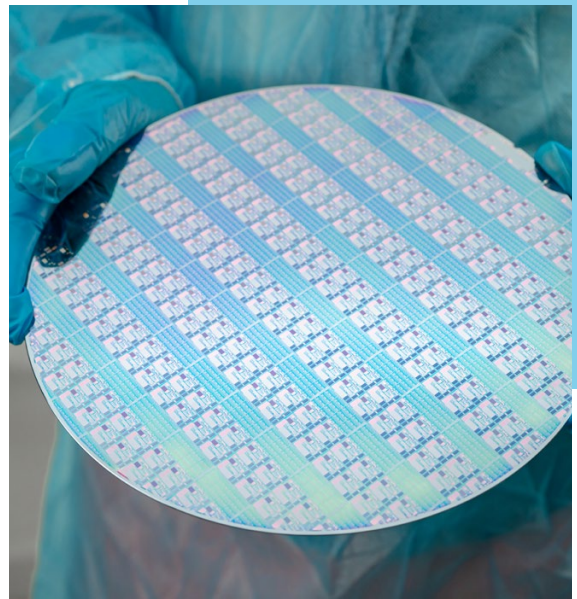
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5-minute read

Science and Technology

Innovation in Action: Getting You Up to Speed on Manufacturing



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We're living in a time of rapid technological change. In some cases, it will take many years to see the impacts on our daily lives. (We looked at three such examples in our 2026 report, [On the Horizon](#)).

One area where the impacts are more concrete is manufacturing of advanced technologies.

But did you know that the U.S. has lagged behind other nations in manufacturing advanced technology products in recent decades? This led to a \$400 billion trade deficit in advanced technology products in 2025.

So what is the federal government doing about it?

A Matter of Perspective

To see the big picture, sometimes it helps to start small.

How many times have you pulled out your cell phone today to find something quickly?

A lot, right?

That device in your hand is just one small example of how advanced, high-tech products can make our lives easier, safer, healthier. And how manufacturing these products can help drive our economy.

Now let's zoom out for the 30,000-foot view.

Making Change

One way the U.S. is trying to strengthen its manufacturing is through Manufacturing USA—a national network of institutes that are partnerships between federal agencies, companies, universities, and others.

For example, a company working with one of the institutes, America Makes, in Youngstown, Ohio, developed a plastic that could help 3D print replacement parts for military aircraft.

Another example: a member of the PowerAmerica Institute in Raleigh, North Carolina, developed a new type of semiconductor for the company's next generation of off-road vehicles.

As of December 2024, the Departments of Commerce, Energy, and Defense established 17 of these institutes and gave them several hundred million dollars a year in recent years.

Staying on Track for the Long Haul

To meet the nation's goals, Congress needs to know how far federal agencies have come and where they're headed in implementing the Manufacturing USA Program.

GAO has reported to Congress since 2017 on the program's work.

In April 2017, we [recommended](#) steps to strengthen interagency collaboration and Commerce did this in October 2019.

Two years later in May 2019, we made additional [recommendations](#), including that Commerce work with Defense and Energy to better measure performance across the Manufacturing USA network. As of April 2026, this work is still underway.

Most recently, in June 2025, we [suggested](#) that Congress consider aligning the time frames for updating a required Manufacturing USA Program strategic plan with that of a higher-level national strategy for advanced manufacturing. Congress aligned these time frames in December 2025.

For more details, see our reports below.

Related GAO Reports

[On the Horizon: Three Science and Technology Trends That Could Affect Society](#) (GAO-26-108079)

[On the Horizon: Three Science and Technology Trends that Could Affect Society](#) (GAO-25-107542)

[Advanced Manufacturing: Aligning Strategies and Improving Agency Reviews Could Help Institutes Achieve National Goals](#) (GAO-25-107369)

[Advanced Manufacturing: Innovation Institutes Report Technology Progress and Members Report Satisfaction with Their Involvement](#) (GAO-22-103979)

[Advanced Manufacturing: Innovation Institutes Have Demonstrated Initial Accomplishments, but Challenges Remain in Measuring Performance and Ensuring Sustainability](#) (GAO-19-409)

[Advanced Manufacturing: Commerce Could Strengthen Collaboration with Other Agencies on Innovation Institutes](#) (GAO-17-320)

[3D Printing: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications of Additive Manufacturing](#) (GAO-15-505SP)

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