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Fuel Your Pipeline: Harness Manufacturing Funding to Modernize and Secure Facilities

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Hosted by Michael Paddock • Presented by Joseph Phelan • With David Gutshall, John Mariano, and Caroli Murphy of Cisco • Grants Office, LLC

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Welcome and Introductions

Michael Paddock:

Hello everyone, and thanks for joining us for Fuel Your Pipeline: Harness Manufacturing Funding to Modernize and Secure Facilities. I'm Michael Paddock, CEO of Grants Office, and I want to welcome everyone to today's session. We've got a great session for you, but before we get started, I want to very much thank our sponsor Cisco for making it possible to bring you all this information and for sponsoring today's session.

Housekeeping

A couple of housekeeping items for you. As many of you know, you can listen hands-free over your computer speakers or headphones. There's no need to dial in, but if you do become disconnected, you can go to the menu at the top of your screen. If you don't see it, click on “Show Menu Bar” and go to the audio and video menu to find alternative ways to connect to the audio portion of today's session.

You can ask questions at any time using the question and answer interface at the bottom right-hand corner of your screen. Feel free to send in as many questions as you'd like over the course of today's session. We'll get to as many as we can at the end — we'll save those questions until right at the end and handle as many as we have time for before the top of the next hour.

The session is being recorded, and the replay along with the slides and other resource materials will be available on the link that Kate will be sharing in the chat. She already shared it, and she'll be sharing it again probably a couple of times throughout the course of the session. It'll be posted around 45 minutes from now, so look for that if you want to access the replay and/or the slides and other resource materials that may be available.

Today's Panelists

I am joined by a great group of panelists. We've got David Gutshall, Cisco Industrial IoT and Security Account Executive; his partner in crime with the same job title, John Mariano, also from Cisco; and Joseph Phelan, Grants Development Consultant here at Grants Office. Sherry Cathcart Chavis could not

join us today, so Caroli Murphy will be speaking on Sherry's behalf about the Cisco Public Funding Office. Welcome to all of our presenters. We'll look forward to a lively conversation here as we go forward. Without further ado, let's jump right into the Cisco presentation from David and John.

Cisco: Securing, Enabling, and Connecting Resilient Factories

David Gutshall:
Thank you, sir. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening if you're out there. I am David Gutshall, part of our Industrial IoT and Security team focused on manufacturing. And with me, I have —

John Mariano:
John Mariano, same game, same title.

David Gutshall:
There we go. So I think we have about 10 minutes. Thanks, John. We'll just get right into it.

Industry Trends and the Fourth Computing Paradigm

First of all, if you look across the industry at companies, vendors, and partners that are in this business of securing, enabling, and connecting resilient factories, Cisco is number one here, and we've been number one for over two-plus decades. We have the depth, the breadth, been moving data packets for four-plus decades. We know how to do this better than anybody else.

Every year, we talk about, “Oh my gosh, we're at an inflection point. Oh my gosh, the disruptor's right around the corner.” Look — I think we all know that leaders and executives across the world recognize where we are now is you're going to have once-in-career, defining things happen probably every quarter. And so the only thing you can do is lean in, put a plan together, and get there as fast as humanly possible without taking the line down.

Just some stats: we're in the fourth computing paradigm, and the pendulum is swinging back. We centralized compute with green screens, decentralized compute with PCs, recentralized again with VMs, and now compute is coming back to the edge, close to where the data is generated. Nobody can find enough people. There are more open jobs, and we're now having to automate more because we automated as much as we could. Put 10 people on the line, and now we can only find six. So how do we get our arms around that? Retraining folks, getting them educated on this AI-ready world that we're moving into, and being ready to embrace that inside of the production part of the factory. And look, IT and OT have got to continue to converge, and folks have finally recognized that. John, anything to add here?

John Mariano:
The only thing I would add on the right side of the screen there is that information for the 41% of IT and OT teams that are working independently on cybersecurity comes out of a Cisco State of Industrial Networking Report that we publish on a yearly basis. It really takes a look at trends and where the current industry is and where things are going, and that bubbled up to the top as something that needed to have a specific particular focus — IT and OT collaboration, especially on cybersecurity.

David Gutshall:
Spot on, John. It's more critical now than ever to get those teams talking.

Secure, Reliable Connectivity and Network Visibility

Here's the great news: we launched some amazing products at Cisco Live. Cisco is not sitting on its hands inside of our core spaces. First, you've got to secure what's out there. You can't have a great-running, resilient, active, hitting-your-production-targets plant without having that secure, reliable connectivity. And we're baking that visibility into the network — we'll double-click on that in a moment. We've got to have new, faster, better, more capable, processor-intensive, and bandwidth-intensive switches, because AI's fuel is data. Suddenly data — if it was not that important, then it became a little bit more important, then with the migration to cloud it became even more important. Now it's even more critical than ever, because the network legitimately will shut down your business if it's not resilient and reliable. And we've gone to a mobile-first bias. It used to be wired networking first; now it's very much wireless networking first.

First, you've probably seen us talk about how important baking observability and visibility into the network is. We don't want you to have to overlay something on top of it. You don't get any closer to processes, systems, and what the heck happened than the network. So we bake those visibility capabilities in, top floor to shop floor. On the shop floor, we leverage our Cyber Vision product to get an understanding of what is going on in that space. The great news from this product standpoint is we're now auto-grouping assets — that was our big live announcement. We're taking that gobbledygook that it sees from a visibility standpoint, all of these connections and systems and what-have-you, and getting a first pass at auto-grouping, which gets you the old 80/20 rule. It's about 80% complete. You may like what comes out of the box, but it gets you a heck of a lot faster than just having it show up all at once. You see AI sprinkled in a couple of different places, but we know that these things are revolutionizing manufacturing, whether it's machine vision, more virtualization, software-defining some of the automation, and providing more capabilities at all of the stops along that edge-to-cloud journey. John, say one —

John Mariano:
One addition on this slide — sorry for interrupting you there.

David Gutshall:
No problem.

John Mariano:
So you'll see something — virtual PLCs. What that really is, is it's abstracting the PLC functionality into basically a personal computer or a thin client that you don't have to put right at the machine side. So you can put it anywhere in the plant, and it makes it a little more flexible, saves you some floor space and panel space, and it doesn't lock you into a certain set of hardware.

David Gutshall:
Spot on. What it does is it makes the network — the jitter, those latencies, the large buffers, you can't be buffering inside the plant — it makes the network even more critical than it was.

Switching Portfolio: PoE, Bandwidth, and Ruggedization

That secure, scalable, resilient, AI-ready network — we've got to have additional features and functionalities inside of our switching portfolio in order to do this. Some of the things that we launched: we've got 4PPoE capability inside of these things, so high power for cameras and vision systems, high power for the higher pixel count as well as the pan, tilt, and zoom capabilities of those cameras. More bandwidth east and west — generally we always think about bandwidth north and south, but now we're looking at that east-west bandwidth as well. And then copy-and-pasting those same capabilities into our IP67 ruggedized portfolio, so if you want to get rid of the cabinet that's out there and just mount the stuff right on the wall or wherever it is. Oh, by the way, you get the doubling of the ability for it to last in basically any kind of harsh environment you want. And then we're expanding those same capabilities for PoE and higher bandwidth into our traditional ruggedized rack-mount portfolio as well, giving both horizontal and vertical stacking capabilities within that form factor. John, anything I missed there?

John Mariano:
Nope, all good.

Cisco Ultra Reliable Wireless Backhaul

David Gutshall:
Excellent. A couple more things, and then we'll turn it over to the folks that really matter. We've been teasing this for a while, and now we're finally there: we launched our Cisco Ultra Reliable Wireless Backhaul product a number of years ago that gave us the ability to suddenly have things that broke 802.11 fences. That was this idea of near-guaranteed data reliability and the ability to legitimately have at the very least two access points that we're talking to at the same time, with make-for-break capabilities. The bad news was always that you had to pick one, and in some cases you might actually have to hang two even if it's the identical model — double the amount of access points.

Now we're giving the ability to have traditional 802.11 wireless as well as that Ultra Reliable Wireless Backhaul capability within that same form factor. So places where you need that reliability — as reliable as a wire — think about an AGV. If it roams and it takes 50 to 100 milliseconds to roam, that AGV, that automated guided vehicle, is going to fail-safe and stop. Great news is it's safe; bad news is it's down because it's not moving. You have the ability to move mobility applications like AGVs to the Ultra Reliable Wireless Backhaul side of that AP. John, this is your world — you came from this world. What did I miss there?

John Mariano:
Nothing actually. You did us a fantastic job. I have nothing to add.

Catalyst Center and IT/OT Convergence

David Gutshall:
Thank you, sir. And then finally — we know that these worlds are converging. We know that what OT needs, the process folks need from their network, tends to be a little bit different than what IT needs. We are continuously giving more and more capabilities within our management platform of Catalyst Center — that on-prem component that IT understands, leverages, knows, and loves — and being able to take our traditional ruggedized portfolio that we just mentioned and roll all of that data, knowledge, understanding, and insights up to Catalyst Center so you can have that more singular pane of glass to manage those. Because we know even if OT owns tier one and some of tier two, ultimately it generally will get escalated to IT, and you want the ability to have that same insights that IT has in that layer. With that, I believe our 10 minutes is up. Thank you, everyone. We'll be around for the remainder of the time if you have any questions before the end.

The Grants Landscape for Manufacturers

Michael Paddock:
Thanks very much, David and John — great information, and certainly some innovative and exciting new things coming from Cisco. With that, I'm going to turn it over to Joseph Phelan to talk to us a little bit about the grants landscape around this. Joseph —

Joseph Phelan:
Thanks, Michael. Thank you, John and David, for an excellent presentation. Today I'm going to speak about the different grant opportunities available for manufacturers. Historically, manufacturing grants haven't always been available, since funding has typically been reserved for the public sector. But there has been a heightened focus in recent years for American manufacturers to receive grant funding. The CHIPS Act is obviously the most popular piece of legislation relating to manufacturers, which I'll get to in a little bit. Other federal agencies and state agencies have made funds available for manufacturers of all

sizes to apply for. So today I'm going to speak about grants in a general sense and how they relate to manufacturing firms. I'll provide five federal opportunities that exist now and into the near future, as well as an update on where the current administration priorities are when it comes to manufacturing. I'll touch on some state opportunities as well as some tips on how to navigate the manufacturing grants landscape.

Grant Funding Basics

First, we'll start with the basics. Usually when we speak about grants, we typically just focus on grants. However, manufacturers do have other funding mechanisms at their disposal. First, grants, which are going to be those awards targeted to help a specific area or address a certain priority presented by the federal or the state government. Then there are incentives, which are usually tax-related and usually related to a priority from the federal or state government — whether it's advanced manufacturing facilities, clean energy, or demonstration activities. There's been a focus on those in recent years. Some of these grant programs have incentives built into the programs, or they're separate programs that are available for incentives. And then also there are some loans — some of the agencies do offer loans for funding.

When you're thinking about an application: if you've never applied for a grant before, there are several different elements to an application. It's going to vary depending on the grant maker itself, but typically there's some sort of proposal narrative — an explanation as to where the need is for funding and why there's a need for funding, how you're going to utilize the funds, and creating a plan there. Financial documentation is always going to be an essential aspect of a grant application, especially for a for-profit organization. And then also having the personnel and staff experience to complete the grant that has been awarded — that's going to be included as well.

Grant timelines are always the most popular question that we receive at Grants Office: just how long grants can take. It's going to vary depending on the program itself. Every grant maker puts out Notices of Funding Opportunity, or NOFOs, or RFPs, to whoever is eligible to apply for them. It's typically anywhere from 4 to 8 weeks — sometimes 10 weeks — to submit the application once that NOFO or RFP is released. With the CHIPS Act, we saw a little bit longer leeway for that time frame. There's a program I'm going to speak about in a little bit that has a longer runway for funding as far as the deadline goes. So it really will depend on the program. But historically for federal programs, we do see that 4-to-8-week turnaround time once a grant has been posted on Grants.gov or another website to then accept applications.

As far as when awards are announced: NOFOs and RFPs sometimes explicitly say when the application awards are expected to be announced, but it will depend. We see here right now with the CHIPS Act, there are some grants that are still being negotiated and renegotiated, depending on where things stand

from the previous administration and now the current administration. So there are going to be some various factors that go into when awards are announced. But there usually is some information in the NOFO or the RFP explaining when the period of performance is expected to begin, based on when the awards are officially announced.

Manufacturer Categories and Fundable Project Examples

From Cisco's perspective, they categorize manufacturers into six categories. You have discrete manufacturers — automotive, aerospace, electronics, industrial machinery. You have process manufacturers, focused on pharmaceuticals, food and beverage, and chemicals. Consumer goods, which are producers of textiles, personal care products, and packaged foods. Small- and medium-sized, which is pretty much any manufacturer with limited budgets and resources — staff size or just overall revenue. Heavy industry and industrial, which is going to be those industries producing metals, mining equipment, as well as construction materials. And then high-tech and advanced, which is semiconductor production, additive manufacturing, as well as renewable energy equipment production.

All of these manufacturers are going to be eligible. There is a focus in certain aspects on those small- and medium-sized manufacturers, as well as the high-tech and advanced production of semiconductors and additive manufacturing. However, a lot of the programs that are out there explicitly mention they're really focused on how manufacturers can use those funds to help with manufacturing processes, energy efficiency, those types of things. It really just depends on the actual fundable project example.

When it comes to fundable projects under federal and state funding: workforce training is definitely going to be a big one. As David and John mentioned, AI is a big player right now as far as just training and upskilling individuals on various technologies. That's definitely going to be an eligible project. Cybersecurity goes both ways — there's a training aspect of cybersecurity, but also the physical equipment purchase of cybersecurity is going to be eligible. Then purchasing any type of equipment to help make manufacturing processes more streamlined and smooth, and help with energy efficiency. There are definitely funds or tax credits for certain utilities in certain areas for manufacturing firms. You have expansion and the modernization of facilities, which is going to be a big one, especially when it relates to the CHIPS Act. Research and development — there are definitely some grants out there to help with the future of manufacturing. And then you have grants to allow organizations to reach certain compliance standards, and Industry 4.0 is a priority for certain states throughout the country. And then there's also just general capital expenses depending on where you're located and what type of manufacturer you are. So those are typically the examples of fundable projects that we see manufacturers having the most success with.

Federal Grant-Making Agencies for Manufacturers

There are 26 federal grant-making agencies across the country, but when it comes to manufacturers, five are very relevant. I'm going to briefly explain each one and what their roles are, and how often they're putting out federal grant opportunities.

Department of Commerce

The first is the Department of Commerce, which is focused on innovation and invention. Right now they're focused on emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing. Within the Department of Commerce, there are three sub-agencies or bureaus that have funding opportunities: the Economic Development Administration (EDA); the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) — that's the organization that runs the CHIPS program; and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), which runs the BEAD program. We won't be talking about BEAD today, but that's just for your awareness. As I mentioned, NIST is going to administer, or has administered, the CHIPS program, which we'll discuss a little bit later.

Department of Energy

Then you have the Department of Energy, focused on any type of security and prosperity for energy, environmental, and nuclear challenges through various solutions with science and technology. There have been several different sub-agencies that have opened in the last few years, specifically under the previous administration — the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations, the Grid Deployment Office, the Office of Manufacturing and Energy Supply Chains, the Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response. We've definitely seen some sub-agencies, and as the new administration passes different budgets, additional offices may be established that offer grant programs that manufacturers can take advantage of. I just wanted to give you a high-level overview of the Department of Energy.

National Science Foundation (NSF)

Then you have the National Science Foundation, which runs as an independent federal agency focused on any type of science and engineering throughout the country. There's really no sub-agency that works under the NSF. They fund around 11,000 awards each year, and it's going to be research and education as well as training. It's really focused on maintaining a strong workforce in the STEM field, as well as anything to do with facilities, infrastructure, and computing. Those are some of the core focus areas for NSF.

Department of Labor

The Department of Labor — focused on the Employment and Training Administration, which is going to be the sub-agency that's most relevant for manufacturers. It's solely focused on training and retraining,

retaining employees, upskilling — those types of programs. There is some manufacturing focus on some of the programs from the Employment and Training Administration under the Department of Labor.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

The last agency is the Small Business Administration, which — as in its name — helps small businesses as well as entrepreneurs. Right now there's a focus on the Made in America Manufacturing Initiative, which is going to provide a commitment to access to capital for small businesses, as well as to improve opportunities for public and private manufacturing support. So that's just a basic overview of the federal grant-making agencies that are most relevant for manufacturers.

Five Federal Programs for Manufacturers

1. EDA Disaster Supplemental Grant Program

With that, I'll speak about five programs — one from each of these agencies. The first is the Disaster Supplemental Grant Program, which comes from the Economic Development Administration under the Department of Commerce. This program actually just opened earlier — either late last month or earlier this month. It comes from funds from the American Relief Act, which was passed at the end of last year. It's going to provide investments into regions that are experiencing economic harm from various hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, floods, or other national disasters that occurred during calendar years 2023 and 2024.

There are three different pathways in this program, and two of the pathways are very relevant for manufacturers. The first is the implementation path, which is going to fund both standalone construction or non-construction projects meant to help communities recover from any type of natural disaster that has happened within the last few years. Some of the eligible activities with the implementation program include upgrading or constructing improvements to business incubators and industrial parks; expanding or constructing workforce training facilities at local community colleges or trade or technical schools; anything to spur or accelerate large-scale industry investments; developing or expanding commercialization and proof-of-concept centers; and providing necessary equipment to those workforce training programs. The implementation activities for this program range from $100,000 to $20 million — a pretty wide range, but that's the implementation aspect, which is going to be smaller than the industry transformation projects, which range from $20 to $50 million.

Now, the implementation grants are due at any time. You can submit an application whenever, as long as you're located in an area that has experienced some sort of national disaster. However, the industry transformation path has a March 3, 2026 deadline — a little less than 9 months from now — and they're going to award anywhere from three to five projects, with the range of $20 to $50 million. The program that they provided as an example in the NOFO is this idea that you can scale a semiconductor

manufacturing corridor through various funding mechanisms. So all types of manufacturing-enabled expansion for a community that has experienced economic harm from a natural disaster. It's a very timely program. Obviously it won't touch everyone — not everyone can apply for it — but there have been several storms that have taken place in the last few years in the south and the west. There are definitely opportunities out there for several organizations interested in this, and there is going to be a partnership between private and public sector located in an area that has recently experienced a natural disaster.

2. DOE Smart Manufacturing Program

The next program comes from the Department of Energy. This is a program that is expected to open later this year. It was put on hold and is being reviewed by the current administration. It's really focused on expanding or establishing programs to support small- and medium-sized manufacturers to allow for the adoption of smart manufacturing technologies and practices, as well as to facilitate access to high-performance computing resources. Funds are really geared towards state entities, state-funded universities, and community and technical schools, but there is the partnership with manufacturers to focus on where the need is — how to improve facility efficiency, increase product quality, and accelerate innovation that helps to lead to global competitiveness.

There are several different focus areas for this program. You have an outreach component; training and workforce development; facility, product, and process assessment; roadmapping to help build these plans and implement smart manufacturing improvements for small- and medium-sized manufacturers; and direct technology implementation, which is really going to focus on identifying or directly providing financial assistance to facilitate small- and medium-sized manufacturers' access to and implementation of smart manufacturing and high-performance computing resource technologies. The average award size is going to be $1.5 million. As I mentioned, it's expected to open later this year. There's a chance that the wording gets changed a little bit in the NOFO, but we do anticipate this program to open up later this year.

3. NSF Future Manufacturing Grant Program

The next program, which won't open until next year, comes from the National Science Foundation. It's called the Future Manufacturing Grant Program, and it's really focused on various research and education to help enable new manufacturing capabilities, with a focus on cyber-manufacturing, eco-manufacturing, as well as bio-manufacturing. There's a chance that some of these priorities are changed a teeny bit, but it's really focused on helping to enhance the U.S.'s leadership in manufacturing by providing these new capabilities for both established companies as well as entrepreneurs. U.S.-based commercial organizations are able to apply for this program. There is encouragement to connect with

two-year educational institutions to apply or to work together. That's definitely something worth pointing out. The average award for this is $1.75 million.

4. DOL H-1B Skills Training Grant

The next program comes from the Department of Labor, specifically under the Employment and Training Administration. It has different names because new administrations adjust the program itself depending on where the need is from industry and from the economy perspective. But it's the H-1B Skills Training Grant, and we do anticipate this program to return in 2026. It's going to fund all types of training and related activities to assist workers in gaining the skills and competency needed to obtain or upgrade employment in high-growth industries or economic sectors. Projects were last awarded in September of last year, and that program was called Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs, which really focused on advanced manufacturing, information technology, and any type of professional, scientific, and technical services occupations that support renewable energy, transportation, as well as broadband infrastructure sectors. This program will have a new name next year, and there will be maybe more focus on certain aspects of workforce training. I definitely see a scenario where AI is included in the priorities of this next round of funding. It's going to be a partnership — nonprofit organizations, workforce agencies, labor unions, as well as economic development agencies are going to be who you want to partner with for this program. It's definitely a really competitive program, but also a really solid program for training and upskilling.

5. SBA Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)

The last program comes from the Small Business Administration. It's going to support all types of technology innovation through research opportunities. It's called the Small Business Innovation Research, or SBIR. There are several different aspects of this program. Typically, topics are introduced — for fiscal year 2026, it's expected that topics are released on August 4th and December 15th for Phase 1, and on October 21st and March 2026 for Phase 2. Phase 1 is really focused on proof of feasibility, while Phase 2 focuses on any type of prototypes, demonstrations, and commercialization of advanced technologies. In 2024, there were 994 awards in total with an average of about $220,000 for Phase 1, and 160 awards in total with just under $1.2 million as the average award amount for Phase 2. Similar to most of these programs, it's going to be a partnership with a university to conduct research or to work on the commercialization of a specific technology or advancement in the technology. Definitely another program to keep an eye on. Also, as I mentioned with the focus on the Made in America manufacturing initiative that the Small Business Administration has expressed since the new administration took over, definitely an agency to look into for future programs as well.

Federal Budget Context: CHIPS Act and IIJA

Typically, the federal budget is where most grant funding flows from. The budget represents the priorities of the current administration. The fiscal year begins on October 1st and ends on September 30th the following year. However, Congress is able to create additional opportunities through special legislation, as an act of Congress. Special legislation takes place outside of the normal federal budget period. It's meant to address a specific need, and both the Senate and the House have to pass a simple majority before the President signs the act of Congress into law.

CHIPS Act

There have been two specific pieces of legislation that were introduced in the early part of this decade. The CHIPS Act was signed in August of 2022. It authorized various funds to boost the semiconductor industry, with funds for research and development as well as semiconductor investments to build or expand locations of semiconductor facilities. We have two types of incentives — the commercial fabrication facilities as well as the small-scale supply chain projects — and there have been four research and development programs. We've seen over 40 awards announced, although these funds have not necessarily been spent yet. Actually, none of them really have been spent — it's been an ongoing process as far as being renegotiated with the Secretary of Commerce and NIST.

So that's where things stand right now: some of these awards that were announced towards the end of last year or the beginning of this year are being reworked. There have been four research and development awards announced to organizations in North Carolina, Georgia, California, and Arizona. But as far as the big programs from CHIPS, we're still waiting to learn more about these awards that are being finalized as far as when the programs are going to start, when the construction is going to start. The thing about this program, though, is it's a reimbursement grant. So once specific timelines and project milestones have been completed, then the organization receives additional funds. It's definitely going to be a program that's relevant well into the end of this decade because, obviously, these things take time to build. So definitely something to keep your eye on and make sure you're checking in with the news about where things stand with the CHIPS Act.

IIJA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act)

Separately, there's the IIJA funding, which was actually signed into law at the end of 2021. It was focused on infrastructure and job creation. There has been some relevancy for manufacturing companies, focused more so on the energy side of things. Some of the funds have been awarded — this program has been around for a little bit now — however, some funds still remain. There were some programs like the Battery Manufacturing and Recycling Grants Program that had an open deadline when the new administration took over, and that had been pulled. So we're still kind of waiting to see exactly where those things are, because some of the programs weren't necessarily aligned with the current

administration's policies as related to equity as well as climate change. We're really just kind of waiting to see when, or if, these programs are going to reopen in the near future.

Looking Ahead: AI, Cybersecurity, and Workforce Development

With the current administration, there are going to be future budgets that are going to be passed and future priorities that are going to be established. We already know from the Department of Labor that AI is going to be a major aspect of things. As labor shortages persist, manufacturers have turned to automation to help boost efficiencies, reduce costs, and maintain those high levels of production. So we're definitely going to see that as a specific area of focus from the current administration.

In relation to cybersecurity — same thing. New technologies require cybersecurity to be key. Any type of training of employees on cybersecurity, as well as purchasing cybersecurity software or any type of equipment that helps to ensure these technologies are secure, is going to be essential for organizations. It ties in with workforce development — it's going to tie in AI and cybersecurity with training and upskilling. As we prepare for the future of the workforce and the different aspects of how manufacturing is going to change, the current and future administrations are definitely going to be focused on those types of activities. More clarity is expected in the coming months, especially as the budget gets worked on and passed through sometime in the near future. But we do anticipate funding for AI, cybersecurity, and workforce development to continue.

State Grant Opportunities

Federal opportunities — there are several out there, but states sometimes could be a better opportunity for organizations to take advantage of, because there are resources and funds available. There is a focus on small- and medium-sized manufacturing companies from the state level. There are also incentives to increase the workforce in a specific state, to help build or expand that. There are definitely funds out there for expansion and for construction of facilities in states. It's sometimes hard, though, to know exactly where to look for funding.

The first thing to think about is to focus on those states that have economic development, commerce, small business advocates, tourism, workforce, and advanced manufacturing agencies. Massachusetts in particular has an advanced manufacturing agency that offers grant programming. Department of Labor is where you're going to find some of those state agencies that offer competitive programs.

Some funding does come directly from the federal government. There is the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) — a public-private partnership, if you're not familiar with it. It's going to provide solutions to small- and medium-sized manufacturers to grow and make operational improvements. The Manufacturing Extension Partnership is something that has been discussed about being potentially restricted a little bit or eliminated from the federal budget. So definitely keep an eye on that as far as

where that funding is going to go, because I know some states really rely on that as far as helping their small- and medium-sized manufacturers to improve their operations and reduce their risk. So definitely something to keep an eye on as the year goes on.

States are going to offer a combination of incentives, credits, as well as resources that are going to be available. Grants are going to fund the same types of things from the state as from the federal. There might be more focus on compliance standards when it comes to the state, or to expand or to allow for an organization, if it's competitive with another state — they might add additional incentives for you to open a business there. So it really just depends on the state itself. The focus is about improving efficiencies — that's going to become paramount. There are definitely some programs that require you only can have so many employees to apply, or you can only have so much revenue to apply. But they really focus on improving the efficiencies of these manufacturers. Industry 4.0 and cybersecurity compliance are definitely key.

State Program Examples

Here are some examples of state opportunities. The Small Manufacturers Modernization Grant in New York targets specific industries but is really focused on small- and medium-sized manufacturers. They provide funds for machinery and equipment purchases as well as renovation or construction.

The Manufacturing Cybersecurity Program actually has a deadline later this week. It's going to fund any type of infrastructure purchases for cybersecurity, so cameras are going to be included with that. It's up to $30,000 per award. They really focus on partnering with a nonprofit or a community or technical college. They have three different programs from their Advanced Manufacturing Office, and this is just one example, but they really focus on all types of partnerships with local organizations.

Then you have the Manufacturing Illinois Chips for Real Opportunity Acts in Illinois — for semiconductor, microchip, and quantum computer manufacturers. That's really focused on expanding facilities, research and development, as well as anything that helps increase jobs in Illinois.

In Indiana, there's the Manufacturing Readiness Grant, which is a pretty solid opportunity. Any manufacturer can apply for it, but there is a preference for small- and medium-sized manufacturers. It's a very popular program. They announced earlier this spring that the program had closed for 2025. They provide funds for any type of advanced technology, anything IoT-related, as well as connectivity.

The thing with grants in general, but specifically state grants, is sometimes some of these programs will give you some flexibility. If you have any interest in applying for it, maybe your budget is at a certain level but you need funding for a technology purchase — you can always apply for a training and then use the funds for that training for a technology purchase, or vice versa. So it does give you some more flexibility when it comes to your finances and as far as what you want to prioritize at your organization.

State CHIPS Funds

In addition to the state opportunities that are listed, there are some funds out there from the state CHIPS funds, which is in conjunction with the federal program. Some states did create their own CHIPS programs for manufacturers. Some of these allowed for the state to be incentivized to join forces with the semiconductor organization that was interested in applying to the federal program. They offered some additional incentives and funding for that. But also, some states have opened their own CHIPS funds — Oregon, New York, Illinois, Texas, and North Carolina are some examples that offer tax incentives, funding opportunities, as well as those aforementioned partnerships and resources. There was legislation passed at the state level — different acts of or different legislation — that will allow for future focus on semiconductor research and expansion in those states. So another avenue to look into as well.

Tips for Navigating Manufacturing Grant Programs

That was a lot of information as far as the federal and state grants focus. I want to leave you with a few tips and tricks for navigating these manufacturing programs.

Partnership

I mentioned partnership a bunch throughout, but it's really essential. If you have any interest in applying for federal grants or state grants, establish or expand relationships with local colleges, nonprofit organizations, or any type of quasi-government entities. Those are going to be important. It makes you more attractive on applications. It opens up the opportunity for more applications that you'll be eligible for. So definitely, partnership is the first step.

Research

You can learn directly from the federal and state agencies. You can sign up for newsletters or news alerts from different federal and state agencies. Trade magazines are a great place to visit. Depending on where you're located, there could be some in-person events, especially those Manufacturing Extension Partnerships — they offer some really good in-person events about various cybersecurity initiatives and so on. And then webinars, obviously — it's very easy to join a virtual webinar, as you're doing right now.

Preparation: Evergreen Documents

Preparation — evergreen documents. Have a statement of needs, company overview, personnel description, detailed areas of expertise, and the necessary financial documentation. Sometimes grants — you want to be prepared for a grant as early as possible. Some of this documentation you can just have on file. Sometimes you might already have it on file, but just always having those documents ready

to go for when an application does open. You never know when a program is going to open, and as you're reading through the different newsletters and going directly to the federal or state agency that makes the most sense for your organization, you want to be prepared to apply.

Pilot Programs

One of the things to focus on is the pilot aspect of things. If you have extra budget to consider piloting a program to see if it's successful, then you can ask the federal or state agency for funds to expand that program. We've definitely seen examples of that. That's another good opportunity to think about.

Connect with Agencies

And then last is to connect with the state and federal agencies. There's definitely a dialogue that's encouraged. They want to see what's happening at the state or from the federal perspective just within the country. You can learn more about potential opportunities ahead of time, or various training initiatives. Just connecting with those individuals who are running these programs can go a long way. It's definitely a good place to start if you're able to. And with that, I'm going to pass it back to Michael.

Cisco Public Funding Office

Michael Paddock:
Great. Thanks very much, Joseph. That was a lot of great information. You delivered it all at a record pace. Thanks very much for that — lots of great information. With that, I want to turn it over to Caroli Murphy, who's going to talk to us a little bit about Cisco's Public Funding Office. Caroli —

Caroli Murphy:
Thank you, Michael. Hi, everyone. Hope everybody's surviving the heat waves wherever you are. My name is Caroli Murphy. I'm the partner lead for the Cisco Public Funding Office. I'm filling in for Public Funding Advisor Sherry Cathcart Chavis.

Our office, we support Cisco sellers, partners, and customers as it relates to grants, bonds, and stimulus funding. So my main message to you from our team is: don't do funding alone. I think Joseph just proved my point with everything he just shared. So luckily, you don't need to retain all of that or navigate it all or do that alone. You've got the Cisco Public Funding Office.

We do research and funding reports specific to you. Project checks and training grant promotion. Our team actively monitors public funding sources, keeping in mind technology projects that may be underfunded or require funding. Our public funding advisors are specialists when it comes to funding, so they can guide you on what funding options are available based on your mission and your objectives, and you get to focus on the fun stuff that David and Michael covered off the top.

So, yeah — the Cisco Public Funding Office, that's who we are. We work with the Grants Office. Joseph is from the Grants Office. We work with them to stay up to date on all things funding so we can better serve you. We have a big team to carry the weight of all things funding. We know that most of you are probably wearing multiple hats at your work and you probably don't have time to put on a public funding hat. So that's why we're here to help. We cover many industries like K-12, higher ed, state and local government, commercial, manufacturing, transportation, energy, broadband, and so on.

Our public funding advisors are operationally aligned, so they really know what's going on state by state. They work hand-in-step with Cisco account teams, so use those folks. Our public funding advisors are also aligned with verticals. For example, the public funding advisor that covers manufacturing is Sherry Cathcart Chavis. Sherry is amazing. And a little scoop for you: Sherry is a Cisco sales champion. That's not easy to do when you're on the public funding team and you don't hold a quota. But she's a Cisco sales champion because she has helped folks navigate funding and get to their outcomes and their objectives using the public funding that's available to them. So I recommend, while you still have access to her, use Sherry to navigate everything that Joseph just mentioned and beyond. My call to action is: don't do funding alone. That's all for me. I'll hand it back over to you, Michael.

Q&A and Closing

Michael Paddock:
Great. Thanks very much, Caroli. That was very good. I'm going to leave this slide up — we have, I think, a Q&A slide. I'll pretty much just leave this slide up so that you can see the QR code. It takes you to the web page for the Cisco Public Funding Office, and you can get lots of great information there as well.

Q1: Can you say more about the state-level funding callouts that Joseph mentioned earlier?

We did have a question that came in about the state-level funding callouts that Joseph had mentioned earlier. I just wanted to let everyone know that those funding callouts were just four individual state examples. The information on the other states will be included in an upcoming white paper that will be emailed to everyone who registered for today's session at a later date, as soon as it's finished up. We're just putting the finishing touches on that. So you can expect to see significantly more detailed information and a little bit of expansion on some of the things that have been talked about today in that white paper.

Closing

I think we have no other questions. I want to let everyone know that the replay link is live. So the replay, slides, and other resources — that's all on the link that Kate has put through the chat. So feel free to

click on that. You'll be taken to that page immediately after the close of today's session, so you may not even have to click on anything, but it will be available, and you'll get a follow-up email with that as well.

Okay — so big thanks to Cisco for sponsoring today's session and making it possible for us to bring you all this information. Hope you enjoyed it. We have thanks to share with our presenters David Gutshall and John Mariano, with Caroli Murphy, and of course with Joseph Phelan, for all the knowledge and insights and action items that you've shared with us today, and to all of you. Thanks for coming to today's session. I hope you found it a valuable use of your time, and we'll look forward to seeing you again on a future webcast. Have a great day, everybody.

— End of Transcript —

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