The Flathead Valley has long been a place of makers, innovators and entrepreneurs: making and manufacturing is vital to our quality of life. That’s why Flathead Valley Community College, ImagineIF Libraries, School District 5, Montana West Economic Development, the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce and Montana Manufacturing Extension Center joined forces to offer Making Montana.

This two-day festival of invention and resourcefulness created a network of businesses, economic development resources and learning organizations that will continue to work together to grow the next generation of innovators, ensuring a thriving local economy far into the future.

Inspiring the next generation of innovators

The best part of this experience was “sharing manufacturing and engineering career options with the next generation of students.”
- Local Manufacturer
1. To create a network of manufacturers, learning organizations and economic development resources to grow the emerging workforce. Investing in the emerging workforce ensures long-term economic success in the Flathead Valley.

Nearly 2/3 of manufacturers surveyed said they gained a greater awareness of skills that are currently taught in most local schools, that are important to manufacturing.

At A Glance

Students = 1,056
Manufacturers = 26
Makers = 35
Maker Faire = 1,195
2. To raise students' awareness about local manufacturing and technology opportunities so that they look to local businesses and education when considering future careers.

Student stories about the Expo:
"I love engineering!"
"The world can do so many amazing things, and it’s all here!"

3. To raise the awareness of teachers and school administrators about the skills needed to be successful in manufacturing today. Greater awareness may lead to more skill development opportunities in local schools.

Teacher Responses
As a result of participating in the Manufacturing and Technology Expo, I can tell students about skills that are important for success in manufacturing.

Student Responses
"I know about MT Manufacturing"

Before Event = Definitely Not
After Event = Definitely

"I had no idea there were so many manufacturing opportunities in our area for our kids. Somehow, we need to get more high school kids knowing this!"
- Local Teacher
4. To raise awareness of the interrelationship between maker and manufacturing skills. Heightened awareness will lead to a better understanding of career and business opportunities in the Flathead Valley.

94% of teachers surveyed said they could tell students about Maker skills that are useful in manufacturing as a result of attending the event.

“Making’ – the next generation of inventing and do-it-yourself – is creeping into everyday discourse. The Maker Movement is referenced in connection with topics ranging from the rebirth of manufacturing to job skills development to reconnecting with our roots.”
- Deloitte Center for the Edge

Manufacturer Responses

As a result of participating in the Manufacturing and Technology Expo, I have a better understanding of 'Maker' skills that are also manufacturing workforce skills.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

5. To celebrate making and manufacturing so that more people understand the value of inventing, experimenting and making things with your hands. Uplifting the status of these pursuits leads to a culture of life-long learning, community engagement and economic prosperity.

“There were lots of people from across the valley who are building cool stuff.”
- Local Maker