

# STEP Into Modern Manufacturing, Women Leaders Awarded for Career Excellence

September 25, 2020

# TOYOTA

**WASHINGTON (September 25, 2020)** – Three Toyota employees were honored last night in a virtual award ceremony with Women in Manufacturing STEP (Science, Technology, Engineering and Production) Ahead Awards from The Manufacturing Institute.

The STEP Ahead Awards were created to honor female leaders in science, technology, engineering and production career fields for their excellence and outstanding leadership. This year, 130 women were recognized, from the factory floor to executive leadership, including three winners from Toyota.

- Karen Cooper, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky
- Lauren Powell, Production Engineering and Manufacturing Center
- Ericka Mendez, Toyota Motor Manufacturing de Baja California

“Toyota is very proud of the outstanding achievements of our 2020 STEP Ahead Award winners,” said Chris Reynolds, chief administrative officer, Manufacturing and Corporate Resources, Toyota Motor North America. “Our employees’ commitment to excellence and dedication to our customers help inspire younger generations of women considering careers in the future of manufacturing and mobility.”

Women totaled 47 percent of the U.S. labor force in 2016, but only 29 percent of the manufacturing workforce – constituting one of manufacturing’s largest pools of untapped talent.

“Women are significantly underrepresented in manufacturing, and the industry is in the midst of a workforce crisis,” said Carolyn Lee, executive director of The Manufacturing Institute. “Closing the gender gap in the industry will go a long way toward closing the skills gap, empowering more women to join manufacturing’s ranks and lifting the industry as a whole.”

The STEP Ahead Awards are part of the larger STEP Ahead Initiative, launched to examine and promote the role of women in the manufacturing industry through recognition, research and leadership and close the gender gap in the industry.

Eighteen Toyota employees have previously received this prestigious award.