



We create chemistry

News Release

Two BASF manufacturing leaders honored with 2026 STEP Ahead Awards from the Manufacturing Institute

FLORHAM PARK, NJ, May 18, 2026 – BASF’s Brenda Neely, Site Director in Beaumont, Texas, and Kristen Thrash, Cotton Planner and Data Manager in Lubbock, Texas were among [130 leaders](#) recognized nationally at The Manufacturing Institute’s (MI) 2026 STEP Ahead Awards on April 23, 2026. The STEP Ahead Awards are a key component of the MI’s STEP Ahead initiative, a leading program dedicated to supporting the manufacturing workforce through leadership development and recognition.

“We are proud to celebrate Brenda and Kristen for earning this important award that recognizes their leadership in advancing manufacturing and promoting safety,” said Heather Remley, President and CEO of BASF Corporation. “Brenda’s dedication to developing others has strengthened safety, performance, and resilience at our Beaumont site and beyond. At the same time, Kristen’s ability to lead complex agricultural and manufacturing operations with strategic clarity has delivered meaningful impact across our organization. Leaders like Brenda and Kristen and their passion for excellence, collaboration, and community reflect the very best of BASF and our commitment to helping our employees grow, lead, and make a lasting difference.”

The STEP Ahead Awards shine a spotlight on the people powering

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manufacturing success, those whose leadership, expertise, and commitment to others are building stronger workplaces and communities. As manufacturers work to attract, retain and advance talent in a rapidly evolving industry, programs like STEP Ahead play a critical role in elevating role models and demonstrating what leadership in manufacturing looks like today.

“The future of manufacturing depends on leaders who develop talent, strengthen teams and drive results by building strong workplace cultures,” said Lexi Champion, National Director of STEP Ahead. “The STEP Ahead Awards recognize and celebrate those making that impact every day in their workplaces and communities, and whose leadership helps the next generation see a place for themselves in manufacturing.”

BASF is a long-time sponsor of the STEP Ahead awards ceremony, which occurs annually in Washington, D.C. These prestigious awards recognize employees who have excelled in their careers and showcase leadership across all levels of the manufacturing industry, from the factory floor to the C-suite.

About BASF

BASF Corporation, headquartered in Florham Park, New Jersey, is the North American affiliate of BASF SE, Ludwigshafen, Germany. BASF has more than 15,600 employees in North America and had sales of \$18.1 billion in 2025. For more information about BASF’s North American operations, visit www.basf.com/us.

At BASF, we create chemistry for a sustainable future. Our ambition: We want to be the preferred chemical company to enable our customers’ green transformation. We combine economic success with environmental protection and social responsibility. Around 108,000 employees in the BASF Group contribute to the success of our customers in nearly all sectors and almost every country in the world. Our portfolio comprises, as core businesses, the segments Chemicals, Materials, Industrial Solutions, and Nutrition & Care; our standalone businesses are bundled in the segments Surface Technologies and Agricultural Solutions. BASF generated sales of around €60 billion in 2025. BASF shares are traded on the stock exchange in Frankfurt (BAS) and as American Depositary Receipts (BASFY) in the United States. Further information at www.basf.com.