

2026 Smart Manufacturing Innovation Support Program

As part of Korea's national initiative to advance AI-driven industrial innovation, the Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS, Minister Han Seong-sook) announced the 2026 Smart Manufacturing Innovation Support Program on Friday, October 31, 2025.

The notice outlines detailed plans and funding schedules under the government's AI-based Smart Manufacturing Innovation 3.0 Strategy, helping small and medium-manufacturers prepare early for digital transformation and the integration of artificial intelligence in production.

The 2026 program will encompass 12 key projects in the smart manufacturing innovation domain, with the most significant change being a major expansion of AI-related support initiatives compared to this year.

A primary focus will be supporting the establishment of AI-integrated smart factories, where decision-making and execution – such as defect detection and real-time process control – are autonomously managed.

Specific project categories include:

- Autonomous Factories (30 projects)
- AI-specialized Smart Factories (400 projects)
- Large-SME Cooperation Projects – AI Tracks (20 projects)

In total, approximately 450 projects will be supported. MSS will also strengthen AI transformation (AX) consulting by leveraging experts to help SMEs plan and adopt AI technologies in manufacturing processes.

To address shared challenges faced by SMEs – such as workplace safety and labor shortages – MSS will introduce the “Accelerated Commercialization Program for AI Solutions,” which aims to accelerate the development and deployment of AI-based solutions and equipment tailored to industry needs.

In addition, the ministry plans to expand R&D initiatives related to AI, digital transformation, and core process optimization. A new track will also be established to support the application of outstanding research outcomes in smart factory settings.

For SMEs that lack the capacity to adopt smart technologies, MSS will increase support for manufacturing robot adoption and automate labor-intensive manual processes to enhance productivity and workplace safety.

Furthermore, MSS will continue to foster technology providers by advancing cloud-based manufacturing solutions and supplier capability assessments. The scale of support for manufacturing data standardization will also be expanded, accelerating the construction of standard-based smart factories and revitalizing the broader smart manufacturing ecosystem.

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The Ministry of SMEs and Startups, 대한민국 중소벤처기업부