



CUSTOMER STORY

INDUSTRIAL SEWING AND INNOVATION CENTER (ISAIC)

Pivoting from Fighting Fast Fashion to Fighting COVID-19



Industrial Sewing and Innovation Center (ISAIC), a Detroit-based nonprofit, was founded in 2018 to help break the mold of the apparel manufacturing industry. ISAIC seeks to take a fundamentally new approach to not only apparel manufacturing but also talent force development. With only 3 percent of the clothes that Americans wear being produced in the United States, ISAIC was formed to increase domestic apparel manufacturing, all while reducing waste, developing a talented workforce and providing jobs that pay a living wage.

In April 2020, ISAIC's 12,000-square-foot learning and contract factory on the second floor of Carhartt's midtown Detroit flagship store was nearly complete. The organization was ready to begin manufacturing small batches of high-quality clothing for three domestic apparel companies. However, April 2020 proved to be life-changing for most American companies and citizens, and ISAIC was no exception. ISAIC needed to immediately pivot from preparing to fight against fast fashion to help fight against the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.



After consulting with local hospitals, ISAIC pivoted its manufacturing facility and resources to make personal protective equipment (PPE). A quick pivot in production also required quick work and considerations behind-the-scenes to ensure its equipment and operation could handle the increased demands. ISAIC partnered with Detroit-based Sullair distributor Metropolitan Air Compressor Co., Inc. to identify and install a Sullair compressed air system up to the task. In an extremely compressed schedule, the Metropolitan Air team installed

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While ISAIC's long-term mission and vision to fundamentally improve and change the broader fashion industry may be paused for the time being, its workers continue to be employed, trained and helping battle a cause larger than all of us. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, ISAIC will provide a proprietary training curriculum and paid apprenticeships for skilled labor where workers become invested in the company. In addition, ISAIC's model of education and training can be taken anywhere and is currently used in multiple US states to help rebuild manufacturing in the country from the ground up.

The COVID-19 pandemic and shortages of critical supplies may make many Americans and industries rethink their manufacturing processes. The onshoring of production in numerous industries – including apparel – will likely be welcomed with open arms. ISAIC will be there to lead the charge.

custom ductwork and a Sullair S-energy rotary screw air compressor in the facility. The compressed air is needed to power their industrial sewing and cutting equipment.

The ISAIC team then quickly began production of isolation gowns on April 20, 2020. The facility is making gowns as well as kits for other companies making gowns to help them meet the demand. Already, ISAIC has produced more than 16,000 gowns, which have been provided to the Detroit Medical Center as well as other facilities throughout the state of Michigan.



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—Jen Guarino, CEO of ISAIC



“Although it's not how we envisioned the factory opening, we are thrilled it's finally happened and that we can contribute to the critical need for masks and gowns,” said Jen Guarino, CEO of ISAIC. “And we're doing it while continuing our mission of talent force development in Detroit. We are excited that our sewing specialists' journey learning additional skills and having access to emerging technologies and new career paths will continue with us.”

