State tour visit at Superior Fresh, Missy Hughes with president Brandon Gottsacker, Eau Claire, October 2019

Wisconsin Manufacturing Technology Show, Jela Trask, West Allis, October 2019

Ribbon cutting at Huffcutt Concrete, Mary Gage, Tim Weber and Heather Smith with owner Brian Seubert, Lake Hallie, September 2019

MARKETPLACE conference, Seyoum Mengesha, Milwaukee, October 2019
Our state’s motto, Forward, commands every generation of Wisconsinites to do just that—to persist in the face of adversity, to fight on and to move forward, together.

Seldom has our state faced challenges like those we experienced in fiscal year 2020 (FY20). As the COVID-19 global pandemic reached Wisconsin, it became an urgent public health emergency and triggered a looming economic crisis, the effects and consequences of which we are still working to mitigate.

As the state’s leading economic development organization, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) helped support our state’s businesses, workers and residents in responding to these unprecedented challenges. Just days after I declared a public health emergency in March, WEDC helped small businesses unlock federal disaster relief funds. And within months, WEDC had created three major grant programs and distributed nearly $80 million in assistance to more than 25,000 of our businesses hit hardest by the pandemic.

At the same time, WEDC took the lead in working with public health experts to provide clear, comprehensive guidance to help businesses keep workers, customers and our communities safe. WEDC then built on these new relationships by launching a multimedia platform dedicated to the unique needs of Wisconsin’s small businesses. As the pandemic continued and personal protective equipment (PPE) needs grew, WEDC connected PPE makers with businesses who needed PPE supplies. And to help hometown retailers make the shift to online sales, WEDC created a website where buyers from every corner of our state and beyond could shop at and support local businesses.

WEDC also worked to make sure our state emerges stronger, more resilient and more inclusive in the years ahead. As I directed in my 2020 State of the State speech, WEDC created the Office of Rural Prosperity and launched the Blue Ribbon Commission on Rural Prosperity. Already, the office has taken a leading role in helping rural communities access broadband expansion funds, one of the keys to such a future. I look forward to reviewing the commission’s recommendations and working with the office to help our rural communities thrive.

Finally, in its Wisconsin Tomorrow report on the state’s recovery from the pandemic, WEDC noted that for our state to truly move forward, we must address the legacy of systemic racism and economic inequities to ensure prosperity for all our citizens.

I want to thank Secretary Hughes and her team for their hard work on behalf of the people of Wisconsin. Although we have a long road ahead of us as our state continues its recovery, I am reminded of the grit and determination of Wisconsinites and the resilience we share when we all work together. We must continue to build on the strength we have shown in this most turbulent year and to take up the call—as always, Forward.

Tony Evers, Governor
State of Wisconsin
My first full year as secretary and CEO of Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) was both challenging and inspiring in ways that I could not have expected when I accepted Governor Evers’ appointment to lead this incredible organization. And these dueling emotions, shared by the entire staff here and throughout our extensive partner network, are reflected in the pages of this report, which recaps a period in which our state and the world faced unprecedented health and economic challenges.

I am proud to share both the measurable economic outcomes of our work as well as the human impact of the investments we make with our many stakeholders who play an important role in Wisconsin’s success. Those investments include not only financial assistance directed at job creation and quality of life improvements for our state’s citizens, but also time, energy and emotional resources devoted to solving long-standing and new challenges and creating opportunities for all Wisconsinites to prosper.

This annual report highlights the outcomes of WEDC’s regular work during the first half of FY20 and details the transformative effect COVID-19 has had not only on our operations, but also on our very mission beginning in March. As the pandemic continues to threaten both lives and livelihoods in Wisconsin, WEDC remains committed to supporting the businesses, communities and people most vulnerable to the effects of disease spread and the economic hardship left in its wake.

While the road to recovery from COVID-19 will be difficult, I am encouraged by the collective resolve I have witnessed by government, industry, business and community leaders throughout the state who have shown through their words and actions a commitment to rebuilding our economy even stronger than before. WEDC has captured wide ranging perspectives on the challenges our state faces and offers broad recommendations for an effective and sustained economic recovery strategy in a report we submitted to the Wisconsin Legislature entitled Wisconsin Tomorrow – An Economy for All.

I am impressed, too, by the care and compassion Wisconsinites of all backgrounds in all areas of the state have shown toward friends, family and neighbors in response to the pandemic. Businesses have adapted their operations to protect employees, customers and the communities in which they operate, embracing the idea that getting our economy back on track requires all of us doing right by one another. WEDC’s We’re All In public information campaign has been embraced and amplified throughout Wisconsin by people celebrating the unique bonds that make us who we are. As a state, we have always banded together to overcome challenges, and today is no different, as is clear from both the personal adjustments we’ve all made in our daily lives and the groundbreaking innovations coming out of Wisconsin companies stepping up to beat this virus.

On behalf of my WEDC colleagues, I thank you for the role you play in building a strong, healthy and resilient Wisconsin.

Melissa L. Hughes
Secretary and CEO
Companies looking to grow in Wisconsin can be assured that they have partners at the state, local and national level to encourage their growth here.

~ Jason Scott, Regional Economic Development Director, WEDC
Measuring economic development success

WEDC employs a variety of measures to gauge the effects of its economic development investments, which range from tax credits for investments in early-stage companies to export readiness programs, industry cluster advancement strategies and downtown redevelopment financing. Tallied here are the total measurable outcomes of WEDC’s FY20 economic development investments, including capital investment and job impact data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communities Assisted</th>
<th>FY20 Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>176</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Businesses Assisted</th>
<th>FY20 Goal</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5,507</td>
<td>4,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,168 WEDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>3,339 Key Strategic Partners*</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Partner Organizations Assisted</th>
<th>FY20 Goal</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This number was reduced by 20% to account for potential overlap with WEDC businesses assisted.

Capital Investment

The benefits of WEDC’s investments do not end with the capital investment made by the company receiving financial assistance. When a company spends millions of dollars on an expansion project, for example, much of that money is pumped into the local economy through the direct purchasing of contractor services.

Job Impact

2,241 JOBS TO BE CREATED
9,183 JOBS TO BE RETAINED
11,424 TOTAL JOB IMPACT

Jobs impacted totals are derived from contracts executed between July 1, 2019, and June 30, 2020. These include executed contracts from both current and previous year commitments and agreements with Key Strategic Partners.

Not all WEDC financial assistance contracts include a job impact requirement. For those that do, this measurement reflects the number of jobs that will be either created or retained as a direct result of the investment. That job impact number is recorded in the contract and the award is contingent upon its attainment.

It takes time—sometimes years—for the positive direct effects of a WEDC investment to be realized. The question, then, is when are the jobs in question actually impacted? And when do they get counted? WEDC reports the total impact of the jobs in the year the contract is executed, and tracks progress to that impact goal throughout the life of the project. Typically, a contract with job creation goals lasts five years.
Small business “how-tos”

WEDC’s pandemic response also included the creation and dissemination of informational resources, including practical guides for businesses of all types seeking advice on overcoming financial and operational challenges brought on by COVID-19. Wisconsin business owners wanted to do what was right to protect their employees, their customers and their communities. And WEDC’s Small Business Survival Guide and 15 industry-specific Reopen Business Guidelines documents, all available online and translated into multiple languages, continue to help them do so.

The rapid development of new regulations, guidance and resources designed to curb the spread of COVID-19, and get people back to work safely created a palpable sense of information overload, leading business owners in Wisconsin unsure of where to turn for the best intelligence suited to their challenges. WEDC created Focus Forward, a multi-media communication channel, specifically for this purpose.

In early March, universities in the state began to recognize the risk of uncontrolled virus spread on their campuses, prompting them and some K-12 schools to move to virtual learning. With measurable community spread occurring in a growing number of Wisconsin counties, public gathering restrictions and statewide school closures were enacted by mid-month. On March 23, Governor Evers signed Emergency Order #28, “Safer at Home,” closing all nonessential businesses and restricting travel and other public activities.

Answers amid uncertainty

As the state agency most closely connected to Wisconsin’s business community and the programs, resources and partnerships available to fuel business success, WEDC stepped up to help business owners navigate the challenges associated with temporary closure. This involved creating an online resource housing information about the governor’s order as well as an open channel of communication that allowed business owners to ask questions and seek clarification about the applicability of the mandate to their operations.

WEDC redirected significant staff resources from its regular work to pandemic response responsibilities, including answering incoming, around-the-clock online and telephone inquiries, all of which received personal attention through an “all hands on deck” escalation strategy coordinated by WEDC’s communications and legal teams. On the day Governor Evers announced the “Safer at Home” order alone, WEDC’s website received more than 100,000 visits.

Filling funding gaps

Meanwhile, WEDC’s policy team worked to quantify the impact of COVID-19 on Wisconsin businesses to support Governor Evers’ application for federal Economic Injury Disaster Loan Assistance, which was approved on March 20, allowing Wisconsin businesses to begin applying for these critical U.S. Small Business Administration funds.

WEDC’s role answering questions about the “Safer at Home” order put the agency in a new spotlight, drawing attention from new audiences, including small businesses not typically served by its traditional economic development programs. Many of these businesses, particularly those owned by ethnic minorities and those located in rural areas, lacked the professional networks and funding sources that serve as a safety net for larger businesses, compounding their plight. In response, WEDC expanded its service model to include a lifeline to these desperate business owners, starting with the creation of an online clearinghouse of local, state, federal and other funding sources aimed at pandemic response and recovery.

WEDC pivots early to address COVID-19

The period covered in this report includes a time when unprecedented challenges befell the world, the nation and Wisconsin as a result of a global pandemic that first surfaced in our state in February 2020, prompting a rapid response from state and local governments, public institutions and the business community aimed at containing and curtailing virus spread—efforts that will continue for months, if not years, to come.

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Through Focus Forward, WEDC draws attention to financial assistance programs as well as technical support available to business owners. The platform, which includes a simple subscription for regular updates, also features success stories showcasing the resilience of Wisconsin businesses that have effectively pivoted to create new, pandemic-responsive avenues for the sale of their products or services.

The wide-ranging threats posed by COVID-19 brought Wisconsinites together in ways that drew upon our state's long history of collaboration and ingenuity, traits reflected in the development in May of the Main Street Marketplace, an online portal created to bring together retailers located in communities that participate in WEDC's Connect Communities and Main Street programs into a searchable online directory of locally owned shops. The portal's goal is to benefit both shoppers, who can now visit one centralized website to find products available for mail order or curbside pickup, and retailers, who can more easily connect with buyers for their products. More than 360 shops are listed on the site, and businesses in any of Wisconsin's participating Connect Communities and Main Street communities that are not yet included can visit the site to submit their listings.

Among the critical needs Wisconsin businesses and health care providers faced as COVID-19 cases spiked in the state was personal protective equipment (PPE) for front-line workers, supplies of which were in high demand nationally. With many Wisconsin manufacturers adapting their operations to produce much-needed PPE, including masks, face shields and hand sanitizer, WEDC enhanced its Wisconsin Supplier Network website to connect companies seeking PPE with in-state manufacturers able to supply it.

Going “All In” to beat the virus

If there is one thing the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us, it is that the health of our people and the health of our economy are interdependent. For this reason, WEDC redeployed its marketing resources and leveraged its community and business partnerships to develop a public information campaign—We're All In—encouraging Wisconsin companies and citizens to adopt the necessary practices and behaviors for Wisconsin to continue its progress toward reopening with confidence. We're All In is a collaborative initiative designed to reach every person in every corner of Wisconsin, providing opportunities to actively participate in the state’s recovery efforts. Through paid media and earned media, online and physical business resources and social sharing, We're All In inspires us all to show our pride in making a difference and going all in for Wisconsin.
Refocusing resources

Realizing how quickly Wisconsin’s economic landscape was changing, WEDC understood that its focus would need to shift dramatically in light of the critical threat COVID-19 posed to the livelihoods of citizens throughout the state, particularly those in underserved communities. By April, WEDC had effectively rerouted its uncommitted program funding and available operational budget toward pandemic response and recovery initiatives.

For many businesses, surviving the crisis boiled down to cash flow, plain and simple. To help Wisconsin’s most vulnerable small businesses get back on their feet amid disruptions caused by COVID-19, WEDC introduced a series of financial assistance programs to complement larger federal programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program.

The first of these was the Small Business 20/20 Program, launched in March, which provided grants of up to $20,000 to targeted businesses with no more than 20 employees to cover rent and to meet payroll expenses, including paid leave. In order to quickly deploy these funds, WEDC worked with the state’s community development financial institutions (CDFIs)—specialized community-based financial institutions with a primary mission to promote economic development by providing financial products and services to people in communities underserved by traditional financial institutions, particularly in low-income communities. Because of the CDFIs’ preexisting relationships with targeted small businesses, they were able to provide the grant funds directly to their clients faster than otherwise would have been the case.

WEDC followed the Small Business 20/20 Program with the Ethnic Minority Emergency Grant initiative, launched in May, providing nearly 1,000 ethnically diverse Wisconsin micro-businesses grants of $2,500 each to help offset losses caused by COVID-19.

WEDC began the process of deploying the $128 million in federal funds it received from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act in June, when it opened the application window for We’re All In Small Business Grants of $2,500, targeting businesses with 20 or fewer full-time equivalent employees and less than $1 million in annual revenue. By the end of the summer, WEDC had awarded $65.3 million to 26,120 businesses through the program and laid the groundwork to distribute over $50 million more by the end of the calendar year through a second small business grant program and an innovation contest for entrepreneurs.

This grant will help us in countless ways. Most importantly, the cushion from this allows our staff to keep assisting us as we fulfill curbside orders. Being able to keep them working is so important because they also have their own families to support. It also gives me more time and energy as an owner to creatively market myself to drive more sales toward us and find new ways to make up some of those lost sales.

~ Angela Downs, Chit Chaat, Racine
Small Business 20/20 Grant Recipient

I’ve owned and operated my gallery since graduating from art school over 35 years ago. I’ve had some gangbuster years and some lean years and this is one of the leanest. The grant will help cover expenses, and I appreciate it. Thank you.”

~ Joan White, Owner, Nicolet Studio, Lakewood
We’re All In Small Business Grant Recipient

I am very grateful for the grant as it helped with paying rent for my restaurant. Since the start of this pandemic, I have lost a lot of income, and it’s still a struggle to survive. My wife and I run this restaurant and are trying hard to remain in business and provide for our kids.

~ Sergio Plascencia Agredano, Los Acros Restaurant, Green Bay
Ethnic Minority Emergency Grant Recipient

Kathy Johnson, owner of Sunset Point Winery in Stevens Point, used her WEDC We’re All In Small Business Grant to implement safety protocols, including enhanced sanitation practices and disposable wine glasses, to protect her employees and customers.
Wisconsin Tomorrow

As part of the state’s COVID-19 relief package this spring, lawmakers and Governor Evers directed WEDC to submit a plan by June 30 “for providing support to the major industries in this state that have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 public health emergency, including tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, forest products, construction, retail and services.”

WEDC responded with a 150-page report, *Wisconsin Tomorrow – An Economy for All*, drawing on extensive contacts with state agencies and stakeholders around the state in business, education and local government. Many stakeholders advised that their assessments of the economic consequences of the pandemic were continuing to evolve, along with the course of the pandemic, but provided some principles on how Wisconsin could position itself for recovery.

The report featured first-person comments from Wisconsinites to provide real-world context about their experiences with COVID-19 and the challenges they continue to face. Small businesses as well as iconic Wisconsin companies shared their perspectives.

The report distilled the feedback WEDC and its partners received into several key observations, namely:

- **The pandemic has hit hardest tourism, retail, entertainment and service businesses.** Many of the businesses that closed in the early phases of the pandemic have remained closed, may have reopened in limited capacity or are struggling for customers. Most have seen substantial declines in their business and are unsure of their long-term prospects.

- **Agriculture and food and beverage, which have been identified as essential businesses, are seeking to anticipate the markets and manage disruptions to the supply chain.**

- **Manufacturing and construction saw less immediate disruption but still anticipate the long-term economic impact with slower consumer spending and overall activity as well as declining capital investment.**

- **Forest products have experienced perhaps the starkest divide, with consumer paper goods at record highs while the decline in printed advertising has seriously impacted the catalog and magazine industry.**

- **Education and health care—both huge economic engines in their own right—have also been disrupted or nearly brought to a halt by the pandemic.**

The report recounted how the state and local governments responded in the early stages of the crisis, such as by disbursing more than $13.7 billion in federal funds, including support for small businesses through the Payroll Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loans, as well as $1.85 billion in funding through the federal CARES Act.

With the pandemic and its impact on Wisconsin’s economy still unfolding, the report identified three priorities for recovery:

- **Get Everyone Back to Work:** The report notes that COVID-19 has transformed Wisconsin’s workforce. Many service-sector jobs, particularly in retail and restaurants, have been eliminated and are not likely to return. It will be crucial to reskill and train people who lost their jobs. The pandemic has reinforced access to high-quality childcare, early childhood education and health care as essential to the economy.

- **Fix Broadband:** The pandemic has highlighted the digital divide in our state. Education, e-commerce, remote working and even contact with government depend on access to computers and high-speed internet.

- **Support Innovation:** Innovation fuels job growth, as well as flexibility and resiliency in our businesses. In a time of constrained resources and risk aversion, Wisconsin has the chance to use its innovative, entrepreneurial spirit to launch its recovery.

Additionally, WEDC Secretary Missy Hughes noted in her preface to the report one “equally important, but more longstanding, crisis that will determine our state’s economic future: the crisis of racial disparity and inequity. As the state’s leader in economic development, we know by advancing the economic well-being of every Wisconsinite, we can make a difference.”

Going forward, the report calls for a “spirited yet productive debate, one that reflects Wisconsin’s history of big ideas and ground-breaking innovation and lays the groundwork for Wisconsin’s strongest economy.”
A new WEDC secretary hits the road to learn more about Wisconsin businesses

WEDC’s leadership underwent a transition in October 2019 as Hughes became secretary and CEO, succeeding Mark Hogan, and Sam Rikkers became deputy secretary and COO, succeeding Tricia Braun.

Secretary Hughes joined WEDC from the Organic Valley dairy cooperative, where she served as chief legal counsel and chief mission officer. During her time at Organic Valley, sales grew from $150 million to more than $1 billion annually.

Eager to get a better feel for the scope of WEDC’s role in economic development and to learn more about the businesses WEDC assists, Secretary Hughes spent her first two weeks on the job traveling the state, touring more than a dozen businesses and meeting with more than 50 business and community leaders.

During her travel around the state, Secretary Hughes stopped at ATI Forged Products in Cudahy. Known for its complete, integrated supply chain for specialty materials and their high-performance aerospace and defense applications, the company has expanded its operations in Wisconsin with help from WEDC.
Although her statewide travel diminished during the early stages of the pandemic, Secretary Hughes has still taken to the road to promote the We’re All In initiative and to highlight businesses and projects that exemplify the state’s can-do approach to economic recovery.

“Every day, people in Wisconsin get up, go to work, and do amazing things that make our state a leader in so many fields,” she said. “One of the most rewarding parts of this job is getting out to every corner of our state, spending time with these businesses, and figuring out ways we can help them grow.”

The businesses visited in her inaugural tour included Green Bay’s Titletown Tech, a partnership between Microsoft and the Green Bay Packers to advance entrepreneurship in northeastern Wisconsin; Printpack in Rhinelander, which produces cutting-edge printing packaging for food and other products; Metal-Era in Waukesha, which boasts state-of-the-art robotic manufacturing technology; and the Pablo Center, an entertainment venue that is helping to cement Eau Claire’s reputation as the cultural heart of Wisconsin’s Driftless region.

The secretary also met with leaders from each of the state’s nine regional economic development organizations, or REDOs—Grow North, the New North, Milwaukee 7, Visions Northwest, Centergy, Momentum West, 7 Rivers Alliance, Prosperity Southwest and the Madison Regional Economic Partnership—as well as University of Wisconsin campus officials from around the state.

“One of Wisconsin’s strengths is the partnerships that have been forged between local and regional economic development leaders, the state, and the University of Wisconsin,” Secretary Hughes said. “I’m pleased that I was able to make these connections early in my time at WEDC, because as we pull together to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges, a united approach will be more important than ever.”

Secretary Hughes with state Rep. Kalan Haywood at a Milwaukee grant announcement for the African American Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin.
Multiplier effect

By investing in capable partner organizations that provide specialized services that increase economic activity within targeted geographies, industries or populations, WEDC extends the reach and impact of its investments. Our nearly $5 million investment in Key Strategic Partners in FY20 helped connect businesses and communities with critical resources and proven expertise available within the state’s robust economic development network. Among the organizations recognized and funded by WEDC as Key Strategic Partners are three minority chambers of commerce and their affiliated entities.

Additionally, WEDC’s Capacity Building Grant Program provides financial support to organizations that promote economic prosperity throughout the state. In FY20, WEDC awarded $107,500 in Capacity Building Grants to four grassroots organizations devoted to helping businesses and communities thrive. Included in these investments was a $50,000 grant to Nicolet Area Technical College in Rhinelander to foster innovation and business development in rural northern Wisconsin through a new initiative—the GRID (Guiding Rural Innovation and Development). The funding will be used to develop an innovation engagement platform housed on the GRID website to encourage and celebrate innovation and its effect on business development.

“The need to encourage and support entrepreneurial activity has never been more important, and WEDC’s Capacity Building Grant will help us do this here in the Northwoods,” said Toni Van Doren, business solutions coordinator at Nicolet Area Technical College. “With the GRID, we are using physical and digital platforms to provide multiple ways for entrepreneurs to quickly find the diverse knowledge, support and resources they need to succeed.”

Also receiving WEDC Capacity Building Grant funds in FY20 was the Wisconsin Economic Development Association, which plans to use its $25,000 award to design and host a series of planning sessions to support the development of individual economic prosperity strategies for Wisconsin’s tribes.

WEDC directed an additional $437,000 of its Capacity Building Grant funds in FY20 to organizations that provide support services to entrepreneurs. Among the recipients of such Entrepreneurship Support Grants was the UW Law and Entrepreneurship Clinic to support entrepreneurship in rural Wisconsin. WEDC’s $50,000 grant helps the UW Law and Entrepreneurship Clinic provide direct legal services to entrepreneurs throughout the state in partnership with local Small Business Development Centers, county economic development organizations or co-working spaces.

“For example, we held in-person office hours in Platteville in conjunction with the Platteville Business Incubator and UW-Platteville,” said UW Law and Entrepreneurship Clinic Associate Professor Jeffrey Glazer. “We went down and met the local business leaders, then held a one-hour information session, with eight businesses for 30 minutes each, then finished the day by talking with a local business law firm.” The clinic has more recently moved to a virtual event, with online office hours completedor scheduled in Eau Claire, Stevens Point, Green Bay and the Sheboygan/Manitowoc area.

The Doyenne Group, meanwhile, plans to use a $65,000 Entrepreneurship Support Grant from WEDC to support initiatives aimed at creating equitable entrepreneurial ecosystems throughout Wisconsin where women entrepreneurs are recognized for their ventures and economic clout. The model originally envisioned delivering Doyenne’s resources to communities beyond its current operating bases in Madison and Milwaukee, including in-person visits to co-working centers in the Fox Valley and Rock County. The organization has shifted to virtual brown-bag lunch sessions in light of the risks associated with COVID-19, with two well-attended sessions already in the books.

“Our goal is to create space for women entrepreneurs that recognizes the different lived experience they bring to their enterprises,” said Doyenne Executive Director and Founder Heather Wentler. Funding from WEDC, she hopes, will help improve female entrepreneurship in Wisconsin, which lags the nation in startups founded by women. ©

The Doyenne Group aims to use the grant funding from WEDC to create equitable entrepreneurial ecosystems throughout Wisconsin.
Looking forward together

Wisconsin’s industry leadership drives interest in the companies operating here whose technical expertise and product quality are unmatched worldwide. The result is increased sales and, in some cases, investment in these businesses that allow them to grow, evolve and reach new markets. WEDC not only promotes Wisconsin’s industry strength to national and international audiences; we also work with organizations, educational institutions and companies across many core sectors to maintain and extend the global reach and impact of Wisconsin industry know-how: advanced manufacturing; food and beverage production; biohealth; water technology; and energy, power and control. The result is greater demand for products made in Wisconsin by companies of all sizes in these industries, and greater prosperity for the people and communities connected to these businesses.

The following are just some of the collaborative projects WEDC supported in FY20 to help ensure that our state and its businesses maintain a global competitive advantage. These investments, among others, are designed to maximize Wisconsin’s preparedness for new technologies and production practices, ensuring that our state is well positioned to capitalize on emerging and future industry trends.

Wisconsin Supplier Network

In October 2019, WEDC launched a new website to help connect new and existing businesses in Wisconsin with buyers, suppliers and service providers they need. The Wisconsin Supplier Network (wisconsinsuppliernetwork.com) features a free online directory of suppliers and services as well as a communications platform that provides regular newsletters and alerts to promote new business opportunities, supplier development resources and industry networking initiatives. WEDC worked with New North, the regional economic development organization covering 18 counties in northeast Wisconsin, to build upon a supplier database that organization had developed, improving the platform’s data quality and user interface and expanding its scale to cover the entire state.

Fab Labs Grants

WEDC awarded 31 school districts throughout the state a total of more than $690,000 in grants in FY20 to establish or expand local fabrication laboratory (fab lab) facilities. A fab lab is a high-technology workshop equipped with computer-controlled manufacturing components such as 3D printers, laser engravers, computer numerical control routers and plasma cutters. Through its Fab Labs Grant Program, WEDC is supporting the purchase of fab lab equipment for instructional and educational purposes by elementary, middle, junior high or high school students.

Over the past five years, WEDC has invested more than $2.8 million to provide 77 school districts across the state with the equipment necessary to help students learn high-demand skills, including technology, manufacturing and engineering.

Photo: School District of New Berlin, Fab Labs Grant recipient.

Midwest Energy Research Consortium

WEDC awarded $400,000 to the Midwest Energy Research Consortium (MWERC), a member-based industry association focused on the energy, power and control industry, to establish an electromagnetic interference test facility to provide training for Milwaukee area workers, with a special focus on the 30th Street Industrial Corridor and its underserved residents receiving assistance from Employ Milwaukee and Maximus, as well as the Northwest Side Community Development Corporation. The training MWERC will provide is expected to raise salaries of workers by giving them advanced knowledge and skills that are not currently available in the state.

Photo: School District of New Berlin, Fab Labs Grant recipient.
Fostering Wisconsin’s entrepreneurship ecosystem

Making great ideas into better realities is possible in a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem like Wisconsin’s. Built on a foundation of constant improvement and advancement, Wisconsin strengthens new business innovation through supporting startups from seed to growth stage.

Wisconsin has an incredibly rich and vibrant entrepreneurial culture. The many events, conferences, pitch contests, mentorship meetings, investor groups, industry resources, technical assistance providers, lenders, investors and community support for entrepreneurs all work together to form a complex entrepreneurship ecosystem of which we are incredibly proud.

WEDC’s entrepreneurship and innovation initiatives and programs include:

The Qualified New Business Venture (QNBV) Program helps startups raise the capital they need to grow by offering tax credits to investors.

The Technology Development Loan Program assists companies with the funding necessary to develop and launch high-tech or innovative products and services.

The Entrepreneurship Support Grant helps to strengthen entrepreneurial communities by supporting new, unique entrepreneurship programs that would otherwise not be able to move forward.

The Seed Accelerator Program helps support cohort-based lean startup programs throughout the state to help founder teams get the answers critical to moving a new company forward.

The Capital Catalyst Program helps organizations or communities develop seed funds to invest in early-stage and innovative small businesses that operate in their region, industry or other community.

The Entrepreneurial Micro-grants Program administered by UW-Extension’s Center for Technology Commercialization (CTC) helps companies develop business plans and competitive proposals for federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grants.

The SBIR Advance Program administered by CTC aims to fill critical funding gaps for activities that are restricted under these federal grant awards, such as market research, customer validation, patent development, business model development and regulatory assessment.

There can be obstacles along the way, and even with promising business ideas, young companies can often face funding gaps. WEDC’s entrepreneurial programs are designed to further advance startup activity by supporting the full path from startup to commercialization. By working with a statewide network of partners, WEDC’s initiatives spur entrepreneurial activity by providing direct capital infusions and incenting investments through angel and venture tax credits, mentoring, training and other important resources.

In FY20, the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Committee was created to continue to find ways to invest and support small businesses, local companies and entrepreneurship. The new committee will complement WEDC’s existing programs that provide an array of resources to entrepreneurs and make sure this sector has access to the resources needed to grow and thrive.

WEDC’s mission is to support businesses throughout Wisconsin and help them expand.

The Entrepreneurship and Innovation Committee will help WEDC ensure that this vital sector has access to the resources needed to grow and thrive.

~ Lisa Mauer, WEDC Board of Directors Vice-Chair
Below are totals representing the 2019 impact of four WEDC programs combined: Qualified New Business Venture Program, Technology Development Loan Program, Seed Accelerator Program and Capital Catalyst Program.

- **TOTAL JOBS**: 3,398
- **NEW CAPITAL GENERATION**: $706M
- **TOTAL PAYROLL**: $241M

* Note that between Shine Medical and Northstar Radioisotopes they raised a combined $236.5 MM

During FY20, through the Entrepreneurship Support Grant Program, nine organizations were awarded a total of $500,000 to help develop or expand innovative programs aimed at advancing the climate for entrepreneurship throughout the state. Since launching in 2016, the program has provided a total of $1.5 million in grants to 26 organizations statewide to help fund activities such as prototyping assistance, legal services and outreach to underserved entrepreneurs.

In FY20, the Entrepreneurial Micro-grants Program assisted nearly 113 entrepreneurs, with 17 clients receiving support for entrepreneurial training coursework and SBIR assistance. CTC clients that received SBIR assistance were awarded over $22 million in federal SBIR/STTR grants. Also during FY20, 37 new companies received QNBV certification, which provides tax credits to investors in these companies. Investors provided $56.6 million in qualifying investments to 70 QNBV companies in 2019 (QNBV results are measured according to calendar year rather than fiscal year) and received $14.1 million in tax credits. WEDC’s Technology Development Loan Program made 10 new loans during FY20, and at the end of the year had a total of 80 active loans.

Supporting entrepreneurship and the development of new businesses is critical to ensuring the state’s long-term economic growth and competitive position in an ever-changing world.

~ Aaron Hagar, Vice President, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, WEDC

“Through the work of the Wisconsin Technology Council and WEDC, there are numerous multi-day opportunities for companies to present to investors. They are well run, with quality investment opportunities and investors from around the country. We are way ahead of other states in this regard, particularly in the Midwest.”

~ Jay Handy, Co-founder, Walnut Capital Management

Oasis, a co-working space specifically for the water technology sector created in Milwaukee by The Water Council.
Growing Wisconsin companies

Although Wisconsin saw business expansions slow during the second half of FY20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were still a number of significant projects undertaken during the year that affirmed Wisconsin’s status as a global leader in manufacturing.

In areas ranging from pharmaceuticals to all-terrain vehicles, businesses turned to WEDC—and to our state’s stellar supply of dedicated, well-trained workers—to help their businesses grow.

‘Life-changing therapies,’ produced in Madison

Catalent Inc. is a global provider of advanced delivery technologies, development and manufacturing solutions for drugs, biologics, gene therapies and consumer health products. With 35 research and production facilities in the U.S., the company produces an estimated 72 billion doses for nearly 7,000 customer products, or approximately one in every 20 doses of medications taken by patients annually. To help meet its customers’ growing demand for new ways to deliver treatments, the company decided to invest $75 million into its cell line development and biomanufacturing site in Madison, a move expected to create at least 145 new jobs by the end of 2021.

The expansion, which will more than double Catalent’s commercial biomanufacturing capacity at the site, will “support our customers who are developing cutting-edge, often life-changing therapies,” said Graham Brearley, general manager of Catalent Biologics. “Through our expansion, we are thrilled to partner with the state to bring more high-tech jobs to the highly skilled people of Wisconsin and help make better treatments to positively impact patients around the world.”

Madison’s status as a hub for biotechnology, its skilled workforce and the presence of the University of Wisconsin-Madison were all factors in the decision to expand at this location, company officials said.

“Catalent’s continued growth demonstrates that we are a community with a workforce, quality of life and business environment that can support growing international firms on the cutting edge of new technology,” said Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway.

Deere increases its run in Horicon

The John Deere factory in Horicon dates to the 1800s. It first produced disks, drills and other farming equipment before shifting to lawn and garden equipment in the 1960s; its products now also include the popular Gator utility vehicles.

The plant has undergone two expansions in recent years, both assisted by WEDC. In FY20, Deere & Company announced it had completed a $24 million, 22,000-square-foot project that adds 12 jobs and two giant presses to punch out steel parts. That comes on top of another $43 million, 388,000-square-foot expansion.

With more than 1,200 employees, Deere & Company is the largest employer in Dodge County, a lead it is likely to retain with the latest expansion.

“Improvements we make to any John Deere manufacturing facility are focused on better serving our customers,” said Steve Johnson, factory manager at the Horicon Works. “The incentive programs offered by the State of Wisconsin help us to retain jobs here and continue to grow the success of our Wisconsin business operations.”
Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, which traces its roots in Wisconsin to 1910, is now owned by more than 300 state dairy farmers. The cooperative produces specialty and artisan cheeses, and ships throughout the U.S. Along with retail and cheese factory locations in Ellsworth and Comstock, the Comstock Creamery is also a milk processing and whey drying plant.

Ellsworth plans to relocate parts of its facility in Comstock to a new development in Menomonie with assistance from WEDC. The goal of the relocation is to retain the creamery’s workforce and allow for production expansion to meet customer demand while increasing national and international sales, improving efficiencies and creating a centralized warehousing and distribution center.

Growing in Salem

Stabio North America, previously known as Anderson Manufacturing, has its U.S. headquarters in Rockford, Illinois, and manufacturing facilities in Bristol, Union Grove and Lake Geneva.

The company is a cold form manufacturer of special parts that include fasteners and components, such as terminals, contacts, pins and rivets. Many of these parts are used by the automotive industry, specifically in a car’s battery, exhaust system, clamps and flanges, braking system, engine and turbocharger. The company also supplies manufacturers of power control systems, small engines and plumbing fixtures across the U.S.

When the time came to expand, the company wanted to consolidate its three Wisconsin facilities and still have plenty of room to grow. Stabio officials approached WEDC to help find the right site, and WEDC worked with its partners, including the Kenosha Area Business Alliance.

The result was another win for southeastern Wisconsin, specifically for western Kenosha County. Stabio selected a site in the Salem Business Park that allows its current facilities to more than double—from 50,000 square feet to 110,000 square feet—with an additional 30,000 square feet to grow within the next three to five years.

The project allows Stabio to construct a custom-built, state-of-the-art facility to house new equipment and accommodate its growing workforce. Meanwhile, Wisconsin retains Stabio’s managerial talent and its high-skilled workforce while potentially drawing more of its manufacturing talent to Wisconsin. The first phase of the project will yield an investment of $13.1 million and the hiring of 35 new employees.
Trade tensions and a global pandemic negatively impacted exports nationwide during the period covered by this report. Although Wisconsin followed this same trend, Wisconsin’s exports actually decreased at a lesser rate than exports for the U.S. as a whole during the first half of 2020 (down 11% for Wisconsin, compared to 18% nationally).

In the first half of 2020 (i.e., the second half of FY20), exports to nine of Wisconsin’s top 10 export destinations decreased relative to export volume for the same time period a year earlier. Even with a 16% decrease, Canada remained the #1 destination for Wisconsin exports. Exports to China, the third-highest ranked destination, actually grew by 16%. There were a few other bright spots: Out of the top 10 export categories for Wisconsin, export volume decreased for eight but increased for two (miscellaneous chemicals and aviation and aircraft equipment, which increased by 11% and 13% respectively).

In all, 97 countries bought more products from Wisconsin in the first six months of 2020 than in the same period of 2019. China topped the list, with an additional $100 million in purchases, followed by Thailand, Chile and Hong Kong, at $59 million, $51 million and $46 million respectively. However, 112 countries bought less, including Wisconsin’s North American neighbors: Exports to Mexico declined by $552 million, while those to Canada dipped by the same amount—$552 million.

WEDC led four Global Trade Ventures during FY20, taking Wisconsin companies to Japan, Australia, Mexico and Canada to meet with potential partners and distributors in each market, with a total of 26 Wisconsin companies taking part. A fifth planned trade venture to China was canceled. The final scheduled trade venture, to Germany, was moved to the fall and was offered in an online format.

Additional virtual trade ventures are planned for FY21. By pivoting to online offerings, WEDC has been able to continue to support Wisconsin companies in expanding their exports and competing on the global stage. Although visiting a foreign market in person is still considered essential for building the trust that leads to ongoing business relationships, with international travel severely restricted, Wisconsin companies can gain an advantage in the market by working with a trusted partner in WEDC and its network of authorized trade representatives located on the ground in markets around the world. Although the benefits of in-person meetings cannot be fully replaced, virtual trade ventures offer several other benefits such as a lower cost (with travel and lodging expenses removed) and a more flexible schedule (with no time required to be set aside for transportation, and with meetings spread over several weeks instead of a shorter period of time in-country).
The ExporTech™ Program, delivered by the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership with support from WEDC, helps companies develop and implement strategic export plans. During FY20, 13 Wisconsin companies completed ExporTech; of these, three were completely new to exporting and the other 10 were exploring expansion into new markets. A survey of past ExporTech participants found that the program continues to offer exceptional results: the 42 companies that returned the survey reported an average impact from going through the program of more than $1 million per company.

Although the number of companies that went through the program during FY20 was lower than the initial target, as the pandemic caused disruptions in trade and the overall economy, ExporTech was quick to adapt once the pandemic began, and took the remaining cohort meetings planned for the fiscal year to a virtual format—an approach that will continue in FY21. The online offering spaces the program sessions out over the course of one week each month, for a couple of hours each day, instead of meeting for one full day per month—a format that may make the program more appealing, since companies don't need to have their top executives out of the office for an entire day each month.

The Global Business Development Program assisted 37 companies with $878,000 in International Market Access Grant (IMAG) and Collaborative Market Access Grant (CMAG) funds. The IMAG Program provides funding to support a company’s specific export development and deployment strategy, with WEDC’s international staff providing technical assistance. During FY20, there were IMAG projects in 30 countries and on every continent except Antarctica. The CMAG aids this same type of effort through industry-focused intermediaries.

Both exports and foreign direct investment were on the agenda when the Wisconsin delegation met with Oleofinos, a company in Jalisco, Mexico, that develops vegetable oils and fats for food, infant nutrition and oleochemical applications, during a February 2020 Global Trade Venture.
The trend toward home delivery of products and services, ranging from books and electronics to groceries and restaurant meals, has accelerated with the COVID-19 pandemic as many consumers look for safer ways to shop, dine and do business.

Even before the pandemic struck, Kroger Co., the largest supermarket chain in the U.S. by revenue and a leader in online grocery sales, announced the selection of Pleasant Prairie as the sixth location for a customer fulfillment center to meet the growing demand for online purchasing.

The planned $67 million facility will measure 350,000 square feet and is expected to create 400 new jobs. It is scheduled to open two years after the site breaks ground, with plans to source, package and prepare grocery products for pick-up orders and direct delivery to customers in Wisconsin, northern Illinois and northwest Indiana. WEDC is assisting the project with $1.5 million in Business Development Tax Credits.

The new location will allow the company “to bring fresh food to our customers faster than ever before,” said Robert Clark, Kroger’s senior vice president of supply chain, manufacturing and sourcing. “We are engineering a model for the region, leveraging advanced robotics technology and creative solutions to redefine the customer experience for our customers in Wisconsin and Illinois.”

The Kroger project was one of several notable business attraction projects WEDC facilitated in FY20. While the pace of these projects slowed somewhat in the second half of the year, businesses continue to choose to move to Wisconsin because of its central location, diverse economic base and well-trained workforce.

Attracting business by rail and highway

Ambassador Steel Fabrication LLC, which goes by the trade name of Harris Rebar, was looking at locations in both Wisconsin and Minnesota to build a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility and consolidate operations scattered among properties the company leased in Menomonie, Eau Claire and Minneapolis.

Working with WEDC, the company selected a site in the Village of Roberts in Pierce County for the 50,000-square-foot manufacturing operation that will also house its sales, detailing and administrative office employees.

Why did Harris Rebar choose this location? Access—specifically, rail and freeway access.

Once production is in full swing, the company plans to run two manufacturing shifts every day, adding about 26 new jobs in this community of 1,500. The owners say they expect to receive about 200 rail cars of supplies annually and plan to ship four to five truck-loads of finished goods to customers every day—so transportation infrastructure is a must-have.

Paper for a new era

While the pandemic has resulted in increased competitive pressure on some parts of Wisconsin’s paper industry, such as consumer and finished papers, other sectors, such as packaging for shipping, have seen new growth. Wisconsin’s status as the nation’s leader in paper production—and its proximity to suppliers and markets—continues to be a major draw.

In Sturtevant, ND Packaging is moving into a full-service box plant equipped with state-of-the-art machinery, to ultimately compete as a low-cost and high-quality producer serving southern Wisconsin, eastern Iowa and northern Illinois. By situating its plant close to final customers, the company can maximize its service
offering via quick-turnaround product delivery, smaller inventory requirements and associated costs, and improved ability to satisfy requirements. And as a company within the Nine Dragons Paper (Holdings) Limited family, ND Packaging will be able to source its paper through transactions with the Biron Division of ND Paper Inc. in Wood County. ND Packaging’s investment represents one of the largest instances of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Wisconsin in FY20. The company has committed to investing more than $30 million in equipment alone and plans to create 88 jobs.

Meanwhile, in Howard, Nouryon Pulp and Performance Chemicals LLC plans to invest $599 million to acquire and expand a manufacturing facility—an investment expected to create 56 new jobs. The factory will produce Expancel Microspheres, which serve as both a lightweight filler and blowing agent and are used with businesses that need to cut manufacturing costs, reduce weight, create attractive textures, protect against damage or shield against the elements. This product is currently being produced in Sweden, and through a strategic initiative, Nouryon chose to produce Expancel Microspheres in the U.S. After going through a national site selection process, the company decided to pick Howard to be near its existing operations in Wisconsin.

Courting investment around the world

WEDC’s business and investment attraction team consistently works to raise Wisconsin’s profile as a prime location for FDI. Prior to the start of the pandemic, several important visits took place from inbound international delegations to Wisconsin. In July 2019, a delegation came to Milwaukee from Hessen, Wisconsin’s sister state in Germany. In August 2019, “Invest in Wisconsin: A Guide for Irish Companies” was published by the American Chamber of Commerce – Ireland, and Ireland’s minister of state for the diaspora and international development attended the official launch event in Milwaukee, coordinated by MMAC’s World Trade Association and the Milwaukee 7 regional economic development organization. In September 2019, WEDC and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection welcomed an Irish delegation that was in Madison for the World Dairy Expo and presented investment opportunities in the state. WEDC had also planned to participate in several FDI attraction events in early 2020 coordinated by the Select USA organization. WEDC representatives visited Switzerland, Belgium and Spain before COVID-19 caused the cancellation of planned meetings in Italy and Germany.
Ensuring that people in all Wisconsin’s communities have access to opportunities and resources to start and grow a successful business—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation—has always been part of WEDC’s mission, but the COVID-19 pandemic made disparities in our state apparent in a new way. The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on communities of color, as well as recent unrest in our communities, make this a critical time for Wisconsin to address longstanding issues of racial and economic equity to ensure that every citizen has the same access to full participation in the recovery and opportunity to achieve economic well-being.

WEDC responded quickly with some new initiatives designed specifically for the businesses most at risk of not making it through the pandemic—and we remain committed to fostering prosperity that includes all Wisconsin residents, so that no communities are left behind. Addressing recent and ongoing crises, we have an opportunity to not just keep doing things the same old way, but to try innovative approaches—and we are committed to an inclusive approach that leads to a new kind of economic resilience.

These commitments, for FY21 and moving forward, include an awareness of how health, education and the environment affect economic outcomes, rather than treating those topics as separate. They also include a focus on infrastructure, recognizing that high-speed internet has become essential for learning and workforce participation as well as business development.

Last fall, WEDC hosted its 38th annual MARKETPLACE conference. Held Oct. 23-24, 2019, in Milwaukee, the Governor’s Conference on Diverse Business Development is the flagship annual event for minority-, woman-, veteran- and LGBTQ-owned businesses. The event brings together small business owners—both current and aspiring—for networking, education and training, as well as one-on-one meetings with government and corporate buyers to forge connections or even make deals on the spot. A total of 841 people registered—a new record for the conference. New records were also set for the number of exhibitors in the Expo Hall—105—and the number of people registered for the evening reception—more than 400. Several components of the event had to be moved to larger event spaces within the venue to meet the increased demand. On the heels of this record-setting year, the 2020 conference is being planned as a virtual event (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) for the first time in the event’s history, with every effort being made to preserve the networking, education and celebration aspects of the conference in the virtual setting—while anticipating even higher enrollment may be possible since the event may appeal to attendees statewide.

The state’s minority chambers of commerce and their pass-through entities remain strong Key Strategic Partners of WEDC, valued for their connections in their respective communities and the services they provide—including administering revolving loan funds that act as a source of capital for businesses that otherwise may experience barriers to access. During FY20, the chambers provided services to 3,218 businesses around the state and conducted 202 workshops on business development topics.

Entering FY21, WEDC’s Minority Business Development Program was renamed the Diverse Business Development Program to reflect its broader focus.

Supporting diverse business communities

TOTAL FUNDING FOR PROJECTS USING REVOLVING LOAN FUNDS

$2.4M
Cultivating rural Wisconsin

Now more than ever, listening to and supporting rural businesses and individuals is essential to addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

~ Kelliann Blazek, Director of the Office of Rural Prosperity, WEDC

Maintaining the vibrancy of Wisconsin’s rural economies requires an understanding of the diversity of its industries, from agricultural production and working forests to Main Street businesses. Using a coordinated statewide approach to recognizing the variety of Wisconsin’s rural economic assets will add to building and maintaining rural prosperity throughout the state. WEDC is committed to helping rural stakeholders navigate the programs and resources available to build upon their strengths.

In FY20, as part of his State of the State address in January, Governor Evers announced two initiatives to assist rural residents: the establishment of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Rural Prosperity to recommend policies to support Wisconsin’s rural communities, and the creation of the Office of Rural Prosperity within WEDC.

The commission seeks to tap local perspectives on long-term, recent and future economic challenges facing the people, communities and businesses that make rural Wisconsin shine—and to turn ideas into action that will increase economic activity and improve the quality of life for future generations. The commission will gather on-the-ground input from diverse stakeholders throughout the state whose lives and livelihoods are tied to the vitality of their rural communities.

During FY20, WEDC Secretary Missy Hughes named Kelliann Blazek as the first director of the Office of Rural Prosperity. The new office will be a ‘one-stop shop’ for rural development resources and programs tailored to rural communities, businesses and workers.

As communities continued to experience the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the commission held three listening sessions to explore opportunities to build more resilient rural communities. The commission also accepted written public comments and conducted one-on-one meetings with stakeholder groups. From this public input, the commission will develop a set of recommendations to support rural businesses and communities across Wisconsin.

Also, the COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated significant gaps in broadband coverage in Wisconsin’s rural communities, making e-learning, telecommuting, telehealth and online sales difficult in many parts of the state. In response, WEDC’s Office of Rural Prosperity will work in partnership with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin to set up a Broadband Connectors Pilot Program from September to December 2020 to assist local governments, schools and tribal governments in applying for federal, state and private-sector broadband funds.

The goal of the pilot is:

- To provide broadband technical assistance to a cohort of six communities across the state so that they are better prepared to apply for state, federal or private broadband opportunities
- To develop locally driven solutions and best practices that can serve as a model for other communities across the state, which will inform the refinement of Wisconsin’s Playbook for Broadband Progress
- To better understand the type(s) of technical assistance that communities need most to expand broadband, which will inform recommendations regarding future programs and resources

WEDC is working to strengthen partnerships with rural communities, making rural prosperity part of our broader economic development plan.
The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) leads economic development efforts for the state by advancing and maximizing opportunities in Wisconsin for businesses, communities and people to thrive in a globally competitive environment. WEDC provides resources, operational support and financial assistance to companies, partners and communities in Wisconsin. Working with more than 600 regional and local partners, WEDC develops and delivers solutions representative of a highly responsive and coordinated economic development network.

Visit wedc.org to learn more.