FAB LABS GRANT PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT'S NEW FOR FY26?

For FY25, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) awarded a total of $496,761 to fund fabrication laboratories (fab labs) in Wisconsin public schools. WEDC received 29 completed applications and awarded grants to 20 public school districts, bringing the total number of grants awarded in the history of the program to 231 at 133 public school districts. For FY26, WEDC is continuing the Fab Labs Grant Program as part of its overall program offerings, with $250,000 budgeted. The FY26 Fab Labs Grant Program will be noncompetitive (first come, first served). To request an application, applicants should visit **wedc.org/fablabs** and select the "apply" button at the top of the page. After clicking the button, the applicant will receive an invitation to the Network Wisconsin system, where they can begin the application process.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Wisconsin public school districts as defined in Wis. Stat. §115.01(3) are eligible to apply. "Public School District" means the territorial unit for school administration as defined by Wis. Stat. §115.01(3) or a Tribal school as defined by Wis. Stat. §115.001(15m). In addition, either a cooperative educational service agency (CESA) as defined in Wis. Stat. §116.01 or a lead public school district may apply on behalf of a consortium of two or more public school districts. School districts are allowed to submit only one application per round. Potential applicants are encouraged to discuss project options with their district administration to ensure that each district only develops one application. Applicants may only be awarded one grant per fiscal year. Applicants can receive a maximum of three grants over the program's lifetime. The three-award limit does not apply to the following:

- Milwaukee Public Schools
- The expansion of a fab lab to allow use by K-8 students
- The expansion or addition of a fab lab to include artificial intelligence or related skills training

LOOK FORWARD ❯❯

HOW MUCH FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?

An individual public school district applicant can seek up to $25,000 per grant (see matching requirement below). A consortium of two or more public school districts can seek up to $50,000. The minimum grant amount available is $10,000. A total of $250,000 is available for the FY26 non-competitive (first come, first served) grant program.

WHAT ARE THE MATCH REQUIREMENTS?

All applicants must match 50% of the grant amount of funding provided by WEDC. For example, if an applicant applies for a grant of $25,000, they must provide match funding of at least $12,500.

WHAT CAN THE FUNDS BE USED FOR?

Awardees must use funds to purchase equipment used for instructional and educational purposes by elementary, middle, junior high, or high school students in one or more fab labs.

WHAT IS A FAB LAB?

A fab lab is a high-tech workshop equipped with computer-controlled additive and subtractive manufacturing components such as 3D printers, laser engravers, computer numerical control routers, and/or plasma cutters. It may also include advanced equipment and simulators related to artificial intelligence, health care/health sciences, and skilled trades. A fully functioning fab lab has active engagement with the business community, is accessible to multiple departments within a school or schools, provides community access, and is integrated with the network of Wisconsin-based fab labs. See **wedc.org/fablabs** for a link to a resource page with a list of equipment typically found in a fab lab.

HOW DO I APPLY?

To request an application, visit **wedc.org/fablabs** and select the "request an application" button at the top of the page. After clicking the button, you will receive an invite to the Network Wisconsin system, where you can begin the application process.

WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS?

The submission deadline is 11:59 p.m. on Jan. 15, 2026. Late applications will not be considered.

HOW IS "EQUIPMENT" DEFINED? WHAT IS INCLUDED AND EXCLUDED?

Equipment eligible for grant funding, or which can be counted toward a school district's match, includes equipment necessary for the creation or expansion of a school's fab lab in keeping with the definition given above. Equipment may include computer software required to operate the equipment, as well as installation of the equipment and necessary machinetooling. Equipment does not include any building modifications required to house the equipment, e.g., electrical, ventilation, flooring upgrades, or additions. It also does not include supplies.

HOW WILL APPLICATIONS BE EVALUATED?

WEDC will evaluate applicants based on application completeness, evidence of readiness and long-range planning, curriculum, business and community partnerships, and previous awards.

CAN PRIOR PURCHASES OF EQUIPMENT BE COUNTED TOWARD MATCH FUNDING?

No. To be counted toward grant reimbursement or match funding, expenditures must be incurred after the date the grant is awarded.

WHAT SOURCES OF MATCH FUNDING ARE ALLOWED?

WEDC is flexible on the source of the matching funds and includes Perkins dollars. However, expenditures for both match funding and grant reimbursement must be incurred after the grant has been awarded. In-kind match (meaning any contributions made to the project other than cash) will not be considered, nor will indirect construction costs (aka "soft costs"). If pledges are made toward the grant amount an applicant is requesting, a letter of commitment documenting this pledge must be submitted with the application.

DOES THE FAB LAB HAVE TO BE OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY?

The program requires that once the fab lab is fully functioning, it provides community access. Community access may be developed over time and structured to meet the unique needs of the district and community.

IS THERE A TIMELINE FOR THE REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE FAB LABS GRANT PROGRAM?

We do not yet have a timeline for the review process. Our goal is to begin evaluations as soon as a completed application is received. The timing will depend on the number of applications received.

WHAT ARE THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS PROGRAM?

Recipients will be required to submit a performance report documenting the number of unique students who accessed the lab as part of a curriculum-based learning environment, as well as any other contract deliverable. WEDC may impose additional reporting requirements to evaluate project performance and to ensure compliance with contract deliverables. A district may identify other metrics in its application.

WHAT TYPE OF EXPENSES CAN BE INCLUDED FOR MATCH?

Equipment expenses (as defined above) are the only expenses that can be counted toward the match requirement. On the budget table, there is a line to include equipment expenditures beyond the required match and for expenditures beyond equipment. Additional expenditures will not count toward the match requirement, but may be considered in the evaluation process.

WHAT FINANCIAL INFORMATION DO YOU WANT US TO PROVIDE FOR SECTION III OF THE APPLICATION?

The table for Section III comes from a data report produced by the state Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The link to the DPI site for the report is: **https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/statistical/cost-revenue/comparative-revenue-member**. Note that the most recent audited financial information may not be updated on the DPI website. You may provide the three years that are available on DPI's website, which is current through 2023-24. If your application is a consortium application, the financial information must be provided for all participating school districts.