

WISCONSIN CERTIFIED SITES PROGRAM APPLICANT FAQ

Q: Why should I certify my developable industrial site?

A: In today's manufacturing site selection environment, readiness is not optional. It is a baseline requirement to compete effectively for projects. Since the pandemic, companies are prioritizing shovel-ready sites with infrastructure, due diligence, zoning, and fast-track permitting in place. Certification ensures your team has the structured, decision-ready data needed to compete effectively in today's environment. Both site selectors and platforms driven by artificial intelligence (AI) evaluate locations based on available data well before any outreach begins.

By going through the certification process, the local team gains:

- Hands-on experience navigating the site selection process
- A comprehensive site and community analysis from third-party experts
- A customized strategic development plan
- Marketing assets through WEDC
- Third-party review of the due diligence and site documentation needed to meet initial RFI screening requirements

Q: What industries are most interested in certified sites?

A: Industries actively seeking Certified Sites include many of Wisconsin's key sectors:

- Advanced manufacturing (e.g., robotics, precision tools, packaging)
- Electrical equipment and components
- Semiconductor fabrication
- Biohealth/medical device manufacturing
- Industrial machinery manufacturing
- Food and beverage production (including dairy)

Industrial development projects value speed, certainty, and infrastructure, making Certified Sites highly attractive. The more impactful the project (capital expenditures and jobs created) the more likely the project is to move forward on a shovel ready site.

Q: What are the benefits to my community?

A: Industrial development brings powerful ripple effects:

- Increased tax base to support schools, parks, services, and other local priorities such as housing, childcare, and transportation
- New jobs that attract and retain a skilled workforce
- Support for small businesses and local entrepreneurs
- Diversification of the community's manufacturing base

LOOK FORWARD ►

This is the flywheel effect in action: One investment leads to another, building momentum for long-term prosperity.

Q: What certification pathways are available?

A: WEDC's Certified Sites Program now offers three pathways depending on a site's current level of readiness:

- **Full certification** for sites that are ready for comprehensive review, including desktop analysis, field investigation, site analysis, and a formal certification determination.
- **Early-stage certification** for promising sites that may not yet be ready for full certification but would benefit from a virtual/desktop review, an industrial fit analysis, a readiness gap assessment, and a targeted action plan. It is an ideal starting point for communities evaluating a property for industrial development and determining whether industrial use represents its highest and best use.
- **Recertification** for previously Certified Sites seeking an updated review against current program criteria.

Q: What is the benefit of the site visit as part of the Certified Sites process?

A: The site visit is a critical step in moving from site documentation to real-world understanding of the industrial site selection process. While desktop review and due diligence studies establish a strong baseline of development potential, the site visit brings together local stakeholders and technical experts to assess how the site and community perform.

Through the site visit, communities gain:

- A shared, on-the-ground understanding of the site's strengths, constraints, and development potential
- Direct input from technical experts on utilities, infrastructure, access, and site configuration
- Clear identification of gaps or risks that may not be fully captured in desktop analysis
- Alignment among local partners on site positioning and how to communicate it to prospects
- Actionable guidance that informs the site's strategic development plan
- Direct feedback from a qualified and respected site selector on the marketability of the site for industrial development

Most importantly, the site visit helps communities translate data into insight. It strengthens the community's ability to confidently and accurately represent the site, while building the coordination and familiarity needed to respond to real projects.

Q: How do I know if my site is ready to apply for certification?**A:** Application Readiness Self-Assessment:

- Size: Minimum of 20 contiguous, developable acres
- Zoning: Must be zoned for industrial use or have a clear path to rezoning within 90 days of being accepted into the process
- Utilities: Industrial scale water, wastewater, electric, and natural gas service must be available or planned with documented timelines.
- Ownership: Clear title and documented ownership; a public agency or organization owns or has an exclusive option on the property
- Community Support: Local elected leaders, local partners, and site representatives are in support of industrial development and are willing and able to participate in the WEDC Certified Sites process.

Q: Does the municipality need to own the site seeking certification?

A: Public ownership is preferred but not required. For privately owned sites, a public agency or organization should have site control, such as an exclusive option or other documented agreement.

Q: My community has a site that was certified in 2015. Is that certification still good, or does the site need to be recertified?

A: Yes, site certification does end when the wetland delineation is no longer valid; this generally occurs five years after the date of completion. Communities can apply to recertify the site. The cost for recertification is \$8,000. This includes a desktop review of the site and due diligence studies, analysis of site against current program criteria, and recertification determination. The recertification process also allows for communities to understand present-day industrial development trends and current utility availability.

Q: How has WEDC's approach to Certified Sites evolved?

A: WEDC has shifted the Certified Sites process from a point-in-time designation to a structured pathway, focused on supporting communities as they begin the process of preparing sites for industrial development.

We recognize that site readiness is built over time. Many communities have strong sites but need guidance, coordination, and technical support to reach a competitive level. The process is now designed to meet communities where they are and provide hands-on assistance at each stage of readiness.

Through this pathway approach, communities benefit from:

- Early-stage guidance to help prioritize next steps and focus resources effectively

- Ongoing access to technical expertise
- Clear benchmarks that help communities understand what “competitive” looks like in today’s site selection environment
- A more accessible entry point, ensuring that communities of varying capacity can participate and make progress

This approach ensures that communities are not working toward certification in isolation. Instead, they are building readiness, gaining the tools, relationships, and clarity needed to move forward with confidence—whether they are just getting started or nearing full certification.

Early-stage certification includes:

- Virtual site investigation by a qualified professional site selection consultant
- Desktop analysis, industrial fit analysis, and readiness gap analysis against full certification criteria
- Issuance of an early-stage site determination with a targeted action plan to progress the site toward full certification

The cost for early-stage certification is \$6,000.

Early-stage certification is not required before full certification. Sites that already meet the readiness criteria may proceed directly to the full certification process.

Q: What is the deadline for the FY27 Certified Sites cycle?

A: Sites are accepted into the process on a first-come, first-served basis, provided they meet the criteria described above. For FY27, WEDC has budgeted funds to accept four sites for full certification, four sites for the early-stage “Wisconsin Select” process, and three sites for recertification.

Q: What is required for certification?

A: A full list of requirements for both early-stage and full certification is available on the Establishing a Certified Site webpage. ([Establishing a Certified Site - WEDC](#))

Q: How do I begin the Certification Process?

A: For both early stage and full certification, complete the Letter of Interest form on the Establishing a Certified Site webpage. ([Establishing a Certified Site - WEDC](#))

Q: How much does it cost?

A: Costs include:

- **Application fees (payable directly to Deloitte):**
 - Early-stage certification: \$6,000
 - Full certification: \$10,000
 - Recertification (for lapsed sites): \$8,000

- Required due diligence studies, which vary by site size and condition. The last site that went through the Certified Sites process was approximately 100 acres in size, and due diligence studies cost approximately \$50,000. The cost of these studies will vary by market and consultant.

Q: Are there any grants to help offset costs?

A: Yes. For the 2026-2027 (FY27) Certified Sites process, grants may be available for sites accepted into the process. Grant funds will match up to 50% of due diligence costs (with a maximum of \$100,000 per site). Distressed communities or those with less than 50,000 in population may be reimbursed up to 75% of due diligence costs (with a maximum of \$100,000 per site).

Important: Costs incurred prior to acceptance of a WEDC grant application are ineligible for reimbursement.

Q: How long does certification last?

A: Certification is good as long as the due diligence studies are valid. Currently, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources requires an updated wetland delineation every five years.

Q: Are there examples from previously Certified Sites?

A: Yes, success stories are available on the WEDC website:

- **DeForest Business Park - WEDC**
- **Wisconsin Rapids - WEDC**

Q: Who do I reach out to with additional questions?

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