



For immediate release
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WEDC awards \$750,000 grant for new biomanufacturing center of excellence

*Forward BIO Initiative will provide biohealth entrepreneurs with the necessary resources
to transition research into commercialization*

MADISON, WI. SEPT. 6, 2018 – The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) has awarded a \$750,000 grant to establish the Forward BIO Initiative – a new biomanufacturing center of excellence that will help to bring groundbreaking research happening in Wisconsin out of the labs and into the marketplace. The grant will be administered by BioForward Wisconsin.

The Forward BIO Initiative is a collaborative effort that will offer entrepreneurs and researchers the resources necessary to effectively translate discoveries into commercial products in the emerging area of biomanufacturing—the advanced manufacturing of therapeutic medical devices, cells, tissues or pharmaceuticals. This initiative is committed to advancing Wisconsin’s position as a national leader in the biomanufacturing industry and features three components developed to reduce commercialization risk: the Forward BIO Institute, Forward BIOLABS, and BioForward Wisconsin.

The collaboration guides projects from pre-incorporation within the Forward BIO Institute to the facilitation of efficient startup launches by Forward BIOLABS, with assistance and guidance from BioForward Wisconsin’s industry partners.

“BioForward is excited to be a partner in this strategic, united initiative to advance Wisconsin as a center of excellence for biomanufacturing,” says Lisa Johnson, CEO of BioForward. “Through the Forward BIO Initiative, we will demonstrate how collaboration among public and private entities can advance workforce development, new company formations and industry partnerships.”

The Forward BIO Institute, based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will support transformative research in this emerging field, translate biomanufacturing technologies into the private sector, and establish public-private partnerships to connect UW inventors and researchers with industry leaders. The institute will also serve as a feeder of startups by providing a workforce skilled in both biomanufacturing and relevant business concepts. As part of this initiative, the institute will establish a new master’s degree program at UW-Madison in biomanufacturing innovation.

Forward BIOLABS will be a new, nonprofit shared laboratory facility that will provide fully supported lab and office space. The availability of the shared space will free up capital for startups by eliminating the need to spend their limited resources on leasing space, purchasing equipment and setting up a lab. The 8,700-square-foot facility will be in the University Research Park in Madison, with lab space for up to 20 scientists and common co-working space to allow members to collaborate.

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BioForward Wisconsin will facilitate partnerships between government, academia and private industry, as well as marketing the economic impact of local biomanufacturing companies and Wisconsin's biohealth industry. The organization will connect industry partners to the Forward BIO Institute and Forward BIOLABS to ensure corporate engagement with entrepreneurs.

WEDC's investment in the Forward BIO Initiative is part of the organization's long-term strategy of advancing targeted, high-growth business clusters to develop high-quality jobs and significant job growth in Wisconsin. WEDC-supported centers of excellence—including the Global Water Center and the Energy Innovation Center—serve as cluster "anchors" around which educational R&D, corporate R&D and commercialization, external investment and company attraction connections are made.

"Just as the Global Water Center has put Milwaukee and Wisconsin on the map when it comes to water technology, we believe the Forward BIO Initiative, and promoting Wisconsin as a national biomanufacturing center of excellence, has the same potential for the state's growing biohealth sector, which already includes 1,900 companies that employ more than 44,000 people," said Vincent Rice, vice president of sector strategy development for WEDC, the state's lead economic development organization. "The partners have created a unique model that builds upon the respective strengths of each organization, focusing on a biohealth sector with significant opportunities for innovation, commercialization and growth."

"Wisconsin is home to the most prolific life science inventors in the world, as well as a dense population of bright aspiring entrepreneurs," said Bill Murphy, director of the Forward BIO Institute. "We want to work hand-in-hand with Forward BIOLABS and BioForward to fully activate these resources and create the future of medicine."

"WEDC's award is a statement of Wisconsin's commitment to establishing the Forward BIO Initiative to support advances in technology from discovery through commercialization," said Jessica Martin Eckerly, co-founder of Forward BIOLABS. "This model is an exceptional demonstration of the collaborative force that unites research and industry partners to grow the biomanufacturing industry in Wisconsin."

To learn more about the Forward BIO Initiative and its partner organizations, please visit www.forwardbioinitiative.org.

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About the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

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. 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 or follow WEDC on Twitter @WEDCNews to learn more.

About the Forward BIO Institute

Born from the idea that Wisconsin is an ideal Midwest hub for biomanufacturing in the U.S., the Forward BIO Institute is being established with support from the UW-Madison College of Engineering, the Grainger Institute for Engineering, the School of Veterinary Medicine, the School of Medicine and Public Health and the Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education. The mission of the Forward BIO Institute is to short circuit the path to broad societal impact of innovative technologies and make Wisconsin a leading national hub for biomanufacturing

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R&D and workforce development. To partner with the institute as a donor, a collaborator or a consortium member, contact wlmurphy@wisc.edu.

About Forward BIOLABS

Shared life science laboratories with one goal: help startups succeed by providing fully equipped, maintained, supported lab space and a network to facilitate interactions with business and lab service providers, investors, industry, academia and government. Forward BIOLABS will offer a fast, flexible and inexpensive option for startups, creating capital efficiency by eliminating the need to find, lease, design, equip and operate their own lab. Initial seed funding was provided by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF), and fundraising is ongoing to establish Forward BIOLABS. To inquire about becoming a member, sponsor or donor, contact jmeckerly@forwardbiolabs.org.

About BioForward Wisconsin

BioForward serves as the independent voice of Wisconsin's biohealth industry, providing services and resources to support the growth of our industry throughout the U.S. and the world. BioForward is the only Wisconsin organization representing over 200 biohealth member companies including biotech, biopharma, medical device, diagnostics and digital health, as well as research institutions and service providers. Our focus in 2018 is advocating on behalf of Wisconsin's industry strength in integrated health solutions and research. We have implemented several new initiatives and placed emphasis on the fact that BioForward represents this impactful industry for the state of Wisconsin. To learn more about BioForward and its initiatives, visit www.bioforward.org.

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