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Wisconsin Stands to Generate More Than \$195M in Local Economic Activity from Solar Projects by Hiring In-State Workers

MADISON, WI (October 27, 2021) — [Wisconsin Infrastructure Investment Now](#) (WIIN), a nonprofit organization responsible for educating key stakeholders about responsible investments in Wisconsin infrastructure projects, highlights a new report by [Forward Analytics](#) finding that using Wisconsin workers to build a 150 megawatt (MW) solar farm in rural Wisconsin could create \$11.8 million of economic activity in the region.

Solar Installation in Wisconsin is growing as the Wisconsin Public Service Commission is working to approve another 19 projects that will supply 2,489 MW (or 2.5 gigawatts). The *Capturing The Sun* study by Forward Analytics analyzes the local economic impact generated by installing a 150 MW solar installation in rural Wisconsin.

“The 19 solar farms planned for Wisconsin will cost in excess of \$2.6 billion. This is a much-needed capital investment as aging electric generation plants are retired, but it is Wisconsin residents that will pay for the projects through their utility bills,” said Robb Kahl, Executive Director of WIIN. “Since Wisconsin is paying for the new infrastructure, it should be Wisconsin contractors and workers that build it.”

Critically, the study concludes that solar farm construction’s economic impact depends on the workforce’s composition (i.e., local versus out-of-state), meaning that using Wisconsin local workers generates significantly greater economic impact than an out-of-state workforce. Understanding this distinction is critical because solar farms require very few workers for long-term operation and maintenance once constructed, with the vast majority of the workforce’s economic activity occurring during construction.

Key Findings from the Forward Analytics Study

- Using local workers generates between 73% and 158% more economic activity in the region than using out-of-state workers.
- A local workforce on a single 150 MW project earns a total of \$21.7 million in wages and benefits, which generates \$11.8 million in local economic activity. In contrast, out-of-state workers spend a majority of their wages in their home states.
- If the local workforce is used for the 19 pending projects, more than \$195 million could be generated in economic activity in the regions in which they are built. Wisconsin will stand to lose \$83 and \$120 million in economic activity if projects are built by out-of-state contractors using out-of-state workers.

“While economic impact studies are common, this study isolates the workforce variable and provides policymakers and local governments with valuable information,” said Dale Knapp, Forward Analytics’ Director of Research and Analytics. “The study quantifies what has long been assumed, that infrastructure projects built by local workers are significantly better for the local economy.”

“Wisconsin has a proud history as a leader in the construction industry and is currently making strides forward in green or carbon-neutral infrastructure,” said Kahl. “With Wisconsin’s solar capacity potentially increasing by more than 400% in the next several years, understanding the economic impact of the industry is vital for Wisconsin communities.”

For more information, read the full [Forward Analytics Study](#), or visit WisconsinInfrastructure.com to learn more about WIIN.

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About Wisconsin Infrastructure Investment Now, Inc. (WIIN)

Wisconsin Infrastructure Investment Now, Inc. (WIIN) is a nonprofit organization, and its mission is to educate the public, elected officials and regulators on the societal and economic benefits of the responsible investment in, and expansion of, transportation facilities, renewable and traditional energy projects, mining and other infrastructure projects.