

News Release

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New \$1.2 million initiative aims to boost exports and foreign investment in Wisconsin

*WEDC teams up with UW-Oshkosh, The Water Council,
New North and Milwaukee 7 in first statewide effort*

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh today announced a new \$1.2 million statewide initiative aimed at boosting exports and increasing foreign investment in Wisconsin.

The initiative, which also is being supported by two regional economic development organizations - New North and Milwaukee 7 – and The Water Council, marks a coordinated effort to drive export participation and encourage foreign direct investment in the state.

“This marks the largest coordinated deployment of resources ever to get more Wisconsin companies to export and to encourage foreign companies to invest here,” said Governor Scott Walker. “This initiative will provide new localized resources to Wisconsin companies. It will not only focus on existing companies that export, but will reach targeted companies that have the ability to export but aren’t doing so right now.”

Recipients can use the grant funds to hire international trade consultants who will work to attract foreign companies in Wisconsin's driver industries and/or help Wisconsin companies accelerate their exporting efforts.

The initiative will allow the participating organizations to focus on:

- Providing exporting referrals and advice to businesses
- Connecting companies to financial assistance to support exporting
- Connecting companies to global trade programs provided through the Wisconsin Extended Export Partnership
- Working with WEDC to support and identify expansion opportunities for existing foreign companies residing in the state
- Engaging with foreign companies that are interested in opening a facility in Wisconsin

“What’s key to this new initiative is that it aligns perfectly with the many existing programs offered by WEDC and our partners to increase exports and encourage foreign investment,” said Katy Sinnott, WEDC’s vice president of international business development. “From training program like ExporTech to our international trade missions, this effort complements and enhances the many resources that already exist.”

“UW-Oshkosh is located in the heart of the New North, an area focused on supporting international trade and foreign direct investment, and is well positioned to assist business in this region and statewide,” said Colleen S. Merrill, director at UW-Oshkosh’s Small Business Development Center. “We are excited to be a key player in this initiative, utilizing our Small Business Development Center and expertise on campus to connect resources throughout the region.”

“We are grateful to the WEDC and UW-Oshkosh for making this grant available to the Milwaukee 7,” said Chad Hoffman, VP of Global Trade and Investment at the Milwaukee 7. “There is no one-size-fits-all strategy to grow internationally and navigating the many trade resources can be daunting. This funding directly supports our Export Development Program that was created to engage with new and existing exporters in the region, determine their export potential and make referrals as needed to the trade resources at the local, state and federal level.”

“With established partnerships in France, the Netherlands, and Germany, The Water Council is experiencing a steady flow of European water technology companies that are looking to build roots in the U.S. and, more importantly, in Wisconsin,” said Dean Amhaus, president and CEO of The Water Council. “In the last month we successfully recruited one Irish company, and through this grant we can now work with a European consultant who can quickly represent our interests on that continent.”

To fund the initiative, WEDC has awarded UW-Oshkosh a \$650,000 grant, which will be matched by The Water Council, New North and M7.

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