

2025-2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

As the “Voice of Economic Development” in Wisconsin, WEDA is committed to working with state legislators and policymakers to promote pro-growth policies and programs that encourage private investment, increase business productivity, and allow Wisconsin families to prosper. Effective economic development practices help guide the direction of Wisconsin’s economy and provide essential tools for communities, organizations, and businesses to drive sustainable growth. The WEDA 2025–26 Legislative Agenda lays out key legislative proposals that are needed to stimulate economic growth, spur job creation, encourage investment and innovation, and improve critical infrastructure across Wisconsin.

2025-26 WEDA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:

Strengthen Our Energy Infrastructure

Wisconsin is losing out on significant investment and job creation due to regulatory obstacles that delay approval of critical energy infrastructure needed to power large-demand energy projects and businesses. Unfortunately, the current regulatory process can create uncertainty, impede critical infrastructure investment, and ultimately drive businesses to choose other states that have a more efficient regulatory process. WEDA supports legislation to ensure prospective businesses can access their energy needs more quickly by creating a streamlined approval process for energy infrastructure needed to power high-demand energy projects located in development-ready sites certified by the state.

Modernize TIF Law

Wisconsin communities have successfully used Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) since 1975 to promote development that would not have otherwise occurred without this effective local government financing tool. TIF has attracted new industries, created jobs, and has grown local tax bases across the state. Unfortunately, state TIF law is outdated, does not align with current economic realities, and does not allow communities to best use TIF to address their most pressing economic challenges, or to take advantage of growth opportunities. WEDA supports comprehensive TIF modernization legislation that will enhance TIF flexibility for communities to encourage the development of new workforce housing, fund infrastructure improvements to cultivate additional business development, and ensure Wisconsin remains competitive in the 21st-century economy.

Create Statewide Deal Closing Fund

Create a state-funded Deal Closing Fund that will support economic development by providing financing and incentives to businesses that are considering making investments in Wisconsin. The purpose of the Fund will be to help close deals or attract new businesses to Wisconsin that make significant capital investments in the state, create jobs, or ignite growth in key industries. The Deal Closing Fund is not intended to be the primary source of capital for projects, but rather to provide critical financial incentives – through grants, low-to-no interest loans, and other funding tools – to make key projects viable and move them across the finish line.

WEDA's 2025-26 Legislative Agenda also includes other key actions lawmakers can take to promote growth, attract investment, & help shape vibrant communities, including:

Enhance the Business Climate

WEDA supports effective regulatory reforms and forward-thinking tax policies to create a more business friendly climate in Wisconsin and ultimately help advance business growth, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

- Implement tax reforms, including lowering the state's overall tax burden, to better promote economic growth and opportunity, and to make Wisconsin a more attractive location to live and do business for employees and employers. Most Wisconsin businesses operate as pass-throughs and would benefit significantly from lower individual income tax rates.
- Advocate for reforms aimed at streamlining regulations and administrative processes to reduce costs for Wisconsin businesses, encourage timely investments, and support economic growth.

Strengthen the Workforce

WEDA supports efforts to build and maintain a skilled workforce that meets the needs of Wisconsin employers, which is increasingly important in today's historically tight labor market.

- Improve current workforce housing programs and financial incentives.
- Incentivize businesses to invest in childcare programs.
- Funding for statewide talent attraction programs.
- Reform the state's workforce training programs to better align with the needs of businesses.

Improve the Economic Development Toolbox

WEDA supports enhancing existing economic development incentive programs and creating new ones to provide employers with the resources to expand and help communities grow their local economies.

- Create an advanced manufacturing grant program.
- Preserve the Manufacturing and Agriculture Tax Credit.
- Prioritize alternative goals for state economic development programs, such as attracting and retaining businesses, encouraging capital investment, or fostering innovation, rather than focusing primarily on job creation requirements.
- Ensure smaller, rural communities can take full advantage of the state Historic Tax Credit as a revitalization tool.

Robust Infrastructure

WEDA supports consistent and robust investment in infrastructure critical to economic growth, including transportation, energy, and communication networks.

- Encourage investment in Wisconsin's highways, roads, rail, harbors, and other means of transportation.
- Create a state-funded grant program to advance industrial site infrastructure development.
- Ensure broadband funding is directed to the areas of greatest need.
- Support Right of First Refusal legislation to retain Wisconsin's control over of the state's power grid to avoid unnecessary costs and delays to transmission projects essential to economic development.

The Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA) is a statewide non-profit organization committed to growing the Wisconsin economy. With more than 400 members, WEDA is the largest – and only – statewide trade association serving economic development professionals in Wisconsin and promoting economic growth in communities across the state. WEDA members work in various settings, including counties; municipalities; financial institutions; chambers of commerce; local and regional economic development organizations; state agencies; utilities; construction companies; and numerous private businesses.

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