

ADVOCACY | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT | NETWORKING

ANNUAL REPORT

# 2025

Advancing Economic Development





## JENNY KUDERER-RADCLIFFE

CEcd, EDFP, WEDA Board Chair

Welcome to the 2026 Governor's Conference on Economic Development, one of my favorite events of the year, connecting with friends and colleagues from across the state! As we close out the WEDA year, it is a privilege to join you to reflect on WEDA's incredible 50th Anniversary! Wisconsin economic developers have much to celebrate with some tremendous business and community development stories from across the state this past year.

In fact, 2025 was a transformative year for WEDA. Welcoming Melissa Hunt as WEDA's new President & CEO and bringing on Badger Bay Management, along with our dynamic lineup of education, networking, and advocacy wins, 2025 seems to have passed in a blink. Your WEDA Board of Directors and staff have been working hard to develop an updated strategic plan to guide us through 2026 and beyond. We continue to strengthen our partnership with the Wisconsin Economic Development Institute and so much more. Of course, a highlight was the 50th Anniversary Golf Outing and Celebration Dinner in June.

As my year as board chair draws to a close, I want to offer my thanks to the board of directors and staff for all that you do to support WEDA. I'm excited for Chair Elect Rebecca Deschane to take the gavel and continue the great work we've all embraced. Having been a WEDA member for roughly half of the organization's life, I've witnessed firsthand the organization's development over time and am confident we are poised for much more success in the future.

And to our members, Thank You for your dedication to Wisconsin and to WEDA! To use an old colleague's phrase, "The best is yet to come!"



## MELISSA HUNT

President & CEO

Warm greetings to our incredible WEDA community,

As I reflect on 2025, my new role as President & CEO, I am filled with gratitude and excitement. This has been a year of transition, growth, and renewed clarity for WEDA. And all of it is made possible by you: our members, partners, and colleagues across Wisconsin. During the first half of the year, I served as Past Board Chair, and I want to recognize Kathryn Berger for her exceptional leadership as Interim President & CEO. Her work to strengthen operations and enhance

member services created the strong foundation I stepped into. Since taking on this role, I have been inspired every day by our members. **You are the heart of WEDA.** Your expertise drives our programs, your engagement shapes our advocacy, and your leadership moves communities forward. The momentum we feel statewide is a direct reflection of your time, talent, and trust.

This year, we advanced WEDA's core pillars, Advocacy, Professional Development, and Networking, while delivering impactful Conferences, Academy trainings, and expanded YPEN and ED WOW events. These programs continue to grow in energy, reach, and value thanks to your participation and feedback.

In 2025, we also began a thoughtful review of WEDA and launched our strategic planning process, grounded in member input and industry needs. Conversations with you, across the state, individually and collectively, were essential in solidifying our focus. Your insights are helping define priorities and position WEDA for its next phase of growth as the professional home for Wisconsin's economic developers.

I have often said that **economic development is everything**, it touches every aspect of our communities, schools, businesses, and the spaces in between. That truth has never been clearer. Together, we are guiding Wisconsin forward. As you review this year's highlights, you'll see an organization becoming stronger, more connected, and more aligned than ever. Membership is rising, partnerships are deepening, and our programs continue to deliver meaningful impact.

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly and for believing in the work we do together. I am honored to serve this remarkable organization and look forward to continuing our progress, shoulder to shoulder, as we build WEDA's next chapter.

### Together, we are WEDA.

Here's to the year behind us, the momentum ahead, and to all of you, the heart of WEDA.

## 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

by the Numbers

### MEMBERSHIP

#### MEMBERSHIP

205

5%

345

Members

3%

#### EVENTS SUMMARY

19 EVENTS

- 7 Cities
- 2 Statewide Conferences
- 9 Academies
- 8 Advocacy/CRA/Other

#### REGISTERED ATTENDEES

1446

38.2%

#### SELECTED PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

✓ CRA NETWORK  
151 Attendees

✓ BASIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
COURSE  
53 Attendees



## MICHEAL WELSH

Vice President of Legislative Affairs & Communications

2025 was another busy year for WEDA under the State Capitol dome. Heading into the 2025-26 Legislative Session, WEDA had an extensive “wish list” of legislative priorities to help advance economic growth and prosperity across Wisconsin. In fact, our Legislative Agenda was developed to address some of the state’s largest economic development-related challenges, including those related to housing, childcare, workforce, as well as the need to reform the state’s Tax Incremental Financing laws.

While the current political environment required us to slightly change course on a few of our key goals, we were largely able to find success on many of our priority issues, including a workforce housing and childcare tax incentive bill that has already been signed into law, and others that are in great position to pass before the Legislature adjourns this spring.

## WEDA 2025 Legislative Key Notes....

### Enhancing the Workforce Housing and Childcare Tax Incentives Under the Business Development Tax Credit

*Assembly Bill 280 (Now Wisconsin Act 78)*

This legislation, signed into law by Gov. Tony Evers in December, improves and aims to increase use of the workforce housing and childcare tax credit incentives under the state’s Business Development Tax Credit (BTC) program. The legislation expands the BTC housing and childcare tax sweeteners by allowing eligible businesses to receive tax credits not only for capital expenditures, but also for contributions made to third-party organizations that support workforce housing or childcare initiatives. By broadening eligibility beyond direct capital investments, the law provides employers with greater flexibility to pursue creative, community-based partnerships with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and housing or childcare providers. The new law will also allow childcare and housing investments under BTC to benefit broader communities, not just a business’ own employees.

**Bill Status:** *Signed into law as 2025 WI Act 78*

### Improving the State’s Workforce Housing Revolving Loan Fund Programs

*Assembly Bill 194*

This legislation makes critical improvements to the following three workforce housing revolving loan fund (RLF) programs administered by the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA), which were created in 2023 to increase affordable housing options statewide: 1.) Infrastructure Access Program; 2.) Restore Main Street Program; and 3.) Commercial-to-Housing Conversion Program. The bill updates project eligibility criteria and maximum loan amounts to make the programs more attractive and usable for developers and communities. Most importantly, AB 194 would repeal the “anti-stacking” language in current law that prohibits pairing financing from these programs with Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) or historic rehabilitation tax credits, removing a major barrier to project feasibility.

**Bill Status:** *Passed by the Assembly and is awaiting further action in the Senate*



## Strengthening the Wisconsin Historic Preservation Tax Credit

*Assembly Bill 375*

This legislation enhances Wisconsin’s Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HTC) program, a proven economic development tool that attracts private investment and supports downtown revitalization, job creation, and tourism. Several changes over the years to both the state and federal HTC tax credit programs created eligibility obstacles that have delayed or “killed” certain historic rehabilitation projects. This bill, which will lower administrative barriers to increase program

access and allow more historic buildings to be preserved, will make the following changes to the program: 1.) Decouple the state HTC from the federal HTC for projects applying only for the state credit. This will allow smaller projects to qualify for the state credit without meeting the much higher federal expenditure threshold; and 2.) Modify the current \$3.5 million project cap to allow reapplication every 15 years for new restoration work on the same parcel.

**Bill Status:** *Passed by the Assembly and is awaiting further action in the Senate*

## Creating a Residential Tax Increment District to Boost Housing Development

*Assembly Bill 451*

This legislation would create a new type of Tax Increment District (TID) in Wisconsin—a Residential TID, also referred to as a “Housing TID.” Under this proposal, municipalities would be granted a new tool specifically designed to promote owner-occupied housing development and finance residential infrastructure. The bill provides additional flexibility by exempting Housing TIDs from the current law 12% TIF equalized value limit. Instead, the total value of all Housing TIDs in a municipality would be capped at 3% of the municipality’s equalized property value, allowing communities to address housing needs without crowding out traditional economic development TIDs.

**Bill Status:** *Passed by the Assembly and is awaiting further action in the Senate*

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## Extending the TIF Housing Extension and Proving TIF Flexibility for Residential Development

*Assembly Bill 453*

This legislation includes numerous provisions aimed at boosting housing development, including changes to community comprehensive plans and requests to change zoning classifications. The bill also includes the following key provisions to provide communities with more flexibility to use Tax Increment Financing to promote residential development: 1.) Increase the current law TIF housing extension for TIDs at the end of their lifespan from one to two years; 2.) To clear confusion related to use of TIF for residential development, define “newly-platted residential development” to mean residential development on a parcel that has not previously been the site of permanent structures other than agricultural structures.

**Bill Status:** *Passed by the Assembly and is awaiting further action in the Senate*

## Leveraging the Federal Employer Provided Childcare Tax Credit Bill

*Senate Bill 376*

This legislation creates a new state tax credit for businesses that provide or support childcare for their employees, matching an existing federal incentive. Under current federal law, employers can receive a tax credit for helping build, expand, or operate childcare facilities, or for covering childcare referral and support services. The credit percentage for qualified expenditures is 40% for large businesses and 50% for small businesses. This legislation allows Wisconsin employers who already qualify for that federal credit to also claim the same amount against their state income or franchise taxes. In effect, the bill doubles the incentive for employers

to invest in childcare here in Wisconsin. The credit, which applies only to childcare services located in Wisconsin, is available to a wide range of employers, including small businesses, corporations, and pass-through entities. It also includes taxpayer safeguards so that if a childcare facility closes early and the federal credit must be repaid, the state credit is also repaid.

**Bill Status:** *Passed by the Senate and is awaiting further action in the Assembly.*

## Looking Ahead

Legislative advocacy remains one of WEDA’s most valuable services to its members. The advocacy progress we made during 2025 reflects strong collaboration between WEDA, our key partners, and state policymakers. WEDA will continue working to pursue our legislative goals and seek out additional opportunities to strengthen Wisconsin’s economic climate in the year ahead.

For more information on WEDA’s legislative advocacy efforts, please contact Michael Welsh, VP of Legislative Affairs & Communications at [mwelsh@weda.org](mailto:mwelsh@weda.org).



# WEDA 2025 Financial Report



2025 Fiscal Year End	Actual	Budget	% Budget
<b>Revenue</b>			
Professional Memberships	\$65,022	\$61,170	106%
Corporate Support	\$184,742	\$190,200	97%
Event Registration	\$184,680	\$154,100	120%
Grants	\$67,000	\$105,000	64%
Other	\$6,827	\$11,812	58%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$508,271</b>	<b>\$522,282</b>	<b>97%</b>
<b>Expenses (preliminary)</b>			
Administration	\$309,343	\$320,785	96%
Advocacy	\$90,000	\$90,000	100%
Communication and Marketing	\$12,953	\$19,100	68%
Events	\$124,077	\$124,450	100%
Other	\$9,711	\$15,000	65%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$546,083</b>	<b>\$569,335</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>-\$37,812</b>	<b>-\$47,053</b>	

2025 was a transition year, which featured the recruitment and hiring of our new President & CEO Melissa Hunt following the extraordinary interim support provided by Kathryn Berger through the first portion of the year.

All operations were also consolidated and moved to Badger Bay Management who now provides association management services for WEDA. Considering these changes, the board approved an operating deficit for the year. Fortunately, the association outperformed expectations for the year, largely due to strong membership and corporate support, and event attendance.

## WEDA Board of Directors and Staff Executive Committee

WEDA Board Chair <b>Jenny Kuderer-Radcliffe</b> <i>LaCrosse</i>	President and CEO <b>Melissa Hunt</b> <i>Madison</i>	Member at Large <b>Angie Close</b> <i>Antigo</i>	Member at Large <b>Liz Wendt</b> <i>Wausau</i>
Chair Elect <b>Rebecca Deschane</b> <i>Green Bay</i>	Secretary/Treasurer <b>Kathryn Berger</b> <i>Brown Deer</i>	Board of Directors <b>Pam Christenson</b> <i>Madison</i>	Board of Directors <b>Mark Lee</b> <i>Prairie du Chien</i>
Board of Directors <b>Haley Makela</b> <i>Ashland</i>	Board of Directors <b>Colman Peiffer</b> <i>Madison</i>	Board of Directors <b>Dean Prestegaard</b> <i>Madison</i>	Board of Directors <b>Keri Schreiner</b> <i>River Falls</i>
Board of Directors <b>Dale Shaver</b> <i>Waukesha</i>	Board of Directors <b>Rachel Smith</b> <i>Fond du Lac</i>	Board of Directors <b>Willie Smith</b> <i>Milwaukee</i>	Board of Directors <b>Charlie Walker</b> <i>Chippewa Falls</i>
Board of Directors <b>Wenda Roycraft</b> <i>Madison</i>	Board of Directors <b>Jess Wildes</b> <i>West Bend</i>	Board of Directors <b>Angel Laidlaw</b> <i>Wausau</i>	

