

## Support for Forest Industry Strategic Plan and Roadmap Budget Request

The Wisconsin County Forests Association supports the Wisconsin Council on Forestry's request to fund a **new one-time appropriation in the Forestry SEG Account of \$775,000 to facilitate the development of a Forest Industry-Wide Strategic Plan and Roadmap**. This Plan will build on existing projects which support innovation and workforce development and will position Wisconsin to anticipate and drive the demand of our 21<sup>st</sup> century wood fiber production with sustainable, innovative products to put the state at the top of global wood markets. The goal is a robust forest products industry, now and into the future, that supports our rural communities and our state economy.

Why it is needed now:

- ❖ Wisconsin's forest products industry is at an inflection point where we have seen major market changes impact our industry and rural communities with mills in Park Falls and Wisconsin Rapids closing, leaving hundreds of workers unemployed.
- ❖ This is having a ripple affect across the industry from sustaining and recruiting a trained workforce to our ability to sustainably manage Wisconsin's 17 million acres of forestland.
- ❖ The Blue-Ribbon Commission on Rural Prosperity included the development of a strategic plan and roadmap as a concept to bolster the forest products industry and makes note that the Council on Forestry is well positioned to help lead this effort. <https://ruralwi.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Governors-Blue-Ribbon-Commission-Report.pdf> (page 69)
- ❖ Innovation in the forest industry is occurring at a global scale, paper and wood products have the potential to be used more often as substitutes for less sustainable materials. This effort will help to strategically position Wisconsin to attract new business while maintaining existing industry.
- ❖ We are seeing other states such as Maine and Vermont pursue similar strategic planning efforts and neighboring states invest in alternative wood technology and markets to stay competitive at a regional and global level. Wisconsin needs to proactively plan to keep pace in the industry.
- ❖ Supporting, developing, and diversifying our forest products industry has been recognized as a need recently with related investments including,
  - UWSP WEDC Workforce Innovation Grant
  - Mid-State Technical College Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering, Technology, and Apprenticeship Center
  - Support for Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Technology at UWSP to facilitate cutting edge forest products innovation and translating research into new products.

This Plan will be the foundational source of information and a compass for policymakers, industry investors, entrepreneurs, researchers, regional economic planning groups, and any who seek to invest in supporting and growing Wisconsin's forest products-based economy. It will represent a statewide vision for an environmentally sustainable, economically robust and diverse forward-looking industry built on an assessment of Wisconsin's strengths and capacities and future market opportunities. The Plan will position Wisconsin to anticipate and drive the demand of our 21<sup>st</sup> century wood fiber customers with sustainable, innovative products that offer Wisconsin a competitive seat at the top of the global wood market.

### For more information contact:

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## Additional Background

1. Relevance to the strategic plan is located in the **Wisconsin Forest Product Cluster Build Back Better (BBB) coalition proposal** – See the “Overarching Narrative” for the Build Back Better Region Challenge grant proposal submitted in the summer of 2022: [https://www.eda.gov/archives/2022/files/arpa/build-back-better/finalists/narratives/Wisconsin\\_Forest\\_Products\\_Cluster.pdf](https://www.eda.gov/archives/2022/files/arpa/build-back-better/finalists/narratives/Wisconsin_Forest_Products_Cluster.pdf). There are several references on pages 1, 2, 6 and 10 referring to benchmarking and baselining, market intelligence, horizon scanning, which all relate to what we are now simply referring to as the Forest Industry-wide Strategic Plan and Roadmap. Authors Stacey Johnson (Wisconsin Paper Council) and Paul Fowler (University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point) have been engaged with the Council through entire industry focused efforts and remain supportive of the need to develop a strategic plan.
2. Relevance to **Wisconsin's Forest Action Plan** - Statewide Forest Action Plan is a 10-year strategic plan for the forestry community that spans 2020-2030. The document shares long-term, comprehensive goals and strategies to help the forestry community refine how it will collectively invest state, federal and partner resources to address major management and landscape priorities. See Goals L and M, Page 74 in the report. Generally, the health of the forest industry is a cornerstone to the needs addressed in the entire Forest Socio Economics chapter. <https://widnr.widen.net/view/pdf/77tgnbh66w/2020-Statewide-Forestry-Action-Plan.pdf?t.download=true&u=acpgx5>
3. Relevance to **DNR Division of Forestry 2023 - 2027 Strategic Direction** - A five-year plan that builds off the Forest Action Plan - helps fulfill the division's commitment to align work and resource allocation to best meet their core purpose, niche and values. [https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/ForestPlanning/forestryStrategicDirection\\_2023-2027.pdf](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/ForestPlanning/forestryStrategicDirection_2023-2027.pdf) (pg 6) #1 Major Challenges and Opportunities - Maintaining healthy and resilient forests and the local communities and economies that depend on them. (pg 15) Forest Product Services - Strategy, Expand investigation of new and emerging forest markets in order to advise and support Wisconsin businesses. Note - The DNR Forest Products team is a critical partner in the strategic plan and roadmap effort.
4. **Governor's Letter to the Council** seeking Council's assistance and lead role which at that time the vision was focused on an effort with the U.S. EDA but has since been replaced by the BBB grant effort, and now seen as a complimentary need to support ongoing workforce development initiatives. <https://councilonforestry.wi.gov/Documents/REDS/Gov%20Evers%20Request%20for%20COF%20to%20lead%20REDS.pdf>
5. **The Future of Wisconsin's Forest Products Economy - Summary of Focus Group Discussions report** - this followed the initial Governor's request above. The Council distilled this into actionable items we could lead on, be effective, and that others were not already engaged in. The determination for the Council to pursue an industry wide strategic plan grew out of this, and to its inclusion in the BBB grant application <https://councilonforestry.wi.gov/Documents/REDS%20FINAL%20REPORT%202.8.22.pdf>