

WEDA Legislative Agenda

2023-2024 Legislative Session



Advancing Economic Growth and Prosperity

Economic Development has a broad scope but can be best described as an investment in growing the economy to create opportunity and prosperity for Wisconsin communities, employers, and residents. During the 2023-24 legislative session, it will be increasingly important for state policymakers to focus on effective economic development policies, as we face potential decelerating growth, continued inflation concerns, and a highly unstable labor market.

As the “Voice of Economic Development” in Wisconsin, WEDA is committed to working with lawmakers to promote pro-growth policies that encourage private investment, increase business productivity, and allow Wisconsin families to prosper. The WEDA 2023-24 Legislative Agenda provides a comprehensive list of proposals to boost Wisconsin business attraction and retention; strengthen the state’s workforce; make critical infrastructure investments; and ensure local communities are properly equipped with policy tools to advance economic growth.

The WEDA Government Affairs Team and our members throughout the state look forward to working with the Legislature and the Governor during the 2023-24 session to champion key initiatives that put Wisconsin on a path to greater economic success.

Economic Development Incentives

WEDA supports the improvement of current and the creation of new economic development incentive programs that provide employers with the tools to expand and communities the opportunity to grow their local economies. Critical incentive programs include business tax credits, grants, and loan programs that drive private investment and economic growth across the state. WEDA also encourages policymakers to preserve and enhance Wisconsin Tax Increment Financing (TIF) law. Many Wisconsin communities have used TIF to attract new industries, create jobs, and grow the local tax base. It is not a tax break or a corporate handout, but rather an effective financing tool that sparks development and ultimately reduces the tax burden of other property taxpayers. Ultimately, WEDA supports all legislative efforts to expand the state’s economic development toolbox to ensure Wisconsin remains competitive with our neighboring states.

- Preserve and enhance state Tax Increment Financing law to ensure Wisconsin communities can continue to effectively use TIF to promote local economic growth that benefits residents and property taxpayers.
- Modernize the Business Development Tax Credit to ensure it aligns with current economic realities and remains a powerful business attraction and expansion tool.
- Create a statewide revolving loan fund (RLF) program to increase access to affordable capital for small business expansion and to help fund projects critical to building strong communities.
- Preserve the Manufacturing and Agriculture Tax Credit.
- Establish a product ready fund pool to help communities develop sustainable industrial parks.
- Provide state grant funding for county economic development organizations serving rural communities for the purpose of enhancing program operations.
- Increase state investment in existing and new economic development tools critical for business attraction and retention and to help secure future growth in rural and urban communities across Wisconsin.

Workforce Development

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. In fact, the state's current workforce crisis and the growing difficulty to find enough workers to fill open jobs remains a top concern for businesses throughout the state and a significant impediment to growth. To help strengthen the Wisconsin workforce, WEDA encourages lawmakers to implement programs and policies that help enhance the skills of current Wisconsin workers and attract new individuals to Wisconsin to live and work. It is also essential to encourage residents who are not currently employed to re-enter the workforce by breaking down barriers to employment, including efforts to increase the state's housing stock for working Wisconsin families and improve access to affordable childcare.

Talent Attraction:

- Provide additional state funding for a comprehensive, statewide talent attraction marketing campaign.
- Support tax incentives for new residents that relocate to Wisconsin to work.

Housing:

- Support policies that encourage the development of workforce housing in communities across Wisconsin, including tax credits, TIF incentives, creative financing tools, and zoning and land use reforms.

Childcare:

- Support programs, policies, and tax incentives to strengthen the early childcare workforce and increase access to affordable childcare for Wisconsin working families.

Training:

- Build Wisconsin's talent pipeline through the expansion of and reforms to the state's apprenticeship programs to accelerate the placement of skilled employees in the workforce.
- Reform the Wisconsin Fast Forward Program to ensure it remains an effective and easily utilized tool for Wisconsin employers to upskill the state's workforce.

Tax Climate and Regulatory Reform

WEDA supports effective regulatory reforms and streamlined, equitable tax policies to help foster a competitive business climate in Wisconsin. These are essential ingredients to creating opportunities for business growth and additional capital investment in Wisconsin communities. More specifically, WEDA urges policymakers to continue to reduce the state's tax burden to help make Wisconsin a more attractive place to live, work, and do business.

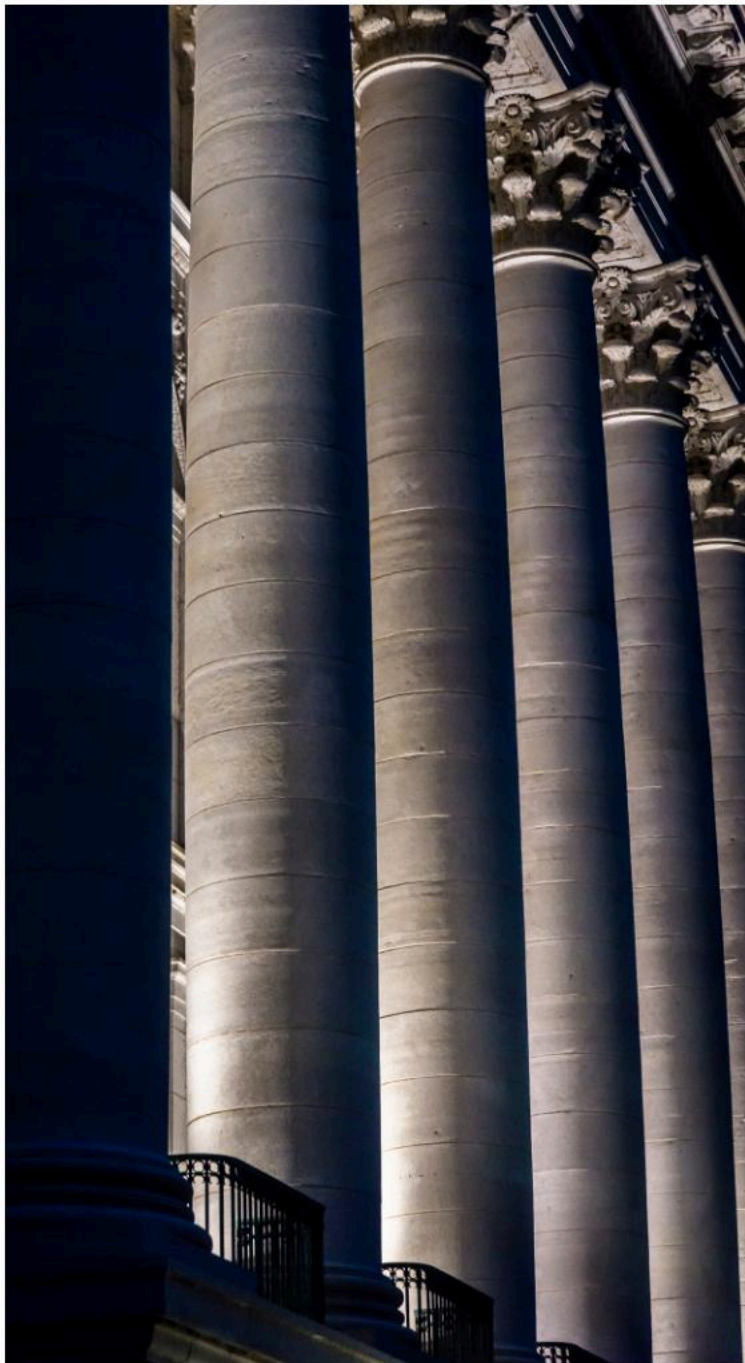
- Support individual income tax cuts for all taxpayers, which will spur economic growth and deliver a powerful talent attraction and retention tool for Wisconsin.
- Support common-sense reforms to reduce regulatory and permitting burdens that create unnecessary costs for Wisconsin businesses, drive uncertainty, and inhibit investment and growth.
- Consolidate all state employee training programs and talent attraction initiatives under one state agency to promote greater efficiency, increase access to critical workforce development information, and provide "one-stop-shopping" for Wisconsin's business community.



Infrastructure

WEDA supports consistent and robust investment in the state's transportation infrastructure – including a modern highway system and well-maintained roads, freight rail, and harbors – as it is vital to economic growth and business productivity. Equally important is the public sector's investment in broadband, as economic opportunities in rural parts of the state are dependent on the availability of this critical infrastructure element. In addition to facilitating commerce and its role as a business and talent attraction tool, high-speed broadband access is also key to the delivery of education, healthcare, and government services.

- Support robust investment in Wisconsin's highways, roads, rail, harbors, and other means of transportation.
- Support additional state funding for rural broadband expansion, as well as policy modifications that ensure broadband funding is directed to the areas of greatest need.
- Promote fiber redundancy and tax incentives in targeted areas to attract data centers.
- Ensure Wisconsin employers have access to affordable and reliable energy.



About WEDA

Founded in 1975, the Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA) is a statewide non-profit trade association dedicated to growing Wisconsin's economy through effective advocacy, education, and networking. Our diverse membership includes professionals working to advance economic growth in a variety of settings, including local and regional economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, utilities, financial institutions, and a variety of businesses and organizations who are invested in growing the state's economy.

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