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WEDC awards \$150,000 grant to support new food and beverage talent outreach program

FaB Wisconsin to implement statewide talent attraction and development initiative

Milwaukee, WI. May 2, 2019 – The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) has awarded a \$150,000 grant to Food and Beverage (FaB) Wisconsin to support the organization’s Talent Outreach Program (TOP) Initiative, a new project designed to promote talent outreach and development in the food and beverage manufacturing industry.

“We’ve focused our efforts on raising the visibility of the factory and identifying pathways for prospective talent to pursue a lifelong career in the food and beverage industry from farm to factory to fork,” said Shelley Jurewicz, executive director for FaB Wisconsin. “To have WEDC’s support helps us accelerate these efforts in a fashion we simply couldn’t do on our own.”

FaB Wisconsin has identified talent outreach and development as a top priority for the food and beverage manufacturing industry. In response to industry input, FaB Wisconsin designed a new statewide talent outreach initiative, aimed at providing industry outreach and educational programming.

The TOP Initiative consists of five components designed in partnership with key stakeholders and private sector leaders to be implemented over a two-year period:

1. **FaB Inspire Portal:** Creating a portal for food and beverage businesses to easily connect with regional entities supporting the Inspire Wisconsin platform designed to connect today’s businesses with tomorrow’s talent
2. **FaBsafe Certification for High Schools:** Developing and piloting a high school version of FaB’s food safety training certification, which will serve as an industry employment or career pathway on-ramp
3. **FaB Universities:** Developing a collective of high schools, colleges, universities and workforce development entities that offer industry-specific academic and training programs in the food and beverage industry
4. **FaB Farm-Factory-Fork:** Expanding and extending FaB’s high school career discovery initiative, which was established to engage schools, students and businesses to reach more students about lifelong career opportunities in the industry
5. **FaB Council Talent Needs Assessment:** Conducting a statewide survey on effectiveness of tools and emerging needs in the food and beverage industry

WEDC’s investment in FaB Wisconsin is part of the organization’s long-term strategy of advancing targeted, high-growth business clusters to develop high-quality jobs and significant job growth in Wisconsin.

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“The FaB TOP Initiative will be an important component in developing a talent pipeline and fostering an innovation ecosystem here in Wisconsin,” said Vincent Rice, WEDC vice president of sector strategy development. “I look forward to seeing the incredible work that this initiative does and the growth that we will see in our food and beverage manufacturing industry as a result.”

FaB Wisconsin is a statewide economic development cluster organization focused on growing Wisconsin’s food and beverage manufacturing industry. FaB works to connect the industry ecosystem from farm to factory to fork, making it easier to innovate, expand, locate or start a food and beverage business in Wisconsin. With more than 250 member companies, government entities and academic institutions, FaB is where the business of food meets our passion for better food and beverage. Learn more at FaBWisconsin.com.

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About the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) leads economic development efforts for the state by advancing and maximizing opportunities in Wisconsin for businesses, communities and people to thrive in a globally competitive environment. Working with more than 600 regional and local partners, WEDC develops and delivers solutions representative of a highly responsive and coordinated economic development network. Visit wedc.org or follow WEDC on Twitter @WEDCNews to learn more.

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