

**EDA Economic Development University Center  
University of Wisconsin-Extension  
University of Wisconsin System**

**Project Progress Report  
10/01/2016 — 06/30/2017**

**Overview of activities:**

Activities reported on this period include the formation and convening of the advisory group and the development of a specific work plan for the initial two-year period. This report also details the beginning work toward fulfilling that work plan.

An advisory committee of key state, regional, and local stakeholders was formed and an initial advisory meeting was held. The purpose of this meeting was to orient the group to the grant award, including the key conditions and the commitments made, as well as to seek input on specific research and activities for the coming year-plus that are consistent with the grant award. The meeting was very successful in achieving these objectives.

Subsequent to this organizational meeting of the advisory group, the project team have been involved in these activities:

- Development of the Wisconsin Economy Survey (research, write, and pilot the upcoming survey).
- Building data sets, basic analysis, and developing graphically interesting presentations of our findings.
- The development and analysis of datasets related to industry cluster analysis, the interstate migration of labor, and shifts to the educational/skill needs of Wisconsin's labor force. This research is being used in reports, policy briefs, presentations, and other forms of dissemination to Wisconsin's policy makers and economic development stakeholders.
- Applied research in collaboration with colleagues in UW-Extension, the UW System, and in universities and Extension programs outside of Wisconsin. Shared the research through peer-reviewed journal articles, education materials, public presentations, and as requested throughout Wisconsin.

## Accomplishments, Benefits & Impacts:

- Planned and organized the initial advisory board meeting, subsequent mid-year meeting, and the following 2018 annual meeting. Developed specific two-year work plan consistent with grant award and making progress on that work plan.
- Developed UW-Extension EDA UC website.
- Completed a thorough review of existing literature surrounding public perceptions of the economy and individual habits in citizen engagement related to economic issues in preparation for an upcoming statewide survey of Wisconsin resident perceptions of the economy at a local, state and national level. I wrote an initial version of the survey, and pre-tested portions of the survey in two separate communities in Wisconsin in the spring of 2017. The relevant question blocks in each of these pilot surveys has been analyzed in order to validate questions. Initial results were then presented to each of the pilot communities in several different forums. Results of test questions are consistent with expectations based on previous data from these two communities, thus validating the questions. Feedback from the communities and their stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive. Based on this, we anticipate the survey will be both useful and interesting to state stakeholders. It should be noted that the pilot tests were conducted at no cost to the EDA UC. Questions were added to pre-existing surveys that were to be administered by the participating communities. Although each community was also interested in learning more about citizen engagement at the local level, these communities were also partially motivated by long-standing relationships with the University of Wisconsin-Extension and the desire to support the initial efforts of the EDA UC.
- The content of the soon to be published report “Brain Drain, Brain Gain or Somewhere in the Middle? ‘Rethinking’ Talent Attraction and Retention from a Sticky State Perspective” has been presented to economic and workforce development professionals across the state. This information will be part of a *Wisconsin State Journal* series that is anticipated to run in early September. A summary of this report was also presented at the 2017 NACDEP/CDS conference.
- Industry and labor force trends for the state’s health care and food manufacturing sectors have been used by Competitive Wisconsin Inc.’s *Be Bold* Initiative to help inform and guide economic development policy in these industries. Labor force trends were also featured as part of a food manufacturing panel discussion recorded for *WisconsinEye*, which is a cable network that covers public affairs and legislative issues in Wisconsin.
- Launched the *WIndicators* economic indicator series on the Center website. This resource provides short summaries of Wisconsin’s economic conditions and complements larger reports and policy briefs.

### Progress toward project timeline:

- A location for the mid-year EDA Advisory Board Meeting has been chosen and reserved, and a preliminary agenda is being drawn up for distribution with 'save the date' notices to be sent in late August. Regarding the annual Winter Advisory Board Meeting, a location has been identified and reserved. Remaining planning will occur after mid-year meeting.
- Estimates for the cost of the survey have been received and are under review. A beta field test for the survey is under preparation and will be administered in September 2017. Pending positive results of the beta test, a final version of the survey will be fielded in late September/early October.
- We are in the process of finalizing a draft of the *State of Wisconsin Manufacturing* report, policy brief and fact sheets in collaboration. This publication will be part of the newly packaged “Wisconsin Economy” series.
- We have started assembling background materials and initiated a discussion on rural housing needs. The rural housing analysis will form another series of reports in the “Wisconsin Economy” series and intends to identify opportunities and challenges related to housing quantity/quality in rural areas and how these conditions affect rural competitiveness and quality of life.
- We have started analyzing how rural commuting patterns have changed after the Great Recession. These commuting patterns will provide insights into: 1) how rural economic structures may have changed over the last decade; 2) whether or not rural and urban areas are more integrated economically; 3) what these changes may mean for rural competitiveness; and 4) potential policies to address these changes.
- Applied research on entrepreneurship, which provides evidence for our programming, has recently been revised and resubmitted to a well-respected journal.
- We’ve completed an outline of the Entrepreneurship for Opinion Leaders curriculum and produced the first lesson/unit and anticipate 3-4 more units to complete the curriculum.
- The special report on economic dynamism is in the draft stage with basic analysis complete and graphics nearly finalized. The content of the Dynamism report and “Entrepreneurship for Opinion Leaders” has led to a University Place lecture to be broadcast on Wisconsin Public Television.
- These products have also fed into two popular press articles on the rural-urban divide. The first article appeared in U.S. News and World Report, PBS, [Salon.com](http://Salon.com), and a translation into Spanish for Univision, among others. The article has reached over 85,000 reads online. The

second article, focused specifically on the rural-urban divide in Wisconsin is forthcoming in *Wiscontext*.

- Also as a result of these products, we'll be presenting at the "Faces of Entrepreneurship" Symposium at UW-Stevens Point. Audience members will include the regional economic development organizations, the UW Board of Regents, and business and economics faculty from the UW System.
- The *WIndicators* series is under development, the first of which has been published online.

### **Challenges:**

We had a significant element of this effort that was expecting a secondary data set under development to be ready by now—and it is not. That has caused us to have to turn to other sources and make some additional adjustments.

### **Organizations Served:**

Institutional support has been outstanding and external partners have been enthusiastic and engaged.

Research partners have been supportive and have contributed to our research agenda.

Specific partners and collaborators include:

- Competitive Wisconsin Inc.; Wisconsin State Journal; Fox Valley Economic Development Professionals; Madison Region Economic Partnership; Village of Cottage Grove; Town of Cottage Grove; Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce; Village of Belleville; Belleville Chamber of Commerce; and Green County Economic Development Corporation.
- The applied research from the UC has been used in "Committee Connect" meetings which have put us in contact with up to six Wisconsin representatives already, and four more anticipated in the near future.
- The University Place served Wisconsin Public Television and their audiences.
- We are commencing a partnership with the other UW System EDA UC recipient at UW-Stout to seek out complementary elements of our efforts.