

Gov. Walker: State Leaders to Join Governor Walker in Awarding Fab Labs Grants Throughout Wisconsin

Posted on Wednesday, Apr 19, 2017

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Madison - Governor Scott Walker, Lieutenant Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, and key state leaders will travel throughout Wisconsin on Tuesday, April 25, to present more than 20 public school districts with a total of nearly \$500,000 in grants that will enable them to start or expand local fabrication laboratories, or fab labs.

"This unified show of support from the leaders of state government and all levels of education is a clear indication of the important role fab labs play in providing students in every region of the state with hands-on learning in science, technology, engineering, art, and math," Governor Walker said. "Fab Lab Day will honor the schools receiving the latest grants and will pay tribute to the teachers, students, community members, and other partners who are working hard to ensure our fab lab network continues to pay dividends for students and the community."

In addition to Governor Walker and Lieutenant Governor Kleefisch, those making grant announcements throughout the state will include:

- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Secretary Mark R. Hogan and Deputy Secretary Tricia Braun
- Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Ray Allen
- University of Wisconsin System (UW-System) President Ray Cross and UW-Stout Chancellor Bob Meyer
- Wisconsin Technical College System President Morna Foy
- WEDC Vice Presidents Lee Swindall, Barbara LaMue, and Aaron Hagar

- Sharon Wendt, Director of Career and Technical Education for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI)

Additional details on the times and locations of the school visits will be released Monday, April 24.

“Fab Labs will provide students with the opportunity to develop an idea and then turn it into a product – it brings reality to the classroom,” said UW-System President, Ray Cross. “They learn how to analyze an issue, problem-solve, create a solution, and communicate their outcomes. Regardless of what discipline a student may pursue, they learn important knowledge and skills that will serve them well throughout their lives.”

“Our fab labs network, along with initiatives such as the state’s youth apprenticeship program and career pathways curriculum, is aimed at providing students with the key skills they need to succeed in the workforce,” added WEDC Secretary Hogan.

WEDC will award grants to 21 school districts to assist them with equipment purchases for instructional and educational purposes in fab labs, which are high-tech workshops with the latest industry equipment used in a wide range of manufacturing facilities. WEDC will provide grants of up to \$25,000 to individual school districts, or up to \$50,000 to consortiums of two or more districts, for the creation and/or expansion of fab labs. The funds may be used to purchase equipment used for instructional and educational purposes by elementary, middle, junior high, or high school students. Applicants must match the amount of funding provided by WEDC.

This is the second round of funding for the Fab Lab Grants. Governor Walker’s 2015-17 state budget included \$500,000 to fund the initial round of grants. In response to an overwhelming number of applications in the first year, WEDC provided another \$500,000 for the program, and in May 2016, grants of up to \$25,000 were awarded to 25 school districts.

Due to the important role fab labs play in student training and workforce development, Governor Walker’s 2017-19 budget calls for another \$1 million in fab lab funding over the next two years.

In the latest round, 69 public school districts applied for Fab Lab Grants, which are

being awarded through a competitive process. Applications were evaluated based on readiness and long-range planning, curriculum, business and community partnerships, financial need, and previous awards.

This year, WEDC is requiring award recipients to make the fab labs accessible to the public, and many schools will offer training and workshops to community members outside of school hours. That facet of the program is expected to drive innovation throughout the community, WEDC officials say.

The Fab Labs Grant Program, which is aimed at preparing students for the workplace, embodies Think-Make-Happen in Wisconsin, a new unifying message that celebrates the opportunities Wisconsin offers for business, personal, and professional fulfillment.

“One of the goals of Think-Make-Happen is to build a greater understanding of the opportunities offered through the multitude of initiatives geared toward readying and aligning our future workforce to the needs of Wisconsin employers,” WEDC Secretary Hogan said.

To mark the unique statewide tour and celebrate the vital role fab labs play in preparing students with the skills they need for the jobs of the 21st century, Governor Walker has declared April 25 as “Fab Lab Day” in Wisconsin. A copy of the Governor’s proclamation is attached. In addition, Governor Walker recorded a promotional video for Fab Lab Day, which can be found [here](#).

For more information about Wisconsin’s fab labs, including resources for teachers, visit www.inwisconsin.com/fablabs or follow #WIFabLab on Twitter.