

Pushing for diversity in Foxconn's supply chain

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Foxconn plans to make \$1.4 billion in supply purchases in Wisconsin each year once the LCD manufacturing facility is up and running. But questions remain about who exactly will provide the needed materials.

Keenan Grenell, director of the Milwaukee-based Manufacturing Diversity Institute, says the state has a chance to avoid falling into the same trap as Silicon Valley — which has a serious lack of minority tech experts — as stakeholders seek answers to these questions.

“Just like every major initiative that comes to an entrepreneurial ecosystem, this thing is fast-track,” he said. “With that being said, there’s going to be some pieces left undone.”

He says getting diverse suppliers involved isn’t exactly at the top of the agenda for Wisconsin leaders in economic development and politics.

“Wisconsin has not done a good job with supplier diversity,” he said. “It’s not going to be a major priority among leaders; they’re just not accustomed to making that a priority, so they don’t do the things to make that happen.”

He says MDI is working to ensure new training regimens are taking place at Gateway Technical College, Waukesha Technical College and Milwaukee Area Technical College to connect underserved communities to training facilities.

“These are on-ramps for individuals that want to be a part of Foxconn’s supply chain,” he said.

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