

UW-Madison: Public comments sought on draft recommendations for Wisconsin's language roadmap

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MADISON-Gautam Malik, chief operating officer of Stevens Point-based manufacturer Gamber-Johnson, has witnessed first-hand how a multilingual workforce can provide a competitive edge for business.

“The bigger market opportunities today exist outside of America,” Malik said. “Some of these emerging markets like Brazil, India, and China are huge for us, and for us to penetrate those markets, we need to meet people with the right language skill sets.”

Wisconsin leaders from multiple sectors – business, health and human services, nonprofits, education, and community organizations – have drafted recommendations for meeting the state’s current and future workforce and community needs related to language skills and intercultural competencies. These draft recommendations, which draw on insights and ideas shared at a statewide Wisconsin Language Summit in January, will form the basis of the Wisconsin Language Roadmap, a strategic planning document that will identify action items to address the State’s workforce and community language needs.

All Wisconsinites are invited to review and comment on the draft recommendations by June 15. The draft recommendations and a link to an online survey to provide comments are available at <https://wisconsinlanguageroadmap.wiscweb.wisc.edu/recommendations/>.

As Wisconsin's economy becomes increasingly global, intercultural competencies, including language skills, are key to productive business interactions at home and abroad. Wisconsin business leaders recognize the value of multilingual workforce talent in meeting six strategic goals: expanding exports, accessing new markets, building partner relationships, gaining a competitive advantage, engaging with local communities, and fulfilling basic business functions. However, these business leaders face difficulties in finding and retaining multilingual personnel, as well as developing staff with a global mindset.

The Wisconsin Language Roadmap Initiative aims to ensure that Wisconsin's citizens are able to compete in interconnected global markets, engage with diverse local communities, and participate in professional and personal networks that cross linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries. The initiative is aimed at preparing all Wisconsin students to be workforce- and community-ready with advanced proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English and in doing so, enhance the economic competitiveness and vitality of the state of Wisconsin.

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For more information:

www.wisconsinlanguageroadmap.wisc.edu