

Gov. Evers: Announces new public-private partnership to increase COVID-19 laboratory testing capacity

Posted on Monday, Mar 30, 2020

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced a new public-private partnership among Wisconsin industry leaders to increase Wisconsin's laboratory testing capacity for COVID-19. Prior to today's announcement, the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene and the Milwaukee Public Health Lab were leading the Wisconsin Clinical Lab Network labs to bring additional COVID-19 testing online.

The new partnership now includes laboratory support from Exact Sciences, Marshfield Clinic Health System, Promega, and UW Health. These organizations, along with the Wisconsin Clinical Lab Network, will now share knowledge, resources, and technology to bolster Wisconsin's testing capacity.

"The Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene and the Milwaukee Public Health Lab should be commended for the tremendous lift they have done over the past few weeks to rapidly bring these tests online. And I want to especially extend my gratitude to the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene for going above and beyond to expand testing capacity within the Wisconsin Clinical Lab Network, and ensure Wisconsin does not have a backlog of COVID-19 tests," said Gov. Evers. "I also want to thank the Wisconsin Diagnostic Lab at Froedtert, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Gunderson Health Systems, and Aurora Health Care for their early work and continued leadership. But even with these combined efforts, unfortunately, we know all too well that as this disease spreads there will be significant pressure on our labs to keep pace with testing."

The Wisconsin Clinical Lab Network labs have been averaging completion of 1,500-2,000 COVID-19 tests per day. The expanded capacity from the state's new public-private partnership is expected to double that capacity initially and continue to expand as additional

platforms and supplies become available.

“Wisconsin is extremely fortunate to have these industry leaders in our own backyard,” said Gov. Evers. “They are exhibiting the right kind of leadership that all Wisconsinites deserve: stepping up with innovation, cutting down superficial barriers, and doing all they can to help keep Wisconsin communities healthy.”

“The people of Exact Sciences are honored to partner with Governor Evers, public health officials, health care providers, Marshfield Clinic, UW Health, Epic, and Promega to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in our state,” said Kevin Conroy, chairman and CEO, Exact Sciences. “Our incredible teams are working around the clock to bring up the ability to support our state’s health care workers, first responders and patients affected by COVID-19. We are repurposing some of our equipment and reconfiguring areas of our laboratory space to help scale up Wisconsin’s COVID-19 testing capabilities. We look forward to applying the lessons we’ve learned in the ongoing fight against cancer to help bring an end to this public health crisis.”

“Marshfield Clinic Health System believes collaboration is at the core of overcoming the challenges COVID-19 is presenting our communities. Not only does this spirit of collaboration exist between state government and our partners in healthcare and private business, it’s what has driven the System’s clinical and research labs to clear the way for widespread and rapid COVID-19 testing,” said Dr. Susan Turney, CEO Marshfield Clinic Health System. “Our ability to now test for COVID-19, and turn results around within a day or less, is a monumental step in terms of identifying the virus, more precisely allocating our resources to patients that need them most and further understanding the scope of the pandemic on a local level.”

“Promega is providing the reagents needed for COVID-19 tests as part of a collective initiative to accelerate testing in Wisconsin. Labs in the state that are running these tests have expressed great confidence in Promega’s ability to manufacture the vital reagents required for the necessary analysis. As needed, Promega scientists and engineers will help fine-tune methods on robots and instrumentation, allowing for high-throughput testing. Promega began scaling up reagent manufacturing in January to address global needs, and has maintained accelerated production since then. Operations teams continue to work on ways to expand production to further meet unprecedented demand,” said Promega CEO, Bill Linton. “Everyone at Promega feels a deep commitment to humanity’s battle against COVID-19, especially given our highly specialized capacity to contribute to this fight. We are honored to join in this historic collaboration between local businesses, labs and state agencies working together to significantly scale up testing capabilities for the

people of Wisconsin.”

“UW Health’s hospitals and clinics are working side by side with state and local government and our private sector partners to increase testing capacity, address the needs for space and equipment and encourage social distancing,” said UW Health CEO, Alan Kaplan. “These coordinated efforts are critical to mounting an effective response to COVID-19. We couldn’t be more proud of the physicians, nurses and staff at UW Health that are on the front lines as we combat this virus.”

Residents who are seeking a COVID-19 test are still required to receive an order from a doctor. These labs are not testing sites.

“While I am excited to announce these critical partnerships that will increase our capacity to fight this outbreak in Wisconsin, there are still very real challenges to obtaining supplies of critical laboratory materials,” said Gov. Evers. “The rapid spread of COVID-19 in other parts of the country and world are making these important supplies scarce, but with our new partners, and through the state’s ongoing efforts to obtain these materials from the federal government and through the private market, we are working day and night to reinforce our sources of these supplies.”

All individuals are encouraged to do the following:

- Stay at home as much as possible. Cancel events and avoid groups, gatherings, play dates, and nonessential appointments;
- Stay at least 6 feet away from other people, when possible;
- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol;
- Avoid touching face, eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands;
- Cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and cough and sneeze into your elbow;
- Continue to visit [Department Health Services COVID-19 informational website](#). This comprehensive website has resources, updates, and answers to commonly asked questions about COVID-19.

More information regarding the statewide COVID-19 response is also available [here](#).