

WMC: New report promotes economic growth and workforce development in rural Wisconsin

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MADISON – WMC Foundation’s Future Wisconsin Project released its “Revitalizing Rural Wisconsin” report on Wednesday in an effort to bring attention to policies and ideas that can promote economic growth and workforce development in rural Wisconsin. The new publication identifies a number of economic challenges facing rural Wisconsin and provides strategies and ideas that can help revitalize portions of the Badger State outside of metropolitan areas like Milwaukee and Madison. WMC Foundation – an affiliate of Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) – announced its focus on rural prosperity at its annual Future Wisconsin Summit in December 2019. Following the Summit, WMC Foundation conducted research amongst employers throughout rural Wisconsin to better understand the business community’s concerns and discuss potential solutions.

The report highlights five challenges facing rural Wisconsin:

- Limited workforce availability
- Gaps in broadband
- Stress on legacy industries
- Lack of new housing
- Affordability of healthcare

“While the challenges facing rural Wisconsin may not be new, that does not diminish the need for action,” said WMC Foundation Executive Director Wade Goodsell. “Thanks to the hard work of the Future Wisconsin Project Steering Committee, this report details a number of best practices and strategies that will put rural Wisconsin on the path to prosperity once again.”

The report outlines several “Ideas that Work” including:

- West Virginia’s Simulated Workplace program, which transforms Career and

Technical Education (CTE) classrooms into authentic workplace environments. From 2010 to 2016, the number of high school seniors completing a CTE program more than doubled.

- The Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) program – which promotes training that leads to an Advanced Manufacturing Technician degree and is currently active in 13 states
- Grant County, Indiana’s Grant’s Got Talent relocation assistance program, which provides down payment assistance to college graduates moving to the community and taking a full-time job in targeted fields

In addition to “Ideas that Work,” the report also highlights policies that can make a difference. These include strategies to attract new talent to the state, use different available technologies to expand rural broadband and contain healthcare costs for businesses so they can provide affordable insurance to employees.

“There is not just one problem facing rural Wisconsin, and there is not a single silver-bullet solution,” added WMC Senior Director of Workforce & Employment Policy Chris Reader. “However, the policy ideas proposed in this report are a first step to revitalizing our rural economy.”

[Click here](#) to read the full report.