

# WEDC: Wisconsin school districts encouraged to apply for Fab Labs Grants

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*WEDC expects to award grants to 20 districts; deadline is Jan.7*

**MADISON, WI. OCT. 27, 2021** – The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) is now accepting applications for the sixth year of its Fabrication Laboratories (Fab Labs) Grant Program, which provides funding to help public schools build or expand fab labs.

The grant program supports hands-on science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) education by assisting public school districts with equipment purchases for instructional and educational purposes in fab labs. Fab labs are high-tech workshops with the latest equipment, including computer-controlled manufacturing components such as 3D printers, laser engravers and computer numerical control routers.

WEDC's investment in the program puts fab labs within reach for schools that might otherwise not have the financial means to install such facilities.

WEDC will provide grants of up to \$25,000 to public school districts, or up to \$50,000 to consortiums of two or more districts, for the creation and/or expansion of fab labs. For this year's funding cycle, applicants are being asked to match 50% of the amount of grant funds requested. For example, if your district is requesting a grant of \$25,000, the district must provide a match of at least \$12,500. The funds may be used to purchase equipment used for instructional and educational purposes by elementary, middle, junior high, or high school students.

Since the program's inception, WEDC has awarded over \$3.4 million in grants to 95 districts. In April, grants totaling \$635,090 were awarded to 28 districts. WEDC is allocating \$500,000 in this fiscal year and anticipates awarding 20 grants. Recipients will be announced in the spring.

"The Fab Labs program allows students to create, build and discover new technologies and skills," said Missy Hughes, secretary and CEO of WEDC. "These labs are where the next generation of Wisconsin workers train and innovate."

Fab Labs Grants will be awarded through a competitive process, with applicants evaluated based on the applicant's readiness and long-range planning, curriculum, business and community partnerships, financial need and previous awards.

Applicants who have already received three grants will be ineligible this year for additional funds, except for Milwaukee Public Schools or if an applicant is seeking a one-time grant to establish a fab lab for use by K-8 students. If a district previously received three Fab Labs Grants, they would still be eligible to apply for a one-time grant to establish a fab lab for use by K-8 students.

In addition to the grant program, WEDC also is supporting the state's fab labs by working with the University of Wisconsin-Stout and Fox Valley Technical College to develop an online tool to increase collaboration and the sharing of resources among school districts with fab labs.

The web portal, which was developed by the UW-Stout Discovery Center with guidance from teachers statewide, allows teachers and others at fab lab schools to communicate with one another on topics such as curriculum development and implementation, equipment usage and troubleshooting, training and professional development.

More information on the program, including application details, can be found at [wedc.org/fablabs](http://wedc.org/fablabs). The deadline is Jan. 7.