

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Works to bring first minority business development center to Wisconsin

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin announced that Wisconsin is receiving federal funding to establish the state's first Minority Business Development Center. The U.S. Department of Commerce Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) has awarded the Wisconsin North Central Minority Supplier Development Council (NCMSDC) \$1.61 million through the MBDA's Business Center Program to operate Wisconsin's first Business Center to assist minority-owned businesses.

Wisconsin is currently served by offices in Detroit and Chicago, but now NCMSDC, whose Wisconsin office is based in Milwaukee, will join a network of MBDA Business Centers and partners from around the country to provide high quality, technical assistance to Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) – including counseling and mentoring, assisting with access to capital, contracts and grants, and supporting job creation and retention. The goal of the MBDA's Business Center Program is to promote the growth and global competitiveness of America's MBEs.

"I worked to bring a new Minority Business Development Center to Wisconsin and now we are going to have additional resources and services in our state to provide direct support to our minority business community," **said Senator Baldwin**. "By investing in expanded access to the MBDA's Business Center Program, we can build a stronger and more diverse small business economy in Wisconsin."

"To give Wisconsin's minority-owned businesses the access they need to succeed, we need to meet people where they are," **said Don Cravins, Jr., Under**

Secretary of Commerce for Minority Business Development. “The greatest obstacle facing minority-owned businesses is access: access to capital, access to contracts, and access to markets. Expanding MBDA’s national network of business centers is critical to breaking down those barriers. The North Central Minority Supplier Development Council understands the unique challenges Wisconsin businesses and entrepreneurs of color face. We are ecstatic they will be operating the state’s first MBDA business center, not only to strengthen Wisconsin businesses, but to further MBDA’s evolution as a leader for America’s 9.7 million minority-owned businesses. We are proud Wisconsin will now have an MBDA business center to call their own.”

“This is the epitome of a public/private partnership at scale,” **said Heather Olson, President & CEO of North Central Minority Supplier Development Council (NCMSDC).** “Operating the Wisconsin Minority Business Center in collaboration with our integrated ecosystem of partners will systemically leverage minority businesses’ access to contracts, capital, and markets. This is a game changer for achieving socioeconomic growth in Wisconsin! We are thankful for Senator Baldwin’s pivotal support in bringing a minority business center to Wisconsin. NCMSDC fully embraces this great challenge and opportunity.”

“Wisconsin’s selection for a new Minority Business Center will further enhance our efforts to ensure diverse businesses have the resources they need to prosper,” **said Missy Hughes, secretary and CEO of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the state’s leading economic development organization.** “WEDC is pleased North Central Minority Supplier Development Council has been selected to lead this effort, and we look forward to supporting this vital service.”

Senator Baldwin worked to include the bipartisan *Minority Business Development Act of 2021* as an amendment to the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)*, making the MBDA permanent and increasing its funding and reach. The legislation provided a provision to award assistance of at least \$250,000 through the agency’s MBDA Business Center Program to eligible entities to operate centers that support minority businesses in accessing capital, contracts, and grants and creating jobs. The infrastructure law also authorized \$550 million over five years for the MBDA, or \$110 million in annual funding through Fiscal Year 2025 – more than double the agency’s 2021 appropriation of \$48 million.

As Chair of the Commerce Committee's subcommittee with jurisdiction over the Minority Business Development Agency, bringing a MBDA Business Development Center to Wisconsin has been Senator Baldwin's priority. Earlier this year, the Department of Commerce announced it would expand into six additional states using funding from the FY22 omnibus. Senator Baldwin pressed Under Secretary Cravins [during his appointment hearing](#) to ensure Wisconsin would be included in that list of new states. Her office also assisted NCMSDC to shepherd their application across the finish line.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).