

# Groups driving startup growth getting \$3.5M through Ignite Wisconsin effort

Posted on Thursday, Feb 19, 2026

Organizations driving startup growth across Wisconsin are getting \$3.5 million in newly announced state funding.

After Gov. Tony Evers referenced the new Ignite Wisconsin funding in his State of the State [address](#) Tuesday evening, WEDC yesterday rolled out details for the four consortiums getting support through the program.

The gov said the effort will “advance startups in our state in targeted sectors to boost our homegrown innovation.” That includes emerging technology such as fusion energy, according to details provided by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.

One of the recipients, the Wisconsin Fusion Energy Coalition, is getting \$778,000 to establish the state as a “national hub” for this industry through business creation and attraction and other related efforts.

Led by the 5 Lakes Institute — which promotes tech development in the Great Lakes region — the coalition plans to provide financial support to five startup teams and technical help to more than 80 companies over 18 months. Expected impacts include 24 new jobs and three new product lines.

“WEDC’s support will help us build out a vibrant ecosystem around decades of world-leading fusion energy research at UW-Madison and Wisconsin’s strong manufacturing base that is well-positioned to be an important part of this new industry’s supply chain,” Kathleen Gallagher, the institute’s executive director, said in a statement.

Other partners in the fusion coalition include the UW-Madison College of Engineering, the UW-Whitewater Fiscal and Economic Research Center, WARF and the Wisconsin Procurement Institute.

Meanwhile, the Cheese Wedge Consortium in northeastern Wisconsin is getting \$1 million to provide accelerator programming, pre-seed funding “bootcamps” and corporate engagement efforts. Led by the New North economic development group, the effort will include equity investments, legal and housing stipends for relocating entrepreneurs, co-working spaces and more.

The consortium plans to support 21 startups and 42 participants within a year, while providing direct funding to 18 businesses, creating 46 new jobs and generating \$3.4 million in revenue, according to the WEDC overview.

Patti Habeck, president and CEO of the New North, says the effort “is about creating a thriving region where ideas flourish, and solutions to the world’s challenges are born.”

Another \$950,000 is going to the Wisconsin Frontier Technology Consortium, led by the Wisconsin Technology Council. This group is focused on boosting emerging tech such as AI, robotics, advanced materials and quantum computing through a new research lab, an accelerator program, and a roundtable gathering to explore related hurdles.

The Frontier consortium says it will support 24 startups in two years, host four labs and four statewide roundtable events, create 50 jobs, provide grants and generate more early-stage investments.

“This end-to-end platform will support founders from innovation to impact and ensure that breakthroughs in deep technology benefit Wisconsin’s core industries and workers,” Tech Council President Maggie Brickerman said in a statement.

The final \$772,000 is going to the Center for Technology Commercialization’s Foundry Factory, which aims to boost the “high-growth” startup ecosystem in the state’s southeastern region. Elements of the CTC effort include an innovation bootcamp, startup accelerators, pitch events and company matchmaking.

The Foundry Factor aims to provide funding to 15 businesses over two years and technical help to 60 businesses, as well as “pre-accelerator” programming for 15 early-stage teams. CTC Director Margaret Ramey says the two-year initiative is “designed to spark a lasting cultural shift toward a more connective, innovative region.”



See the [release](#) and see more on Ignite Wisconsin [here](#).