

# New effort seeks to form cohesive plan for forest products industry

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A newly launched \$1 million initiative aims to develop a cohesive strategy for Wisconsin's forest products industry.

"We want to have a plan for the future, not just respond to what's happening or what we think will happen," Wisconsin Paper Council President Scott Suder said yesterday in an interview. "We want to have a solid plan based on real data ... We don't have that roadmap now, but that's why we're doing this."

Partners in Wisconsin Forests FIRST — which stands for Forest Industry Roadmap and Strategies for Tomorrow — yesterday rolled out details for the two-year project allocated \$1 million in state budget funding.

That grant went to the council and the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, which are working with the Wisconsin Council on Forestry on the effort. Their goals include creating a "long-term roadmap" for the sector, to ensure Wisconsin's forests remain sustainable while supporting the various industries that depend on them.

"Wisconsin's forest products industry has a very extensive and elaborate supply chain, from both the cutting of the trees to industries that utilize those wood products, to the consumer," Suder said. "We want to make sure that entire process, that entire supply chain is healthy. It does begin with forests."

Virginia-based Camoin Associates has been tapped to manage the project, which will be overseen by an executive committee made up of leaders from the participating groups as well as an administrator from the state Department of Natural Resources.

Next, organizers will form a steering committee as well, to work with the project manager to "ensure this roadmap sets Wisconsin apart," Suder said. To create the plan, the initiative will include industry research and data analysis from currently siloed information sources.

In addition to the overarching workforce challenges bemoaned by employers throughout the state, the project will take a “deep dive” on more niche issues such as Wisconsin’s wood fiber supply.

“We’re going to take a look at major challenges,” Suder said. “We’re first going to do a wood fiber supply study to see what our supply looks like, what we will need for the future for the industry. We’re also going to do an inventory and analysis using the latest data.”

Findings will be used to estimate production needs in the future, Suder explained, as well as other relevant trends. He added the initiative may endorse specific policy proposals and legislation down the road, noting partners are interested in “ideas that are going to work” and make Wisconsin competitive in the years to come.

See more in yesterday’s [announcement](#).