

# UW-Stout: Gets \$19 million federal grant to manage statewide manufacturing program

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*Manufacturing Outreach Center receives federal designation as statewide leader to support small and medium-sized manufacturers*

Menomonie, Wis. – University of Wisconsin-Stout, Wisconsin's Polytechnic University, has been awarded \$19 million in federal funds as it takes a leadership role as manager of the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program in Wisconsin. The funds, \$3.8 million annually for five years, come through the U.S. Department of Commerce's [National Institute of Standards and Technology MEP National Network](#). The program's primary mission is to strengthen and empower small and mid-sized U.S. manufacturers through state-designated MEP Centers across the United States.

This funding will enable [UW-Stout's Manufacturing Outreach Center](#) (MOC), its subrecipient the [Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership \(WMEP\)](#), and statewide manufacturing leaders to coordinate efforts that ensure continued, uninterrupted support for Wisconsin's small and mid-sized manufacturers.

For the past decade, MOC and WMEP have received funding through the Wisconsin Center for Manufacturing and Productivity (WCMP). With WCMP's Board of Directors voting to dissolve the organization at the end of 2025 to streamline operations, UW-Stout — through the MOC — stepped forward to secure future funding and maintain continuity of services across the state.

“Through MOC's leadership and the combined statewide field staff of both

organizations,

manufacturers will continue to access tailored support in areas such as lean process improvement, quality management systems, supply chain optimization, leadership development, and advanced technology adoption, including AI,” **UW-Stout Chancellor Katherine Frank** said.

Under the new structure, MOC serves as the primary applicant and coordinating entity, with Madison-based WMEP as a subrecipient and key partner in delivering statewide services. Together, the organizations continue a 30-year impact record: creating or retaining more than 34,000 jobs, generating \$8.9 billion in economic impact, and serving more than 575 manufacturers annually.

“Through this new structure the MOC and its partner, the WMEP, will be able to better connect small and medium-sized manufacturers to statewide resources, including [UW-Stout’s Center for Advanced Manufacturing & AI](#),” said **Seth Hudson, executive director of Corporate Relations and Economic Engagement** at UW-Stout.

Manufacturing remains a cornerstone of Wisconsin’s economy, contributing \$71.6 billion to the state’s \$402 billion gross domestic product and employing about 15% of the workforce, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

“Together, MOC and WMEP have delivered measurable results for Wisconsin manufacturing,” said Chris Baichoo, CEO and executive director of WMEP. “This alliance ensures coordinated, statewide support to help small and mid-sized manufacturers strengthen operations, develop their workforce and remain competitive.”

By equipping manufacturers with practical tools, strategic guidance, and specialized expertise, MOC and WMEP are positioning Wisconsin’s manufacturing sector for long-term strength and competitiveness.

“At UW-Stout’s MOC, our commitment to supporting Wisconsin manufacturers has never been stronger. Our dedicated staff and partners, including WMEP, work alongside manufacturers to meet them where they are and help them tackle the challenges of a fast-moving industry,” said **Aaron Bialzik, director of UW-Stout’s MOC**.

*UW-Stout, a member of the [Universities of Wisconsin](#), is [Wisconsin's Polytechnic University](#), with a focus on applied learning, collaboration with business and industry, and career outcomes. Learn more via the [FOCUS2030](#) strategic plan.*