

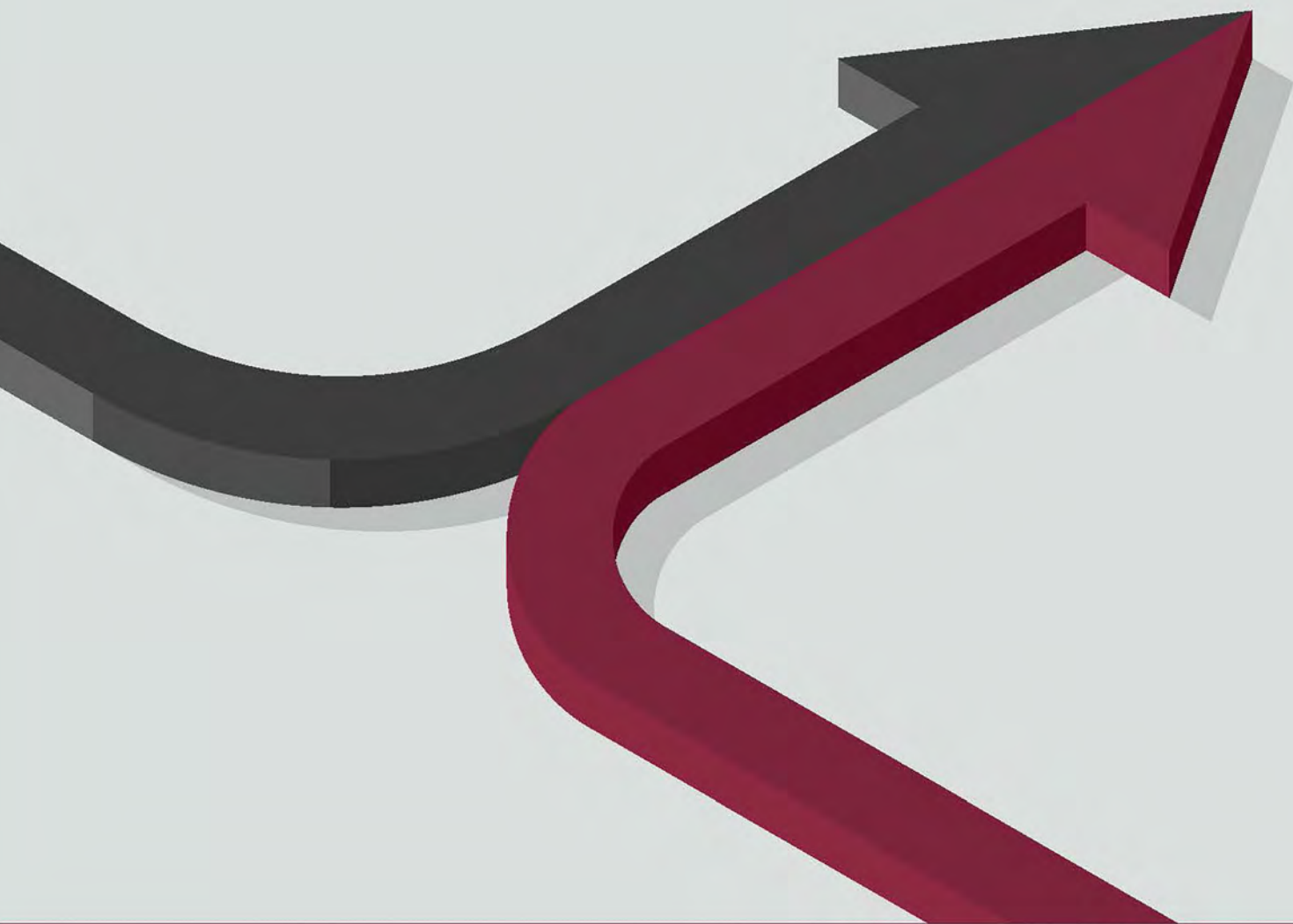
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SEPTEMBER 2026

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From the President

Mark D. O'Connell

/ President & CEO

Learning, Adapting and Working Together

For county officials, each year brings new challenges, new laws, new technologies and new expectations from the residents we serve. Whether responding to cybersecurity threats, managing infrastructure projects or addressing public health needs, the responsibilities of county officials continue to expand.

That is why I encourage every county official to attend the WCA Annual Conference later this month. The conference is more than a yearly gathering. It is an investment in your ability to lead more effectively.

The 2026 conference theme, Honoring the Past, Building the Future, reminds us that public service has always relied on leaders willing to learn, adapt and work together to solve problems. As our nation commemorates its 250th anniversary this year, it is an appropriate time to reflect not only on our history but also on how we can continue to strengthen local government.

One of the best ways to do that is to take advantage of the conference's educational workshops. Designed for county officials and staff, the workshops offer practical information you can apply right away. You'll hear about innovative county programs, emerging issues facing local government, legislative updates and proven strategies from colleagues who have faced many of the same challenges you do. Every workshop offers an opportunity to return home with new ideas, valuable resources and fresh perspectives.

This year's keynote speaker brings strong lessons in leadership to the podium, drawing on key figures from our nation's and world history.

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Peter Cressy, director of Executive Leadership Programs at the Washington Leadership Institute. His presentation, Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Churchill: A Strategic Approach to Leading in Times of Crisis and Change, examines the eight common traits that enabled these influential leaders to guide their people through extraordinary times. More than a history lesson, Dr. Cressy emphasizes the importance of strategic vision, effective communication, visibility and collaboration in dealing with the inherent anxiety created by crisis and change and in charting a positive way forward.

The conference also offers a unique opportunity to hear directly from state leaders in Wisconsin. Attendees will hear remarks from Gov. Tony Evers as he prepares to leave office, from the leading candidates seeking to succeed him, and from Justice Rebecca Dallet, who will provide insight into the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

Beyond the workshops and general sessions, the Annual Conference offers something even more valuable, the chance to connect with peers from across the state. Some of the best ideas don't come from a podium; they come from conversations with fellow county officials who have faced similar challenges. Those relationships often last long after the conference ends.

I hope you'll join us Sept. 20-22 in Sauk County. The knowledge you gain, the connections you make, and the ideas you bring home benefit not only your county and the residents you serve but the state as a whole. We look forward to seeing you there. ■

Stay connected.

Visit wicounties.org to access resources and learn about events.

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Racing the Cyber Clock

What Wisconsin Must Do to Accelerate Its Defenses

By the Division of Enterprise Technology, Wisconsin Department of Administration

The time between a new vulnerability and a cyberattack used to be measured in calendar days. Today, the stopwatch on our phones will do.

Adversaries are leveraging artificial intelligence to accelerate and automate every stage of the attack, from discovering vulnerabilities and conducting reconnaissance to generating multiple malware variants. Attacks now move as fast as the machines they run on, leaving defenders scrambling to adapt.

We are already seeing concrete results from this AI acceleration on the defensive side. In July, Microsoft released a record-shattering set of monthly security updates addressing more than 600 flaws. This massive volume, roughly triple the previous record, was largely attributed to Microsoft's growing use of AI to hunt for bugs across its codebase.

When vendors are discovering and issuing hundreds of patches in a single month, relying on manual deployment is no longer feasible.

It is the position of the state's Division of Enterprise Technology that Wisconsin needs a unified approach grounded in shared services, automated defense, strict identity controls, aggressive vulnerability reduction and tighter coordination across all levels of government.

The federal government is recognizing this shift and

rapidly realigning its strategy. A June 2026 executive order issued a clear directive to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) to prioritize federal cyber defense using AI-enabled defensive tools and to facilitate access to these services for state and local authorities.

More critically, CISA is actively shaping the rules of engagement for AI. In May 2026, CISA and its international partners released the "Careful Adoption of Agentic Artificial Intelligence Services" guide.

They also published a "Software Bill of Materials for AI Minimum Elements"

to help public- and private-sector stakeholders improve transparency across their AI systems and supply chains.

These guidelines are useful because the threats directly affect state, local and tribal governments, as well as critical infrastructure.

Defending against AI threats requires an AI-enabled, highly coordinated response.

Wisconsin municipalities and counties need to be realistic about local resources, as a school district, municipal utility or a county IT department cannot compete alone in an AI cyber arms race. Zero-day vulnerabilities in systems are being actively exploited in the wild; local IT teams do not have days or weeks to manually evaluate and deploy fixes.

**Adversaries are
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conducting reconnaissance
to generating multiple
malware variants.**

Continued on page 8



State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program Notice of Funding Expected

At the time of this writing, the next Notice of Funding Opportunity for State and Local Cybersecurity Grant funding was expected to be released on August 17.

Administered by the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs' Wisconsin Emergency Management and the Wisconsin Department of Administration's Division of Enterprise Technology, the federal State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program supports local governments, rural areas and school districts in meeting the following objectives:

- Develop and establish appropriate governance structures, including developing, implementing, or revising cybersecurity plans, to improve capabilities to respond to cybersecurity incidents and ensure continuity of operations
- Understand current cybersecurity posture improvement based on continuous testing, evaluation and structured assessments
- Implement security protections commensurate with risk
- Ensure organization personnel are appropriately trained in cybersecurity, commensurate with responsibility

The funding can be used on cybersecurity-related activities, including the purchase and installation or activation of multifactor authentication and managed, endpoint, and extended detection and response tools. □

Visit det.wi.gov to learn more.

Continued from page 7

Communities cannot justify building individual security operations centers. Instead, Wisconsin must prioritize shared, low-friction services that raise the baseline for everyone at once. The state and municipalities need resources to deploy enterprise-grade defenses across the board, including:

- Identity modernization and phishing-resistant multi-factor authentication as the nonnegotiable standard across all public systems
- Protective domain name systems that block malicious domains before any connection is made
- Endpoint, managed and extended detection and response tools to detect anomalous behavior in real time
- Continuous, automated patching, rather than annual or monthly scans, to handle the hundreds of updates that tech giants are now releasing each month
- Highly monitored, resilient cloud services, rather than vulnerable legacy systems

To survive attacks that occur at machine speed, Wisconsin's public sector must change how it operates using three core principles: automate, standardize and modernize.

Automate what can be automated. Human analysts cannot parse logs or manually deploy 600 monthly patches fast enough to stop an AI-driven ransomware attack. We must rely on automated detection and response to isolate infected machines and block malicious traffic the instant it is detected.

Standardize what should not vary. There is no strategic advantage to a local municipality or county having a unique firewall configuration or a custom identity policy.

Standardizing baseline security architectures reduces blind spots and makes it much easier to deploy state-level support when an incident occurs.

Modernize or retire systems that cannot be secured. Legacy systems that cannot support modern authentication, AI-driven monitoring or automated patching are ticking time bombs. If a system cannot be modernized to meet current security standards, it must be retired.

AI cyber risk is a statewide resilience issue, not just an IT problem. This requires a structural shift in how we align funding, structure procurement, plan for incident response and recruit talent.

Wisconsin does not need communities to become individual centers of cyber excellence. It needs every community connected to a stronger, faster, shared cyber defense. ■

The Wisconsin Department of Administration's Division of Enterprise Technology is responsible for managing the state's information technology assets and the use of technology to improve government efficiency and service delivery. In consultation with business and IT managers from local, county, and state governments, schools and libraries, and tribes, the division develops strategies, policies, and standards for enterprise and multi-jurisdictional use of IT resources.

Wisconsin Cyber Response Team: Help When It Matters Most

When a cyberattack strikes, Wisconsin local governments don't have to respond alone.

The Wisconsin Cyber Response Team is a volunteer team of cybersecurity and IT professionals administered by Wisconsin Emergency Management through the Department of Military Affairs. The team provides no-cost cybersecurity assistance to counties, tribes, municipalities, public and private K-12 schools, libraries, public utilities, healthcare facilities, and other critical infrastructure organizations.

Before an incident, the Cyber Response Team helps organizations strengthen their defenses through cybersecurity preparedness planning, incident response planning, tabletop exercises, live cyber range training, and risk and vulnerability assessments.

During an incident, the team provides rapid response services, including incident triage, remote digital forensics, on-site incident response and incident command support.

To request assistance during a cybersecurity incident, call 800-943-0003, option 2. □

Learn more at wem.wi.gov.

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THE NEW REALITY

Counties Increasingly on the Front Lines of Cyber Attacks

As counties become more digitally connected, they also become more vulnerable to cyber threats, ranging from costly ransomware attacks to quiet infiltration of critical infrastructure.

Two articles in the Q2 2026 issue of *Governing* magazine, available at governing.com, help to define today's threats and drive home the importance of protecting the critical infrastructure that counties oversee: "What Do Ransomware Attacks Truly Cost?" by Jule Pattison-Gordon and "Governing Luminaries: The Global Cyber War Hits Home," an interview with cybersecurity expert Nicole Perlroth by Steve Towns.

In "What Do Ransomware Attacks Truly Cost?" Pattison-Gordon explains that a ransomware attack is the likeliest disaster to strike a local government and its financial impact extends well beyond any ransom demand. Recovery often requires system downtime, employee overtime, outside consultants, replacement hardware and software, lost revenue, security upgrades, and efforts to mitigate the impact of stolen data. The average ransomware recovery for a state or local government, she says, totaled nearly \$3 million in 2024.

Those are the calculable costs. Not as easy to quantify is the disruption to essential public services. Pattison-Gordon describes how a 2025 ransomware attack against the state of Nevada caused widespread disruptions across state agencies for a month.

Because residents depend on county services every day, governments face enormous pressure to restore operations quickly. That reality makes state and local governments attractive targets, she argues, noting that many smaller local governments understand the risks but often lack the funding, staff, training and time needed to implement basic cybersecurity practices, such as maintaining secure data backups.

At the same time, the article points out, funding for federal cybersecurity assistance has declined during President Donald Trump's second term in office. During the first half of 2025, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) lost a third of its workforce, affecting its ability to assist state and local governments. The Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC) now requires paid membership for the many

**As large corporations have become more difficult to penetrate,
bad actors are increasingly targeting state and local governments
with fewer cybersecurity resources.**



services it previously provided to local governments at no cost. Additional federal budget proposals would further reduce CISA's staffing and end its election security work.

While ransomware remains a significant threat, the second Governing article argues that an even greater danger may be emerging.

In "Governing Luminaries: The Global Cyber War Hits Home," journalist and cybersecurity expert Nicole Perlroth warns in her interview with Steve Towns that foreign governments — particularly China — are quietly infiltrating local computer systems and critical infrastructure, including water utilities, ports, rail systems and their third-party vendors.

Perlroth notes that as large corporations have become more difficult to penetrate, bad actors are increasingly

targeting state and local governments with fewer cybersecurity resources. She cites the city of Littleton, Massachusetts, as an example. In 2023, local officials were notified by the FBI and CISA that the electric, light and water departments, serving just 15,000 residents, had been infiltrated by a Chinese state-sponsored hacking group.

Rather than immediately disrupting operations, she warns, these adversaries often seek to establish long-term access for potential exploitation during future geopolitical conflicts.

According to Perlroth, Iran has also recently escalated its cyber activity. Although its attacks tend to be less sophisticated, she says they are often more aggressive and designed for immediate disruption.

In the interview, Perlroth also described how artificial

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intelligence is accelerating these threats by allowing attackers to automate phishing campaigns, identify vulnerable systems, exploit security weaknesses and even negotiate ransom payments with minimal human involvement. As a result, she argues that it is imperative for all state and local governments to modernize, use the best cybersecurity tools and plan for cyberattacks.

As these articles make clear, the cybersecurity landscape is evolving rapidly.

Cybercriminals and foreign adversaries are increasingly targeting the systems that support essential public services,

and counties must view cybersecurity as an ongoing investment in operational resilience. Strengthening defenses,

preparing for disruptions and equipping employees to recognize emerging threats are no longer optional. They are fundamental to ensuring counties can continue delivering the services residents count on every day. ■



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Federal Cybersecurity Support

Pattison-Gordon's reporting of the importance of federal cybersecurity support to local governments is backed up by efforts by the National Association of Counties and other state and local government membership organizations to urge Congress to restore funding cut by the Trump administration.

In a letter to congressional leaders last fall, NACo and other organizations pointed out that, "In 2024 alone, MS-ISAC's services helped us detect more than 43,000 potential cyberattacks to state and local networks and escalate them to affected organizations 97% faster than commercial alternatives; identify and prevent more than 59,000 potential malware and ransomware attacks and local endpoints, like workstations and servers; prevent 25 billion connections to malicious sites online, each a potential starting point for a cyberattack; and block 5.4 million known malicious or suspicious emails." □

Municipal Water Systems Under Attack

As of this writing, national media outlets are reporting that water facilities in seven states have been hit by cyberattacks. In Minnesota alone, hackers tried to break into at least 30 municipal water systems. The hackers are believed to be affiliated with Iran, although that has not yet been confirmed.

In an article published Aug. 4 on The Conversation, William Akoto, assistant professor of global security at the American University School of International Service, said that "the attackers did not try to infiltrate the computers that utility offices use. Instead, they tried to seize control of small computers in equipment like pumps and valves that deliver drinking water to millions of people. The utilities countered the attacks by shutting down the control computers and sending personnel out into the field to operate equipment manually. Utility officials have said that water remained safe to drink."

According to the article, in addition to changing passwords and installing vendor-approved updates to protect themselves, utilities should remove controllers and human dashboards from direct connection to the internet, route communications through a secure gateway or VPN, require multiple levels of authentication, limit how much access each user has, and separate operational networks from email and other business systems. □

Read the full article at bit.ly/Akoto_Aug4Hackers.



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A Statewide Information Sharing Network Protecting Counties and Local Businesses

By Jerry Eastman, President, CEO & Founder, Wisconsin Cyber Threat Response Alliance

Cyberattacks increasingly target Wisconsin counties, public agencies and small- to medium-sized businesses. Criminal groups probe networks, launch ransomware campaigns and exploit stolen credentials. These attacks disrupt operations, expose sensitive data and erode public trust. As threats grow more sophisticated, Wisconsin organizations need timely, accurate and actionable information to stay ahead of attackers.



WICTRA, the Wisconsin Cyber Threat Response Alliance, was founded nine years ago as a statewide, neutral, nonprofit organization dedicated to meeting that need. By connecting counties, municipalities, state agencies, critical infrastructure operators and private-sector businesses, WICTRA strengthens Wisconsin's cyber readiness through coordinated, cross-sector information sharing. Through its national partnerships,

WICTRA ensures Wisconsin receives threat intelligence from across the country, not just within the state's borders.

► **A neutral hub for Wisconsin's cyber intelligence**

WICTRA does not sell products or compete for contracts. Instead, it serves as a trusted convener, enabling organizations to share threat indicators, compare experiences and receive timely alerts without sales pressure or jurisdictional barriers.

This neutrality matters. Cybersecurity often forces organizations to operate alone, but WICTRA breaks down those silos. Counties and businesses gain access to a statewide network that communicates quickly and consistently about emerging threats — supported by national level intelligence that expands visibility far beyond Wisconsin.

► **Why information sharing changes the game**

Cybercriminals move fast. They reuse tactics across multiple victims, shift strategies within hours and exploit vulnerabilities as soon as they appear. When one Wisconsin organization detects suspicious activity, others may soon face the same threat.

Information sharing changes the equation:

- A phishing campaign that hits one county can be blocked by another.
- A vulnerability exploited in a small business can be patched in a neighboring municipality.
- A suspicious domain identified in another state can be flagged for Wisconsin organizations before it reaches them.

WICTRA ensures this information flows quickly, clearly and reliably — across Wisconsin and across the nation.

► **A nationwide reach**

WICTRA's national intelligence sources include multi-state cyber information-sharing networks, federal and regional threat-intelligence partners, national critical infrastructure information exchanges, and private-sector cybersecurity coalitions.

► **Why it matters**

Nationwide visibility allows WICTRA to warn Wisconsin organizations about threats before they arrive in the state. Counties and businesses benefit from early alerts tied to national ransomware trends, multi-state phishing campaigns and vulnerabilities exploited across the country.

"Prevention of cybersecurity attacks will always remain essential, but organizations today must also build resilience and strengthen their ability to respond to and recover from cybersecurity incidents," says David Cagigal, former state of Wisconsin chief information officer and founding WICTRA board member. "Success is

no longer measured solely by preventing attacks. It is equally defined by how effectively we detect, contain, respond to and recover from them."

► **Cross-sector collaboration in action**

WICTRA brings together organizations that have historically operated in separate domains. Through WICTRA, counties share insights with utilities, school districts alert local employers, businesses notify municipalities of emerging scams, and public safety agencies communicate with private-sector partners about active threats.

This cross-sector model gives Wisconsin a major advantage. Cybercriminals do not limit their attacks to a single type of organization, so Wisconsin's defenses cannot remain siloed. WICTRA's network enables counties and businesses to learn from each other's experiences and respond more quickly and with greater confidence — supported by national threat intelligence that broadens situational awareness.

► **Timely alerts and actionable intelligence**

WICTRA provides organizations with threat intelligence they can act on immediately. Alerts include:

- Indicators of compromise
- Active phishing campaigns targeting Wisconsin
- Ransomware trends affecting local governments and computer networks
- Vulnerabilities exploited nationwide



**WICTRA actively protects
what we have today to
safeguard Wisconsin's
future generations.**

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Wisconsin becomes safer when organizations communicate quickly and consistently about cyber threats.

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- Fraud attempts targeting payroll, finance and human resource systems
- Sector-specific risks for public agencies and private employers

For counties, this intelligence protects essential services, including dispatch, land records, human services and election infrastructure. For small- to medium-sized businesses, it safeguards customer data, financial systems and day-to-day operations.

► Trust as the foundation

Information sharing requires trust. WICTRA fosters that trust by maintaining neutrality, safeguarding sensitive data and promoting collaboration over competition. Counties and businesses participate because they know WICTRA serves the entire state — not a single sector or vendor.

This trust enables organizations to share what they observe without fear of judgment or exposure. A small

business can report a suspicious email. A county can flag unusual network traffic. A school district can share details of a scam targeting staff.

► A stronger Wisconsin through communication

Cyber threats will continue to evolve, but Wisconsin does not need to face them alone. WICTRA provides counties, public-sector organizations and small- to medium-sized businesses with a unified, practical and forward-looking approach to cybersecurity.

By prioritizing information sharing and leveraging nationwide intelligence, WICTRA strengthens public safety, protects critical systems and reinforces trust across Wisconsin's communities.

WICTRA ensures Wisconsin remains informed, connected and resilient in the face of modern cyber threats. Visit wictra.org to learn more. ■

Jerry Eastman is the president, CEO and founder of the Wisconsin Cyber Threat Response Alliance. He is a retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army and served for 32 years in the Wisconsin National Guard. WICTRA is a membership-based organization. Learn more at wictra.org.

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Protecting Property Rights in the Digital Age

By Staci Hoffman, Register of Deeds, Jefferson County

Property ownership remains one of the most important foundations of economic stability. Yet the systems that safeguard ownership — local register of deeds offices and secure, well designed data backups — often operate quietly in the background. As real estate fraud grows more sophisticated through synthetic identities, forged documents and cyberattacks, these foundational systems deserve renewed attention, investment and community support.

▶ **Local register of deeds offices: Guardians of property rights**

At the core of every Wisconsin community lies the register of deeds office, serving as the custodian of official land records — from deeds and mortgages to liens and property transfers. These records form the legal backbone of real estate transactions. When these offices have adequate staffing, updated technology and reliable workflows, they help preserve a transparent and trustworthy property system.

When resources are stretched thin, however, criminals may attempt to exploit gaps. Fraudsters increasingly rely on forged deeds and fabricated identities, causing financial losses and long, costly legal disputes. National estimates place total real estate fraud losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Counties with fewer resources or older systems become especially vulnerable.

Investing in Wisconsin's register of deeds offices strengthens public trust and protects property owners statewide.

▶ **Vacant land: A growing target for fraud**

One of the most troubling trends in recent years involves scams targeting vacant land, especially property owned by out-of-area residents, seniors or individuals who rarely monitor their land records.

A widely reported case in Connecticut exposed how criminals used a forged power of attorney to sell a vacant lot, enabling construction of a \$1.5 million home before the true owner realized what had happened. Wisconsin has not been immune: in late 2025, at least two vacant land fraud cases resulted in combined losses exceeding \$514,000.

Vacant land is particularly appealing to fraudsters because there is no structure for neighbors or local officials to notice unusual activity, owners may not receive local notices, out-of-state owners can be impersonated more easily, and sales can move quickly — sometimes closing before the real owner discovers the deception.

Once a fraudulent deed is recorded, the legitimate owner may face months or even years untangling title issues. Counties that maintain updated records and use modern monitoring tools can identify suspicious transfers earlier and reduce the harm.



► **Real property notification systems: Empowering property owners**

Property notification systems have emerged as one of the most effective tools for detecting deed fraud. These services alert owners whenever a document is recorded involving their name. For owners of vacant land, these alerts can provide the first — and sometimes only — warning of unauthorized activity.

While alerts cannot prevent fraud, early notice greatly improves the likelihood of timely intervention. Criminals are also less likely to operate in jurisdictions where owners are actively notified of recordings.

In 2025, the registers of deeds, together with business partners, spearheaded legislation requiring all 72 counties in Wisconsin to provide a land records notification system. This initiative ensures that property owners across the state can sign up for free alerts in the county where their property is located, helping them stay informed about activity related to their land records. For more information and links to each county's website, visit wrdaonline.org/find-your-rod.

► **Cyberattacks and the necessity of secure, segregated data backups**

Cyberattacks, including ransomware, continue to rise nationally, impacting both private businesses and public agencies. When active records and backups are stored on the same network, a single breach can compromise an entire system.

Organizations that use offsite, offline or cloud-based backups typically recover quickly and avoid ransom payments. Many private-sector regulators now require documented backup and recovery plans as essential safeguards.

Local governments, however, often face budgetary and infrastructure challenges that make these safeguards harder to implement. Recent events in Wisconsin and across the globe illustrate how preparedness dramatically shapes recovery outcomes.

In March, Rusk County experienced a cyber incident affecting parts of its network, including the register of deeds. Because the county maintained secure backups of its land records dating back to 1848, the register of deeds was

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Continued from page 19

able to preserve its historical records and resume services as county systems were restored.

In July, a massive cyberattack paralyzed the national land registry agency in Romania, halting all property transactions and mortgage registrations. While the attackers claimed to have deleted all the country's land registry records after a failed extortion attempt, offline copies isolated the incident to a temporary disruption.

Not all governments have been as fortunate. At least one cyberattack in Wisconsin has affected a county's access to records for months and impacted its cyber insurance coverage, serving as an important lesson in why ongoing investment in secure data infrastructure is essential to protecting property rights.

► Building stronger protections for Wisconsin

To strengthen property protections and support residents statewide, counties can take several proactive steps:

- Continue investing in Wisconsin register of deeds offices — supporting staffing, technology modernization and secure operational practices

- Promote and expand Wisconsin's FREE Land Records Notification System, with emphasis on protecting owners of vacant land
- Apply lessons from recent cybersecurity events by ensuring counties have the funding, training and resources needed to build resilient backup and recovery systems

► Protecting our counties, one record at a time

The systems that preserve property rights rarely attract public attention, but they are essential to the stability of every Wisconsin county. As fraud tactics grow more advanced and as vacant land becomes an increasingly common target, counties must continue to strengthen their defenses. By supporting our register of deeds offices, improving backup and data security practices, and empowering property owners with timely alerts, Wisconsin can build a stronger and more resilient future. ■

Staci Hoffman has been the register of deeds for Jefferson County for nearly 20 years. With degrees from Madison College and UW–Madison, she has an accounting background and is a certified public manager. This article was written with assistance from the Knight Barry Title Group and the American Land Title Association.



WISCONSIN'S UNIVERSITIES HELP STRENGTHEN CYBER DEFENSES

As cyber threats continue to evolve, UW–Oshkosh and UW–Whitewater have developed nationally recognized cybersecurity centers that are helping prepare the next generation of cyber professionals while providing valuable expertise and training for organizations across the state.

With a unique blend of academic insight and extensive real-world experience, the UW–Oshkosh Cybersecurity Center of Excellence is equipping current and future cybersecurity practitioners with the knowledge and skills to respond to threats while helping outside organizations build cyber resiliency.

Counties can take advantage of enhanced tabletop exercises specific to their areas of concern, consultations and policy development, security audits, and skill- and awareness-building for end-users and professionals. Most services and programs are free or at a nominal cost.

The UW–Oshkosh School of Business offers a cybersecurity certificate as well as bachelor's and master's degree programs.

At UW–Whitewater, the Cybersecurity Center for Business



takes a similarly practical approach. Designated by the National Security Agency as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity, it also offers degree programs and a cybersecurity management certificate, as well as research and outreach to help organizations improve their cyber readiness.

Currently, a team of UW–Whitewater faculty, staff and partners is using a federal cybersecurity grant to assess the vulnerability of small, rural agricultural businesses, particularly farms, and attempt to counter the staggering rise in cybersecurity attacks against small and medium-sized businesses and organizations in rural America.

For county governments, these centers are more than academic programs — they are potential partners. As counties face increasingly sophisticated ransomware attacks, workforce shortages, and growing demands to protect sensitive public data, access to local expertise and hands-on training has never been more valuable. □



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Ten Cyber Questions for County Leadership



Want to foster a cybersecurity conversation at your board table?

Use these questions from the Cyber Guide for County Leaders from the National Association of Counties as a starting point.

1. Does our county have a board-adopted information security program in place to govern cyber risk management that includes:
 - Cybersecurity policies and procedures
 - Proper cyber hygiene that covers patching, routine assessments, annual security risk analysis, cyber insurance, and incident response
 - Identification of cyber strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in terms of people, process, and technology
 - Level of current and desired maturity of the county
2. Does our county have multifactor authentication (MFA) in place?
3. Does our county have a security incident plan in place and
 - Is that plan part of the overall continuity of government plan?
 - Is the IT department aware of the security incident plan?
 - Is the plan prioritized based on criteria that take into account critical services and potential impact?
 - Is the plan tested with county departments so they know what to do if a cyber incident occurs?
 - Does the plan include what is an acceptable computer/communication systems outage timeframe?
4. What cyber-related issues have we experienced in the past year or key high-level findings that have been uncovered through an assessment, and what is our plan for addressing them?
5. Are there security initiatives which you believe are important to take on in the next several years? And does that involve new tools and funding? How can elected leadership support you in those?
6. Does our county have an employee security awareness training program in place? Tell me more.
7. Are our backups safe from a security threat and have we conducted exercises to test reinstalling data from backup?
8. How does our county ensure the cyber safety of county employees, contractors and others that connect to the network, especially in a remote environment?
9. Is our county using the cloud for hosting data and applications and how is that protected?
10. Why do we need cyber insurance and what are the current challenges? ■



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Photo credit: Holly Fox, Portage County Business Council

Working for the Public Good

MEET ERIC OLSON, THE NEW PORTAGE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Portage County's new county executive is no stranger to public service. Whether working in the early 1990s for a statewide 4-H program as a University of Minnesota student or serving as an outdoor recreation planner at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources while in graduate school in Madison, Eric Olson has dedicated most of his life to government. This spring, he was elected to the leadership role in Portage County, where he's worked for UW-Stevens Point and UW Extension for the past 22 years.

"Though I am not from Wisconsin, the people I've worked with and for here have inspired me to always dig deeper and rededicate my time and efforts to addressing public problems," he said.

As Olson describes it, for most of his career, he has worked at the intersection of community planning and natural resource management. His first position at UW-Stevens Point was a teaching and Extension position with the Center for Land Use Education. He was then hired as director of the Extension Lakes program, a key part of the Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Partnership — a collaborative between the DNR, Extension and Wisconsin Lakes, a nonprofit association.

At the Center for Land Use Education, Olson was quickly drawn into county zoning administration issues. "Early on, I was introduced to Duane Gruel, Wood County's then-

zoning administrator, and to Steve Brazzale, who was retiring as planning director in Portage County," said Olson. "They were concerned about the future of the county zoning workforce and were seeking help."

Olson hired a student to compile a workforce analysis of all the county's zoning offices. "The data verified Duane and Steve's concerns," he said. "Most rural counties had started their zoning programs in response to the state's mandates for shoreland and floodplain zoning in the 1970s, and by the early 2000s, all the old guard was looking to retire at the same time."

For larger counties in the southeastern region, such transitions could be managed by promoting from within or by hiring from neighboring counties. The same could not be said for the more rural areas, where the zoning office was often a one-person operation.

"The university and the Center for Land Use Education responded in two ways," said Olson. "We revitalized our undergraduate planning curriculum to emphasize the nuts and bolts of zoning, ensuring graduates had the knowledge to enter this part of the field, and we created a leadership program to help early-career zoning staff gain the skills and insights needed to advance to the role of code administrator."

Olson applied the same methodical and collaborative approach to community issues during the post-2008



For Olson, public service has never been about a single position or project — it's about connecting people, ideas and institutions to improve the communities they call home.

economic recovery and created a new AmeriCorps program in central Wisconsin focused on community sustainability. The Central Wisconsin Resiliency Project placed AmeriCorps members in Wood and Portage counties, the city of Stevens Point, and numerous small farms and nonprofits in the area to strengthen their capacity.

“Wood County’s Health Department was a major beneficiary of the project,” explained Olson. “They received a large grant to advance food systems and nutrition, and the AmeriCorps placements were instrumental in meeting the grant’s deliverables.”

Fifteen years later, that same work would resurface, helping fuel new sustainability initiatives for Portage County.

“One of our AmeriCorps members, Joe Kottwitz, served with the Portage County Facilities Department to implement an energy conservation plan for the county. The plan was only partially implemented,” said Olson. “After taking office this spring, I reconnected with Joe. He now works for Focus on Energy and suggested that Portage County would be a good candidate for a program they were testing this year, the Local Government Staffing Grant.” Olson successfully applied for the grant, and Portage County will hire an energy management and sustainability expert this fall.

Having spent so long at UW-Stevens Point, Olson sees many opportunities to connect the campus with county work. “An outsider looking at Portage County’s government operations would not guess that we have a four-year campus and a technical college right in our backyard,” he said. “Already, I am connecting with faculty to discuss internships in our departments, and our new county board chair has recruited a political science professor to serve on the board’s ethics committee. I will continue to champion Extension and am proud that our county has maintained support for a range of Extension educators in our budget.”

Another connection to campus draws from Olson’s volunteer experience as a radio DJ and news host. “I was active in campus radio at the U of M and UW-Madison. I also volunteered at WOJB, the Lac Courte Oreille Ojibwe station

in Sawyer County. This fall, I will start hosting the ‘Town and Gown Hour,’ a biweekly news interview program featuring guests from the county and other local governments, as well as UW-Stevens Point and Mid-State Technical College.” (Look for archived episodes on the Portage County Executive webpage.)

From preparing the next generation of planning professionals to building partnerships that strengthen communities, Olson has consistently focused on practical solutions to public challenges. Now, as Portage County executive, he brings that collaborative mindset to county government, drawing on decades of experience across education, natural resources and community development. For Olson, public service has never been about a single position or project — it’s about connecting people, ideas and institutions to improve the communities they call home. ■



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A Campus Reimagined

The La Crosse County Hillview Transformation

By Eric Timmons, Marketing and Strategic Analyst, La Crosse County

In 2021, La Crosse County leaders faced a challenge. Hillview, a beloved but aging county nursing home, was operating with a declining population and a building designed for an earlier era of institutional care.

“Hillview had been part of La Crosse County for more than a century, and we wanted to keep it as a community asset that everyone could be proud of,” said County Administrator Jane Klekamp, who noted that many other counties have been leaving the nursing home field entirely.

Much of the building was outdated — double rooms, worn common areas, old systems — and the care model had shifted far beyond what Hillview’s layout could support.

A new building was considered, but the cost was high and left questions about what to do with the existing structure.

Instead, the county explored how to reuse the space. Licensed beds had already decreased from more than 200 to about 60 by 2023, leaving half the building unused. “We began to ask how this building could better serve not just residents but staff and the broader community,” Klekamp said.

A turning point came with the American Rescue Plan Act, which brought nearly \$23 million in federal funding to La Crosse County. The county board identified priorities including childcare, sustainability, housing, and infrastructure for older adults. Hillview’s unused areas fit

those needs: a former dining hall could become a childcare center; an empty wing could house 10 units to support the county's homelessness response plan; and another area could be converted into a community-based residential facility. A refreshed nursing home would remain at the core of the reimagined campus.

To manage this complex project — each piece with its own regulatory hurdles — the county hired Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction. The final funding plan included \$12 million in ARPA dollars and another \$1 million secured by U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) through a Congressionally Directed Spending request. The total project cost was about \$20 million, with the remainder of funding borrowed. County facilities staff helped to drive down costs by performing some of the work in-house.

By 2026, the transformation was ready to be celebrated.

Hillview now features private nursing home rooms, updated common spaces, and resident-accessible kitchens

Hillview now features private nursing home rooms, updated common spaces, and resident-accessible kitchens to create a more homelike environment.

to create a more homelike environment. The new 39-bed community-based residential facility, called The Evergreens, includes plans for a four-bed crisis stabilization area for adults with dementia or other cognitive issues — a need identified in the community to provide short-term stabilization before returning home or moving into long-term care. The Oaks, a 10-bed, short-term, secure facility for older adults experiencing challenging behaviors, is also part of the new Hillview.

The childcare center evolved into an intergenerational center to be operated by the YWCA of La Crosse — an innovative model and the first of its kind in Wisconsin, which is still working through final regulatory steps. County employees will have priority for childcare.

In addition to the renovation project, the Hillview campus also includes Carroll Heights, an independent living complex of affordable apartments for older adults,

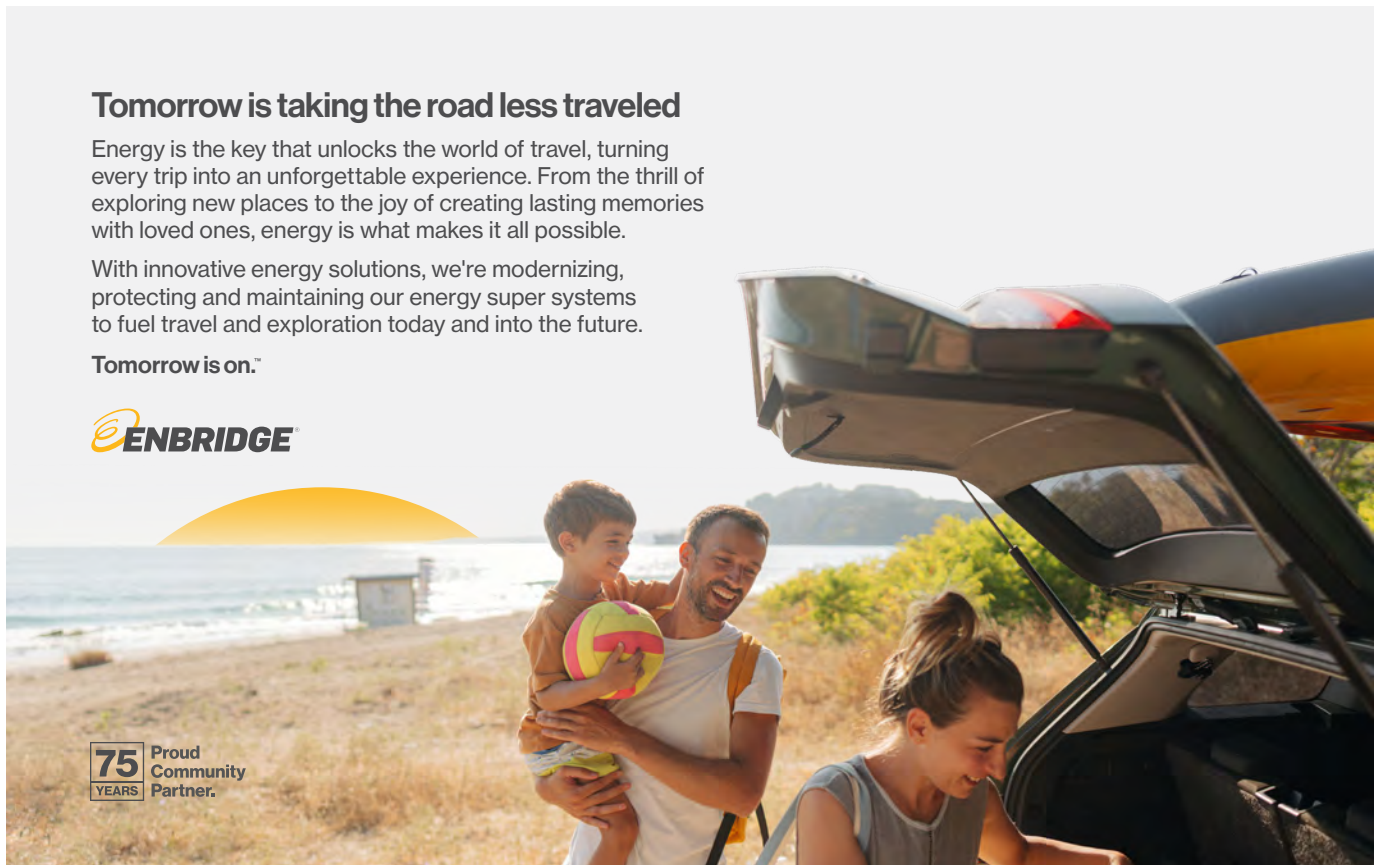
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Continued from page 27

and Hillview Terrace, a residential care apartment complex. Each part of the campus is complementary, offering a full range of options for residents that supports the community and staff.

Federal funding also supported the installation of ground-mounted solar panels at the property.

“We’re proud to be a publicly owned facility that can offer a full continuum of care,” said Wanda Plachecki, La Crosse County’s executive director of long-term care services.

As a county-owned facility, Hillview can coordinate closely with departments such as the Aging and Disability Resource Center, Veterans Services, and Human Services. Most residents are covered by Medicaid.

Hillview’s quality is reflected in its five-star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. It is one of two long-term care campuses operated by La Crosse



County; the other, Lakeview in West Salem, serves as a regional hub for specialized behavioral care with a multi-county funding model.

“In the end, it’s all about providing the best care for our residents,” Plachecki said. “With the new Hillview, we have a facility that matches that commitment.” ■

Eric Timmons is the marketing and strategic analyst for La Crosse County.

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WAUKESHA COUNTY
Volunteer Services Program

2026 NACO ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Wisconsin Counties Recognized for Innovation

The National Association of Counties recently announced its 2026 Achievement Awards, recognizing outstanding county programs from across the country. The annual, non-competitive awards honor innovative initiatives in 18 categories spanning the full range of county government responsibilities, with one program in each category receiving the prestigious “Best of Category” designation.

This year, three Wisconsin counties submitted their most innovative programs for recognition, with one receiving the Best of Category honor.

► **BEST OF CATEGORY: Waukesha County’s Disaster Response Model**

Waukesha County received NACO’s highest recognition in the Risk and Emergency Management category for its Countywide Damage Assessment Team, an innovative



mutual-aid network that helps local governments rapidly assess damage following disasters.

The program enables trained staff to cross jurisdictional boundaries to document damage to homes, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses using standardized procedures and a county-customized mobile assessment tool. Waukesha County’s Office of Emergency Management coordinates activation, training, quality control, and data sharing with local officials and Wisconsin Emergency Management, a division of the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs. They ensure communities receive accurate information needed for disaster declarations and recovery assistance.

The team’s first major deployment came during Wisconsin’s August 2025 floods. Within days, assessors completed nearly 700 verified residential damage assessments, helping secure approximately \$19.5 million



MILWAUKEE COUNTY “Conversations to Creating a Healthy Community” podcast

in Individual Assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for affected residents and accelerating recovery efforts.

For Waukesha County emergency management coordinator Alex Freeman, the program demonstrates the value of collaboration as communities face growing expectations to handle emergencies with fewer federal resources.

“With the ongoing emphasis at the federal level on shrinking their role and increasing expectations of local self-sufficiency, intergovernmental mutual aid is one of the most practical ways to adapt and prepare,” Freeman said. “Self-reliance and self-sufficiency don’t necessarily mean going it alone.”

Freeman also emphasized the importance of preparation before disaster strikes.

“Like any other tool or solution, the time to figure it all out is before you need it,” he said. “We can certainly come up with some creative solutions on the fly, but laying the groundwork ahead of time leads to better outcomes.”

Learn more about the county’s damage assessment process in the May 2026 Wisconsin Counties article, “After the Waters Receded: Lessons from the 2025 Southeast Wisconsin Flooding.”

► Other Wisconsin-recognized initiatives

Milwaukee County: Connecting Residents Through Conversation. Milwaukee County was recognized in the Civic Education and Public Information category for its “Conversations to Creating a Healthy Community” podcast series, hosted by the county’s Department of Health and



BEST OF CATEGORY: WAUKESHA COUNTY Countywide Damage Assessment Team

Human Services Executive Director Shakita LaGrant-McClain.

The podcast dives deeper into Milwaukee County’s health and human services system, highlighting available programs and educating residents on how to access them. By making the system more understandable and shining a light on community partnerships and the people working tirelessly to support residents, the series helps connect residents with the resources they need to live healthy and

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meaningful lives.

“Our DHHS team has many dedicated community partners who are doing amazing work,” said LaGrant-McClain. “We launched the podcast to share insights and stories about how services are delivered, the successes, and how residents can get connected. We hope to educate and inform the public, highlight the individuals and organizations doing the work, and encourage people in need to reach out.”

Milwaukee County: A New Model for Human Services.

Milwaukee County also received recognition in the Community and Economic Development category for the new Marcia P. Cogg Health & Human Services Center.

Opened in 2025, the facility was designed specifically to deliver health and human services, bringing critical services under one roof for children, families, older adults, veterans, people with disabilities, and the most vulnerable. The warm, welcoming location improves access to a broad spectrum of resources and services. The building also houses NourishMKE, the city’s largest network of community food centers.

The impact has been immediate. Since relocating the Aging and Disability Resource Center to the building’s first floor, customer walk-ins have increased by 73%. Connecting core ADRC services with additional supports, like behavioral health and housing, strengthens the county’s “No Wrong Door” approach to care.

“For the first time in Milwaukee County history, we have a building designed specifically to deliver health



OZAUKEE COUNTY Tendick Nature County Park
Stream and Wetland Restoration Project

and human services in one accessible location,” said Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley. “This is truly a generational investment to remove barriers to services, meet people where they are, and strengthen our ‘No Wrong Door’ model that continues improving access to care...we are making it easier for people to receive the support they need while continuing to advance our vision of becoming the healthiest county in Wisconsin.”

Ozaukee County: Restoring Nature While Building

Resilience. In the County Resiliency: Infrastructure, Energy, and Sustainability category, Ozaukee County was recognized for its Tendick Nature County Park Stream and Wetland Restoration Project.

The Planning and Parks Department restored an artificially straightened and degraded section of Tendick Creek, which drains into the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan, by reestablishing its natural meanders and restoring surrounding wetlands. The comprehensive project addressed flooding in the park while improving wildlife habitat and enhancing recreational opportunities for visitors.

Andrew Struck, director of the Ozaukee County Planning and Parks Department, said the recognition reflects years of collaboration.

“We are extremely honored by the 2026 NACo Achievement Award,” Struck said. “Over the last decade, the department has undertaken a comprehensive ecological restoration of Tendick Nature County Park with the assistance of many partnering agencies and organizations.”



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
Marcia P. Cogg Health & Human Services Center

The benefits are already apparent.

“The ecological restoration has proven a big success,” Struck said. “A diversity of fish, amphibian, reptile and bird species are taking advantage of the restored habitat, and the restoration assisted in managing recent record flooding in the park in August 2025 and April 2026. Visitors have noted the improved fish and wildlife habitat, scenic beauty, resilience, and public access.”

Waukesha County: Volunteers Expanding Human Services. Waukesha County also received an Achievement Award in the Human Services category for its Volunteer Services Program.

Launched in 2021, the department-wide initiative created a centralized system for recruiting, screening, onboarding, recognizing and managing volunteers. The coordinated approach improves efficiency, strengthens safeguards for vulnerable residents, and provides department-wide visibility to identify trends and scale successful volunteer roles across programs while maintaining consistent oversight and ensuring that volunteers complement, and not replace, professional staff.

In 2025, the system identified 460 active volunteers who contributed more than 29,400 hours of service valued at nearly \$1.34 million. Volunteers delivered meals, provided transportation, supported wellness checks, assisted with Teen Court and substance use recovery programs, and helped strengthen emergency preparedness.

“We are incredibly proud of our Volunteer Services Program and the dedicated volunteers who make it so impactful,” said Elizabeth Aldred, director of Health and Human Services. “Their time, compassion and commitment bring tremendous value to our programs and, most importantly, to the residents we serve. Whether they are delivering meals, providing transportation, supporting youth and families, or helping with emergency preparedness, our volunteers show the care and dedication that make Waukesha County a stronger, more connected community.”

► A tradition of county innovation

From disaster response and environmental restoration to public engagement and human services, Wisconsin’s 2026



WAUKESHA COUNTY Volunteer Services Program

NACo Achievement Award honorees demonstrate how counties continue to develop practical, collaborative solutions that improve residents’ lives. Their recognition underscores the important role counties play as laboratories of innovation, finding creative ways to meet today’s challenges while building stronger, more resilient communities for the future. ■

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Supporting Future Leaders

By Andrea Treder, Program Manager, Wisconsin Counties Association

It's no surprise that college is expensive, and many students juggle multiple jobs while pursuing their educational goals. To ease that financial burden, the Wisconsin County Mutual Insurance Corporation has awarded five \$2,500 scholarships to students, and the WCA Group Health Trust has awarded seven \$3,000 scholarships

to students pursuing careers in healthcare.

For almost two decades now, these scholarships continue to give back to members who work tirelessly to keep Wisconsin's counties, municipalities and school districts running smoothly.

Applicants must be enrolled full-time

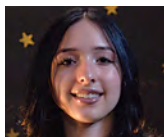


WISCONSIN COUNTY MUTUAL INSURANCE CORPORATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

County Mutual, which insures over 50 counties in Wisconsin, has awarded more than \$100,000 in scholarships since launching the program in 2007. This year, nearly 150 students applied, with five recipients selected:



OLIVIA BARKER, daughter of Lincoln County Deputy Clerk of Court Thomas Barker, is studying nursing at UW-Oshkosh with the goal of becoming a certified registered nurse anesthetist. "I have seen shortages in quality healthcare in our rural central Wisconsin area, and I am determined to give back to the place where I grew up and make sure local residents have quality providers."



GRETA STOWE, daughter of Langlade County Corporation Counsel Robin Stowe, is attending UW-Eau Claire and looking forward to teaching mathematics. Inspired by her love for math, she said, "I want to empower students to learn and properly prepare for any mathematical obstacle that may come their way."



JAMES RHINES, son of Ozaukee County administrative assistant Amy Rhines, is pursuing a degree in economics, philosophy and mathematics at UW-Oshkosh. "I realized sharing the information that I discovered was just as, if not more, fulfilling than the actual research."



KELSEA GIESE, whose father Corey Giese is the parts room and shop manager in Portage County, is studying communication sciences and disorders at UW-Stevens Point. "The idea that I could help someone speak to their loved ones again, express their thoughts, or simply be understood during one of the most difficult times in their life is what inspires me to pursue this career."



ABIGAIL JASHINSKY, interim community development coordinator in Washington County, is studying accounting at UW-Green Bay. "I'd like to be a certified public accountant, with aspirations to become chief financial officer, deciding the financial direction of local governments." □

2026 Scholarship Recipients

in an undergraduate program at an accredited two- or four-year college in Wisconsin by fall 2026. Additionally, the applicant or their spouse, parent, grandparent, or guardian must be employed by a County Mutual or GHT member to apply for the respective scholarship.



An independent panel of educators selected the 2026 recipients based on scores of their future goals and career plans, grade point average, community involvement, written essay, and letter of recommendation. □

WCA GROUP HEALTH TRUST SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The WCA Group Health Trust focuses its scholarships on students pursuing careers in the healthcare field, ranging from nursing and physical therapy to radiography and medical research. This year, the GHT received more than 60 applications and proudly awarded seven scholarships:



LYDIA DECKER, daughter of Marathon County surveyor David Decker, is majoring in biology and pre-professional health science at UW–Eau Claire. She plans to become a dentist in her rural hometown. “I would like to have my own dental practice one day and give my community the best dental care possible.”



AARON LORENZO, son of Kenosha Joint Services Assistant Director Stephanie Lorenzo, is attending Carthage College and majoring in neuroscience. “My long-term career goal is to become a psychiatrist and dedicate my career to helping people with their challenges and live more fulfilling lives.”



MORGAN GERRITS, daughter of Outagamie County Clerk Kelly Gerrits, is a radiological sciences major at Bellin College. She plans to become certified in X-Ray, CT, and MRI scanning. “With the field of radiology growing, I want to stay updated with all advancements to provide the absolute best quality of care possible to my community.”



DEVIN DANIELSEN, daughter of Washburn County Highway Commissioner Brian Danielson, is studying nursing at UW–Oshkosh. “I want to improve the quality of life of as many people as I possibly can and make a difference wherever I go.”



GRETCHEN ROTTIER, daughter of Howard-Suamico School District educator Dustin Rottier, is studying exercise science and pre-physical therapy at Carroll College. She plans to pursue a doctorate in physical therapy and said, “My ultimate goal is to become a physical therapist who positively impacts both the physical and mental health of patients.”



KATE PYTLESKI, daughter of Oconto County Clerk Kim Pytleski, is studying communication sciences and disorders at UW–Stevens Point. She plans to become a medical speech and language pathologist and said, “Caring for individuals at the end of life and helping them communicate final thoughts and wishes is the most meaningful work imaginable.”



TERESA SCHLAAK, daughter of Calumet County Treasurer Mike Schlaak, is studying psychology and criminal justice at Carthage College. “I want to build a future where I can make a difference for others by understanding how their minds work, specifically those with dissociative identity disorder.”



BROWN COUNTY

Flight of Champions, a Stars and Stripes Honor Flight

Poised to Share the Best of Our State, Uniquely Wisconsin Returns for Season Five

Wisconsin is a state defined by its people, places and traditions, and no series captures those stories quite like Uniquely Wisconsin. Returning for its fifth season in September, the Emmy Award-winning series continues its mission of uncovering the remarkable people, businesses and landmarks that make each corner of the Badger State truly one of a kind.

“Season five will have viewers discovering everything from century-old traditions and historic landmarks to innovative entrepreneurs and environmental stewardship,” said WCA



By Michelle Gormican Thompson,
Thompson Communications

President & CEO Mark D. O’Connell. “We are incredibly excited to tell these stories of five very different counties — Walworth, Sawyer, Brown, Grant and Washington.”

Their stories include:

► **WALWORTH COUNTY: History on the water and harvests from the heart**

Walworth County has long been known for its beautiful lakes, historic destinations and welcoming communities. This season looks at the legacy of Bill Gage and Gage Marine,

Counties highlighted in the first four seasons of Uniquely Wisconsin include Adams, Ashland, Brown, Calumet, Green Lake, Jefferson, Kenosha, Lincoln, Marathon, Monroe, Oconto, Outagamie, Pierce, Portage, Price, Racine, Rock, Sauk, Sheboygan, Washington and Wood.

To see season five stories, as well as previous seasons, visit Discover Wisconsin’s YouTube page at [youtube.com/DiscoverWI](https://www.youtube.com/DiscoverWI) and scroll down to the “Uniquely Wisconsin” section. You can also listen to “The Cabin” podcast on your favorite podcast player, where counties in the program are featured. To learn more and join the Emmy Award-winning Uniquely Wisconsin brand, contact WCA President & CEO Mark O’Connell or WCA Communications Consultant Michelle Gormican Thompson at 866-404-2700.

a family business that has helped shape life on Geneva Lake for generations. Viewers will also step inside the world-famous Yerkes Observatory, whose groundbreaking astronomical discoveries continue to inspire scientists and visitors alike. Rounding out the county's stories is Pearce's Farm Stand, where fresh produce, family tradition and community come together to create a beloved local destination.

► **SAWYER COUNTY: Northwoods tradition meets new opportunity**

The forests and lakes of Sawyer County provide the backdrop for stories rooted in hospitality, entrepreneurship and resilience. The season visits Deerfoot Lodge, where generations of families have built lifelong memories in Wisconsin's Northwoods. It also highlights The Lumber Exchange, a new gathering place helping to shape downtown Hayward's future, along with the Moxi Lounge, where creativity and community are helping to redefine the local dining and social scene.

► **BROWN COUNTY: Preserving heritage and protecting the future**

Brown County's stories continue to celebrate both its rich history and its commitment to conservation. Viewers will experience Flight of Champions, a Stars and Stripes Honor Flight that transports Korean and Vietnam War veterans from Green Bay's Austin Straubel International Airport to Washington, D.C., to visit the memorials built in their honor. The Packers Heritage Trail offers a fascinating walk through the birthplace of one of football's most legendary franchises, while the restoration efforts throughout the Bay of Green Bay demonstrate how science, conservation, and community partnerships are working together to improve one of Wisconsin's most important natural resources.

► **GRANT COUNTY: Where rivers, agriculture and heritage converge**

Nestled among rolling hills and winding waterways, Grant County showcases the landscapes that have defined southwestern Wisconsin for generations. This season, follow the rivers that have shaped the county's communities and economy, visit the iconic Potosi Brewing Company to explore its historic revival, and spend time at Vesperman Farms, where agriculture, family values, and stewardship remain at the heart of everyday life.



WASHINGTON COUNTY

Heart & Homestead housing initiative

► **WASHINGTON COUNTY: Innovation with small-town spirit**

Washington County demonstrates how local businesses and creative ideas can strengthen an entire community. Viewers will meet restaurateur Tony Koebel, whose establishments, The Norbert and The Orville, have become neighborhood favorites through hospitality and thoughtful cuisine. The season also features Heart & Homestead, an innovative housing initiative designed to help communities grow, and Flamingo Marine, where passion for boating and customer service continues to drive success.

► **More stories beyond the broadcast**

"These stories are told from the inimitable perspective of each county, and this is the hallmark of season five," said Mark Rose, president & CEO of Discover Mediaworks, the production company of Uniquely Wisconsin. "Each episode is just the beginning, and we encourage viewers to continue exploring every featured county through additional stories available on Discover Wisconsin's YouTube, Facebook and Instagram channels.

Rose concluded, "We are beyond proud of what season five will bring. It truly is another celebration of the people who preserve Wisconsin's history, embrace innovation, protect its natural beauty, and strengthen their communities every day. Whether you're discovering these places for the first time or reconnecting with familiar favorites, this new season promises stories that remind us of what makes our state so special." ■

Honoring the Past Building *the* Future

Celebrating 250 Years



Wisconsin Counties Association
**2026 ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**
September 20-22, 2026

See you in Sauk County!

GET READY TO EXPLORE the important issues facing Wisconsin's county officials at this year's gathering, Sept. 20 – 22 in Sauk County.

As we celebrate America 250, we will reflect on our nation's history while looking ahead to the opportunities and progress that will shape the future. Attendees will hear from state and federal speakers, participate in engaging workshop sessions, and connect with colleagues through valuable networking opportunities.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

▶ **Standard registration ends Sept. 16**

After Sept. 16, only onsite registrations are allowed, which include an additional fee to accommodate late meal charges. For more information and to register, visit wicounties.org/conference.



▶ **Visit the conference website for details**

Use the QR code to visit the conference website at wcaconference.com for the agenda and an interactive exhibit hall.

Agenda highlights include:

- Nearly 30 informative and engaging workshops on timely issues, including an interactive "mock" county board meeting
- General session speakers who will inform and entertain you
- A robust exhibit hall with vendors providing a wide array of services
- Networking opportunities at meals, receptions and more!



▶ **Stop by the conference registration desk**

When you arrive at the Kalahari, come to the WCA registration desk in the Africa Ballroom Foyer to pick up your badge and conference materials. The WCA will staff the registration desk on Sunday, Sept. 20, from 11:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and on Monday, Sept. 21, beginning at 7 a.m.

▶ **Green Bay Packers game**

Join us on Sunday, Sept. 20 at 12 p.m. in the Kalahari Ballrooms A, H to watch the Packers take on the New York Jets. Beverages and light snacks provided.

▶ **WCA Annual Business Meeting**

If you are attending the WCA Annual Business Meeting on Sunday, Sept. 20, pick up your credentials beginning at 3 p.m. in Africa 10-30 of the Kalahari. The meeting starts at 3:30 p.m.

▶ **Complimentary shuttle service**

Not staying at the Kalahari? Use the complimentary shuttle service on Monday and Tuesday. It runs between participating hotels and the Kalahari. Stop by the WCA registration desk for a schedule.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact the WCA at 866-404-2700 or mail@wicounties.org.



Welcome from co-host Sauk County

Sauk County's story is one of resilience, innovation and community. For thousands of years, this land has been home to Indigenous peoples, including the Ho-Chunk Nation, whose enduring history and cultural heritage remain integral to our communities, while the county's name honors the Sauk people, reminding us that our shared history began long before European settlers arrived.



From those earliest communities to the growth of Baraboo and Reedsburg as centers of modern industry, Sauk County has helped shape Wisconsin's history. The Ringling Brothers Circus brought worldwide recognition, while today Lake Delton and the Wisconsin Dells reflect the entrepreneurship and creativity that drive our economy.

The landscape adds to our story. For centuries, the Wisconsin River has provided transportation, recreation and opportunity. The Baraboo Hills, among the continent's oldest rock formations, are showcased at Devil's Lake State Park and draw visitors from around the world.

Honoring the past means more than remembering history. It means learning from the generations who laid the foundations of our communities with roads, schools, courthouses and parks. It is now our responsibility to expand on their legacy and build the future by strengthening infrastructure, supporting economic growth, protecting natural resources, and ensuring effective local government through collaboration and innovation.

We are honored to welcome you and wish you an inspiring, productive and memorable conference. While you're here, I encourage you to explore our historic downtowns and enjoy the county's scenic parks, trails and farms.

Thank you for your dedication to public service and for all you do on behalf of the people of Wisconsin.

— Timothy McCumber, Sauk County Board Chair



Welcome from co-host Dodge County

Dodge County is honored to welcome our friends and colleagues from across the state to the WCA Annual Conference as this year's co-host. We are proud to showcase our community — one built with a rich heritage that looks forward to the innovations of tomorrow.



As a county, we're geographically situated to provide ample economic opportunity while maintaining the charm of small-town life surrounded by remarkable outdoor recreation. Our deep agricultural roots continue to drive one of the state's strongest farm economies, while a growing manufacturing sector and forward-thinking local leadership are creating new opportunities for businesses, families and visitors.

Beyond our economic strengths, Dodge County offers an affordable quality of life that makes our county feel like home. From scenic lakes, rivers and trails to welcoming downtowns, historic communities and year-round recreation, there is something here for everyone to discover, no matter the direction.

We invite you to connect with us, explore what makes Dodge County unique, and experience firsthand the innovation, collaboration and spirit that defines us. Whether you're visiting with us at the conference or planning a future trip, we hope you'll discover why Dodge County sits at the crossroads of innovation, opportunity and community.

— Dave Frohling, Dodge County Board Chair

“In the Board Room” Webinar Recordings Available

The final 2026 WCA “In the Board Room” monthly webinars with Andy Phillips and Attolles Law will be held on Oct. 28, Nov. 18 and Dec. 16.

Visit bit.ly/InTheBoardRoom26 to register for the 2026 webinars. There is no cost to register. Recordings of all webinars are available at wicounties.org. ■

Save the dates for upcoming webinars:
October 28 ■ November 18 ■ December 16

Apply by Sept. 30 for the 2026-28 WI Certified Public Manager Program

The Wisconsin Certified Public Manager® Program is a nationally accredited, 300-hour management development program that prepares managers in federal, state, local, and tribal governments, as well as in nonprofit organizations, for the challenges and unique demands of the public management profession.

Participants who successfully complete the program are awarded the Certified Public Manager® designation.

Visit UW-Madison Extension, Local Government Education at localgovernment.extension.wisc.edu by Sept. 30 to learn more and apply for the next cohort. ■

2026 Green Book: A Book of County Facts Available

For county governments to successfully carry out their mission, strategic long-range thinking is critical — and reliable data plays an essential role. To assist counties in this work, Forward Analytics recently published the 2026 edition of The Green Book, a trusted resource that provides key data for every county in Wisconsin.

The annual fact book includes information on each county's government structure, population, finances and economy. County officials can use the data for economic development planning, assessing future service needs, and much more. Each county clerk receives enough hard copies to distribute The Green Book to all county board supervisors and 10 department heads.

An online, interactive format allows county leaders to explore data dynamically, compare counties, and tailor insights to their unique needs. This powerful tool takes the fact book beyond print, making data more accessible and actionable than ever before.

Visit forward-analytics.net to explore the online version, download a copy of the printed fact book, or view individual county fact sheets. Additional printed copies can be requested. □



Shape the Future of Small-Town Wisconsin

Concerned about the future of Wisconsin's small (but mighty) communities? Join fellow community leaders, elected officials, business owners and civic-minded neighbors at a Small Community Forum to share best practices and tackle the opportunities and challenges unique to small-town Wisconsin.

Forums are hosted by the WCA, Wisconsin Rural Partners, Create Wisconsin, and other partners.

2026 SMALL COMMUNITY FORUMS

- **Dunn County:** Sept. 24, Viking Bowl & Catering, Colfax, 7:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- **Lincoln County:** Oct. 8, PCA William Buedingen Training Center, Tomahawk, 7:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- **Sheboygan County:** Date TBA, Random Lake, 7:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

All forums start with registration and breakfast at 7:30 a.m., with the program beginning at 8 a.m. and lunch at 12 p.m. The registration fee is \$30. For more information and to register, visit wiruralpartners.org/Small-Community-Forums. □

Three Citizens' Assemblies Scheduled This Fall

UW-Madison's La Follette School of Public Affairs and Division of Extension are working with Leadership Wisconsin and local governments to bring citizens' assemblies to communities across the state.

This effort is part of La Follette School's Main Street Agenda program, which aims to foster civic dialogue and share insights on Wisconsin residents' perspectives about important policy topics. Three assemblies are scheduled for this fall, with two more to follow in 2027.

The first, Kenosha County's Community Assembly on Housing, will bring residents together in early October to consider what role, if any, factory-built housing could play

in addressing local housing needs. Participants will deliver their recommendations to the county's Housing Task Force, which is sponsoring the assembly.

Later that month, an assembly sponsored by Dodgeville's mayor's office and school district will focus on their housing and school enrollment challenges. Then, in November, the Milwaukee mayor's office will sponsor an assembly for participants to assess the city's needs and priorities and learn about how tax incremental financing can be used to invest in affordable housing.

Visit communityassembly.wisc.edu to learn more about this effort and stay up to date on these and other assemblies.



Prime Exclusive Offer for WCA Members

The WCA has partnered with Amazon Business for a new, exclusive program. WCA member counties and their departments are now eligible to sign up for a free Amazon Business Prime membership that includes free and fast shipping, a pre-approved line of credit, and a 25% discount on select office, maintenance, repair, operational and IT products.

WCA members can also leverage a competitively awarded contract by OMNIA Partners to purchase on Amazon Business across all categories for additional savings.

Contact the WCA for more information.

Monday County Leadership Meetings

EVERY MONDAY AT 11 A.M.

This weekly virtual meeting features updates from the WCA Government Affairs team and Attolles Law, association announcements, and guest speakers, such as state agency staff and legislators. A link to the virtual meeting is emailed to WCA members each week.

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Delay of Controversial Grant Changes Advances, Continued Advocacy Needed

Adapted from information by the National Association of Counties

In early August, the U.S. Senate approved a continuing resolution to fund the federal government through Dec. 11. The continuing resolution would also delay implementation of a proposed rule by the Office of Management and Budget that would make substantial changes to its Uniform Guidance for the administration of federal grants. The delay would prevent the OMB from implementing the new rules until at least Dec. 11, allowing more deliberation on the changes — a major win for counties if it becomes law.

The Uniform Guidance governs every federal grant, cooperative agreement and pass-through award that counties receive — covering public safety, transportation, housing, public health, workforce development, child welfare, emergency management and more. Among other changes, the proposed rules would require senior political appointees to review and approve discretionary grants and allow agencies to terminate grants, in whole or in part,

at any time. If the delay is not approved, the changes could go into effect as early as Oct. 1.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed its own continuing resolution (H.R. 5770) to extend government funding through Dec. 4, but it does not delay the proposed OMB Uniform Guidance rule changes. As of this writing, the differences between the two bills must be reconciled before a final continuing resolution is approved by both houses and sent to the president.

Thank you to those county officials who submitted comments to the OMB about the proposed rule changes. That comment period is now closed, but members are encouraged to contact their congressional representatives to encourage support for the delay.

Reach out to U.S. Sens. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) to thank them for including the OMB delay language in the Senate's funding bill and urge them to keep it in as the reconciliation process moves forward. Then, contact your federal representative(s) and ask them to support adopting the Senate's language in the final package.

For more information and updates, visit NACo's Uniform Guidance resource hub at bit.ly/NACo_OMB. ■

Baldwin joins bipartisan Senate group to introduce SUSTAIN 340B Act

In August, U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) joined a bipartisan group of colleagues to introduce comprehensive legislation to reform the 340B Drug Pricing Program. Many county hospitals and health departments rely on 340B savings to fund care for low-income and uninsured patients, so changes to eligibility and contract pharmacy rules could directly affect local health budgets. The Supporting Underserved and Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Integrity Now and for the Future of 340B Act (SUSTAIN 340B Act) would formally define an eligible 340B patient, codify the use of contract pharmacies with new registration and audit requirements, end the 340B Rebate Model Pilot Program within a year, and add new transparency and reporting requirements. Learn more at NACo.org.



Federal 2027 Appropriations Process Underway

Adapted from information by the National Association of Counties

The annual appropriations process begins with the president submitting a budget request to Congress outlining the administration's priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. The U.S. House and Senate Appropriations Committees then each hold a series of budget hearings with the heads of the various federal agencies and adopt a budget resolution outlining the topline spending limits for the respective fiscal year.

Twelve appropriation bills (known as "subcommittee allocations") are introduced in the House and Senate to cover the entire federal budget. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees adopt topline spending limits for each of their 12 spending bills, and the respective subcommittees draft their spending bills in line with these limits.

After the subcommittee approves its appropriation bill, the full committee must approve it before it advances to the full chamber for a vote. After appropriations bills are passed by both chambers of Congress, a conference

committee is appointed to resolve the differences.

Both the House and Senate must then pass the reconciled bills before they are sent to the president's desk for signature. If Congress fails to enact all 12 bills by Oct. 1, it may pass a continuing resolution to maintain federal funding at current levels on a temporary basis while negotiations continue.

Counties rely on federal funds determined through the annual appropriations process to provide vital services to our residents. As such, Congress and the president are urged to commit to working together to reach an agreement on all spending legislation by Oct. 1 of each year.

As of this writing, the House has begun approving its appropriations bills, but the Senate has not. For details about the status of the bills and a summary of what they include, visit the NACo appropriations tracker at naco.org/resource/2027-appropriations-tracker.

Visit bit.ly/NACo_Advocacy for congressional advocacy tips. ■

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LEGAL ISSUES

RELATING TO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Federal Dollars, Local Responsibility

By Malia Malone, Attorney, Attolles Law, s.c.

Local workforce initiatives funded through the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) connect Wisconsin residents with employment, training, and career services while helping employers find and develop skilled workers. Every Wisconsin county participates in one of the state's 11 local workforce development areas, where WIOA dollars support services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth and help address regional labor market needs. Although these initiatives operate through a federal-state-local structure and are delivered through local workforce development boards and service providers, they remain matters of local governmental responsibility.¹

This article explains the governance structure — the roles of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), the Local Elected Official (LEO) Consortium, the local Workforce Development Board (WDB), and the fiscal agent — and why county board chairs, their designees, and county boards must pay close attention. The WIOA gives local elected officials more than an advisory role. Their responsibilities carry legal and financial consequences when monitoring identifies weaknesses, administrative relationships change, insurance coverage is uncertain, or costs are disallowed. County officials should understand the structure before one of those events forces the issue.

► The WIOA chain of responsibility

Congress enacted the WIOA to coordinate employment, education, training, and support services and to connect job seekers with employers. At the federal level, the DOL, principally through its Employment and Training Administration, administers and oversees the WIOA Title I

workforce programs.²

At the state level, the DWD is Wisconsin's federally designated workforce agency. It implements federal requirements, allocates Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funds to the local workforce development areas, issues state policies and guidance, reviews governance documents, monitors local compliance, and communicates federal and state expectations to the local system.³

At the local-government level is the LEO Consortium. (The DWD policy manual uses the term "CEO Consortium" because federal law refers to the "chief elected official.") In a multi-county workforce development area, the consortium comprises the chief elected officials of the participating counties and operates under a written consortium agreement, which identifies the lead official and should define the members' respective responsibilities, including financial liability.⁴

In most counties, the county's representative is the county board chair, the chair's authorized designee, or (if there is one) the elected county executive. Local agreements vary, so each county should confirm who has been formally designated, what authority that person has, and how vacancies or changes in office are handled. Wisconsin consortium agreements commonly recognize representation by a county's chief elected official or an authorized elected designee.⁵

The WDB is a separate body. Its members are appointed by the chief elected official or officials under federal and state membership criteria, and a majority must represent the local business community. In partnership with local elected officials, the WDB sets local workforce policy, develops the local plan, conducts labor-market analysis, convenes workforce partners, selects and monitors service providers, oversees the one-stop delivery system, and develops and monitors the local budget.⁶

The distinction is important. The DOL and DWD provide federal and state oversight. The LEO Consortium represents the participating counties and retains the grant-recipient and governance responsibilities assigned to local elected officials. The WDB supplies the strategic, programmatic and employer-focused leadership required by the WIOA. A fiscal agent may perform accounting and funds-management functions, but it is a delegate within this structure, not a substitute for the LEO Consortium or the WDB.

► **County responsibility, not just influence**

The WIOA does more than give local elected officials a voice. It provides that the chief elected official serves as the local grant recipient and is liable for misuse of grant funds allocated to the local area, unless the official reaches an agreement with the governor to assume that role and liability. Federal regulations further require a written agreement allocating liability among the individual jurisdictions when an area includes more than one unit of local government.⁷

For a multi-county area, those responsibilities are exercised through the LEO Consortium and its governing agreements. The consortium appoints the WDB members, participates in local planning and policy, designates or approves key administrative arrangements, and must receive enough information to exercise meaningful oversight. The county board chair or designee who attends consortium meetings is not merely serving as a liaison to the local workforce development board. That person is participating in a governance body whose decisions may affect the county's legal and financial exposure.

The full county board also has a legitimate interest in the arrangement. The board may be asked to approve an intergovernmental agreement, authorize its representative, accept potential liability, appropriate county funds, or respond to a repayment demand. It should not learn about the governing documents or the county's potential exposure only after a problem has arisen.

► **Fiscal agent does not absorb exposure**

One of the most common misunderstandings involves the fiscal agent. The LEO Consortium designates a fiscal agent to receive funds, maintain accounting records, prepare reports, make authorized payments, and carry out other funds-management functions. The designation, however, does not transfer statutory liability from the counties. Federal law and regulation expressly provide that

designating a fiscal agent does not relieve the chief elected official of liability for misuse of grant funds.⁸

DWD policy requires written governance agreements, including a fiscal agent agreement. That agreement should clearly define authority, reporting duties, records ownership and access, audit cooperation, indemnification, termination, and transition responsibilities. Depending on the arrangement, the fiscal agent may also assist with procurement, contract administration, subrecipient monitoring, or audit functions. Those are substantial responsibilities, but they remain delegated responsibilities.⁹

This is why selection of a fiscal agent should not be treated as a routine administrative detail. Local elected officials should understand the proposed agent's experience, internal controls, staffing depth, succession planning, audit history, financial capacity, and ability to respond to a significant questioned cost or repayment demand. They should also know whether the same organization is serving in multiple roles, such as fiscal agent, board staff, service provider, or one-stop operator, and whether written firewalls and separation-of-duties procedures are in place.

► **Disallowed costs can be county problem**

Federal grant compliance is exacting. Costs may be questioned or disallowed because of inadequate documentation, procurement defects, conflicts of interest, improper cost allocation, unsupported participant expenditures, untimely corrective action, or weak monitoring of subrecipients and contractors. The DWD monitors local areas for fiscal, programmatic, performance, equal-opportunity, and civil-rights compliance. The WDB is responsible for program oversight, provider monitoring, and development and monitoring of the local budget.¹⁰

That is when vague governance language becomes expensive. If the consortium agreement does not clearly allocate liability for disallowed costs among the participating counties, the member counties may face an internal dispute while responding to the DWD or DOL. The bottom line is that the WIOA places the fiscal liability exposure directly on individual counties if the local WDB cannot repay the disallowed costs with non-grant dollars or other repayment arrangements cannot be made.

► **Why the structure matters**

A regional workforce system can operate successfully for

Continued on page 46



LEGAL ISSUES

Continued from page 45

Important questions to ask before a transition or dispute

1. Who formally represents the county on the LEO Consortium, and does the county's resolution or consortium agreement clearly establish that person's authority?
2. Who serves as the lead chief elected official for the workforce development area, what authority has the consortium delegated to that person, and how are succession and temporary vacancies addressed?
3. Are the consortium agreement, WDB bylaws, WDB-LEO agreement, and fiscal-agent agreement current, internally consistent, and approved by the entities whose authority or liability they address?
4. Does the consortium agreement expressly allocate financial liability among the participating counties, including responsibility for prior program years, disallowed costs, transition expenses, and obligations that survive withdrawal?
5. Does the WDB have complete and properly appointed membership, and do local elected officials receive timely notice of vacancies, attendance problems, conflicts of interest, or other issues that could affect certification or governance?
6. What financial information reaches the LEO Consortium and participating county boards on a regular basis, including budget-to-actual results, cash position, questioned costs, subrecipient monitoring, audit findings, and corrective-action status?
7. Are DWD monitoring reports, management responses, corrective-action plans, and significant communications promptly provided to every participating county, rather than only to WDB staff or the fiscal agent?
8. What protections exist if the fiscal agent, WDB, service provider, or a member county withdraws or is unable to perform? The answer should address records, contracts, funds, equipment, insurance, indemnification, and unresolved liabilities.

Each county should also be able to answer one direct question without hesitation: If the DWD disallowed a substantial expenditure tomorrow, who would be responsible for writing the check? □

many years under the same agreements and administrative relationships. That history can create confidence, but it can also create complacency. A change in a board director, fiscal agent, service provider, county representative, or consortium lead can expose gaps that were previously masked by stable personal relationships and institutional knowledge.

A current, coherent set of agreements is essential because the WIOA responsibilities are divided among entities that must work together, but do not have identical roles.

► Oversight is not intrusion

County engagement does not mean micromanaging workforce professionals or substituting county-board judgment for the expertise of the WDB. It means performing the governance work the WIOA assigns to local elected officials: appointing qualified board members, participating in the consortium, receiving meaningful reports, reviewing agreements, responding to monitoring findings, and ensuring that fiscal responsibility is matched with access to information and decision-making.

Wisconsin's workforce development system depends on regional collaboration. Regional structures allow counties to pool expertise, align services with labor markets, and provide programs that no single county may be able to operate as effectively on its own. But collaboration works best when responsibility is transparent. The WDB must have the freedom and expertise to perform its statutory functions, while the LEO Consortium and participating county boards must have the information necessary to protect public funds and ensure accountability.

The most dangerous governance model is one in which the counties are legally responsible but operationally uninformed. The WIOA does not contemplate that result. It places local elected officials in the structure because federal workforce dollars are public dollars and because effective workforce policy must remain connected to the communities it serves. Consistent attention before a problem arises is the best protection for the program, its participants, and the taxpayers of every participating county. ■

Attolles Law, s.c. works on behalf of Wisconsin counties, school districts and other public entities across the state of Wisconsin. Its president & CEO, Andy Phillips, has served as outside general counsel for the Wisconsin Counties Association for more than 20 years.

See the online Sept. 2026 Legal Issues column in the WCA Legal News archive at wicounties.org/legal-news for the endnote citations.

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