



Fabrication Laboratories Grant Program

Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2026

Lead Division: Business and Community Development

New **Revised** 7/1/2025

Grant **Loan** **Tax Credit** **Technical Assistance**

Introduction

Background Information: The Fabrication Laboratory (Fab Lab) program is designed to support hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) education by assisting public school districts with equipment purchases used for instructional and educational purposes in fabrication laboratories in Wisconsin schools. The open Fab Lab environment enables students to learn the skills necessary to thrive in the 21st Century global economy. Fab Labs may also serve as a local economic development tool, providing a resource for entrepreneurs, businesses, and inventors through community access.

Program's Purpose: The program's purpose is to message the state's students, workforce, and business community, as well as out of state firms, the importance of STEAM related training and development to the State of Wisconsin. This is done via helping fund labs that school districts might not be able to otherwise afford. These labs should lead to additional K- 12 students getting trained more directly (hands-on) in STEAM skills, leading to more entering the workforce interested in those occupations.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants: Eligible Applicants for the Fabrication Laboratory program are Wisconsin public school districts and Tribal schools located in Wisconsin. A Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA), or a lead public school district, may apply on behalf of a consortium of two or more public school districts.

Eligible Use of Funds: Fab Lab grants can be used to purchase equipment to be used for instructional and educational purposes in one or more fabrication laboratories by elementary, middle, junior, or high school students and related software installation costs. Costs are only eligible to be applied to grant and matching fund expenses after WEDC approval.

Ineligible Use of Funds: Activities ineligible for program assistance or match include, but are not limited to:

- In-kind contributions.
- Indirect construction costs (e.g., "soft" costs).

Matching: All applicants must provide matching funds equal to 50% of the Fab Lab funds awarded.



Available Incentives

FY26: \$\$250,000

Award Sizes: The minimum Fab Lab grant amount is \$10,000. The maximum Fab Lab grant amount is \$25,000 for individual school districts \$50,000 for consortium applications.

Awards per Applicant: Applicants may only be awarded one grant per fiscal year. Applicants can receive a maximum of three grants over the program's lifetime. The three-award limit does not apply to the following:

- Milwaukee Public Schools.
- The expansion of a Fab Lab to allow use by K-8 students.
- The expansion or addition of a Fab Lab to include artificial intelligence or related skills training.

Activities and Expected Outcomes

Assist 10 public school districts or consortiums.

Impact: Creation of Fabrication Labs and associated educational programming to encourage STEAM based learning in Wisconsin's K-12 schools.

Metrics: As a community development program where performance reporting metrics for Fab Lab are focused on measuring both capital investment costs and usage of the fabrication laboratory. Fab Lab program metrics include the following list, and each project will include one or more of these metrics in its reporting requirements depending on the project's specified use of funds.

- Capital Investment
- Individuals Served/Engaged
- Leverage – Total

Application Guideline

Timeline: The Fab Lab grant program has a continuous application process with a deadline of January 15 for receipt of completed applications.

Review Considerations: WEDC may take the following into account when considering a Fab Lab award:

- Readiness and long-range planning.
- Curriculum.
- Business and community partnerships.
- Financial need and previous awards.



How to Apply: An interested applicant should contact a WEDC Account Manager to determine if their project is right for the program. Upon review of the project, and alignment with eligibility criteria, an applicant will be invited to submit their application through Network Wisconsin.

Award Process: The completed application will be assigned to a WEDC underwriter and go through the award review process.

Performance Reporting: Recipients must submit a performance report documenting the number of unique students who accessed the lab as part of a curriculum-based learning environment and any other contract deliverable.

WEDC annually selects awards on a sample basis for an audit. All backup to the performance report and financial records are required to be maintained by the Recipient for a period of at least three (3) years after the last performance report is due.

WEDC may impose additional reporting requirements to evaluate project performance and to ensure compliance with contract deliverables.

Helpful Information

Definitions:

“CESA” - Cooperative Education Service Agencies, as defined by § 116.01 Wis. Stats.

“Fab Lab” - a high technology workshop equipped with computer controlled additive and subtractive manufacturing components, such as 3-dimensional printers, laser engravers, computer numerical control routers, and/or plasma cutters. It may also include advanced equipment and simulators related to artificial intelligence, healthcare/health sciences, and skilled trades. A fully functioning Fab Lab has active engagement with the business community, is accessible to multiple departments within a school or schools, provides community access, and is integrated with the network of Wisconsin-based Fab Labs.

“Public School District” - the territorial unit for school administration as defined by § 115.01(3) Wis. Stats or a tribal school as defined by § 115.001(15m) Wis. Stats.

Revision History

Program Inception – 2015 Wisconsin Act 55 – Fiscal Year 2015

- 7/1/2018: Moratorium on applicants who have already received three Fab Lab grants.
- 7/1/2019: Clarified performance reporting requirements.
- 7/1/2020: Expand eligibility for school districts establishing Fab Labs to be used by K- 8 students; decrease match requirement; include standard list of ineligible grant or match activities.
- 11/10/2020: Expand eligibility to include tribal schools.
- 07/1/2022: Changed to non-competitive program
- 07/1/2023: Set minimum grant amount
- 7/1/2024: Expanded the definition of a Fab Lab; allow for additional Fab Lab grant if use is to expand the Lab for K-8 students.