



**Policy Academy: Fostering Regional
Collaboration Toward Rural Prosperity**

Wisconsin's Policy Academy Goals

What are we trying to do? Why now?

Our vision:

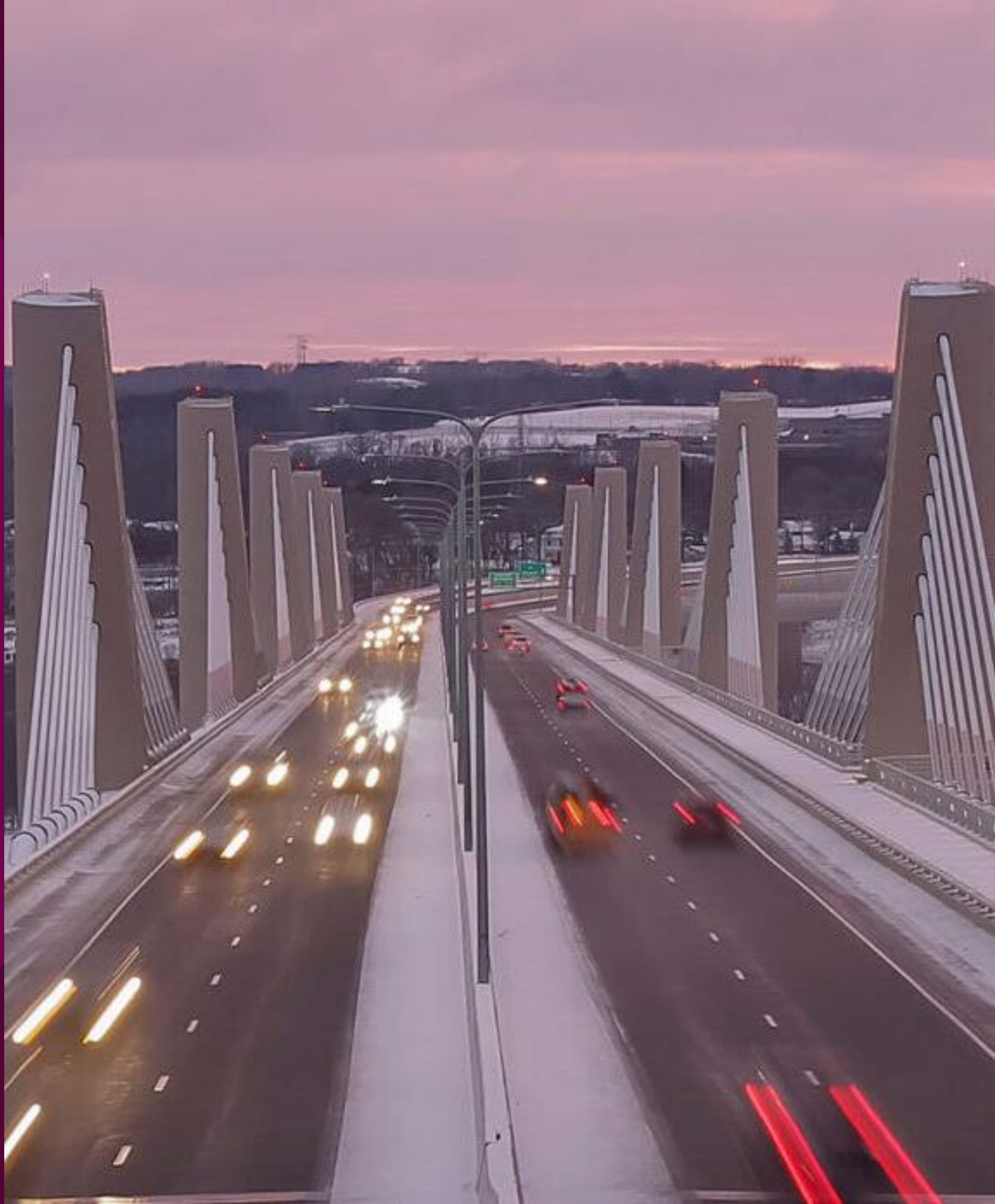
The Policy Academy is a collaborative planning process between the state, tribes, regional partners and universities that results in economic well-being for rural and tribal communities in Wisconsin.

- Establishment of the Office of Rural Prosperity
- Need to build relationships and trust
- WEDC strategic planning



Extension

University of Wisconsin-Madison



Proposed Changes



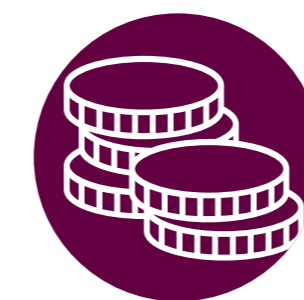
Regional Collaboration

Align state, tribal and regional strategic plans toward rural prosperity.



Enhanced Communication Channels

Create a feedback loop of information between regional and statewide partners.



Targeted Investment

Identify collaborative projects for state and federal funding that provide focused investment toward economic well-being in rural Wisconsin.

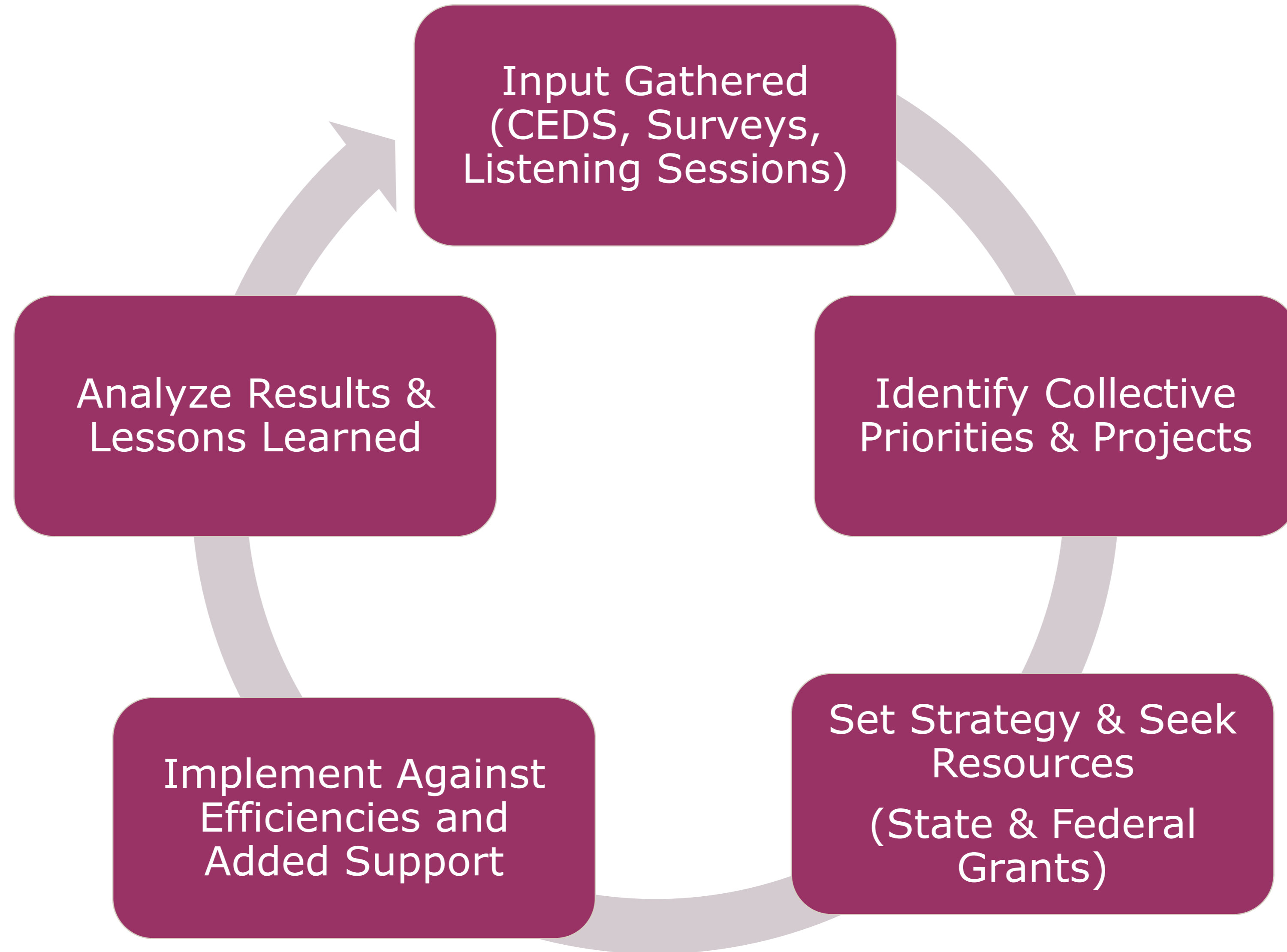


Theory of Change

Enhancing regional collaboration toward rural prosperity.



Feedback Loop



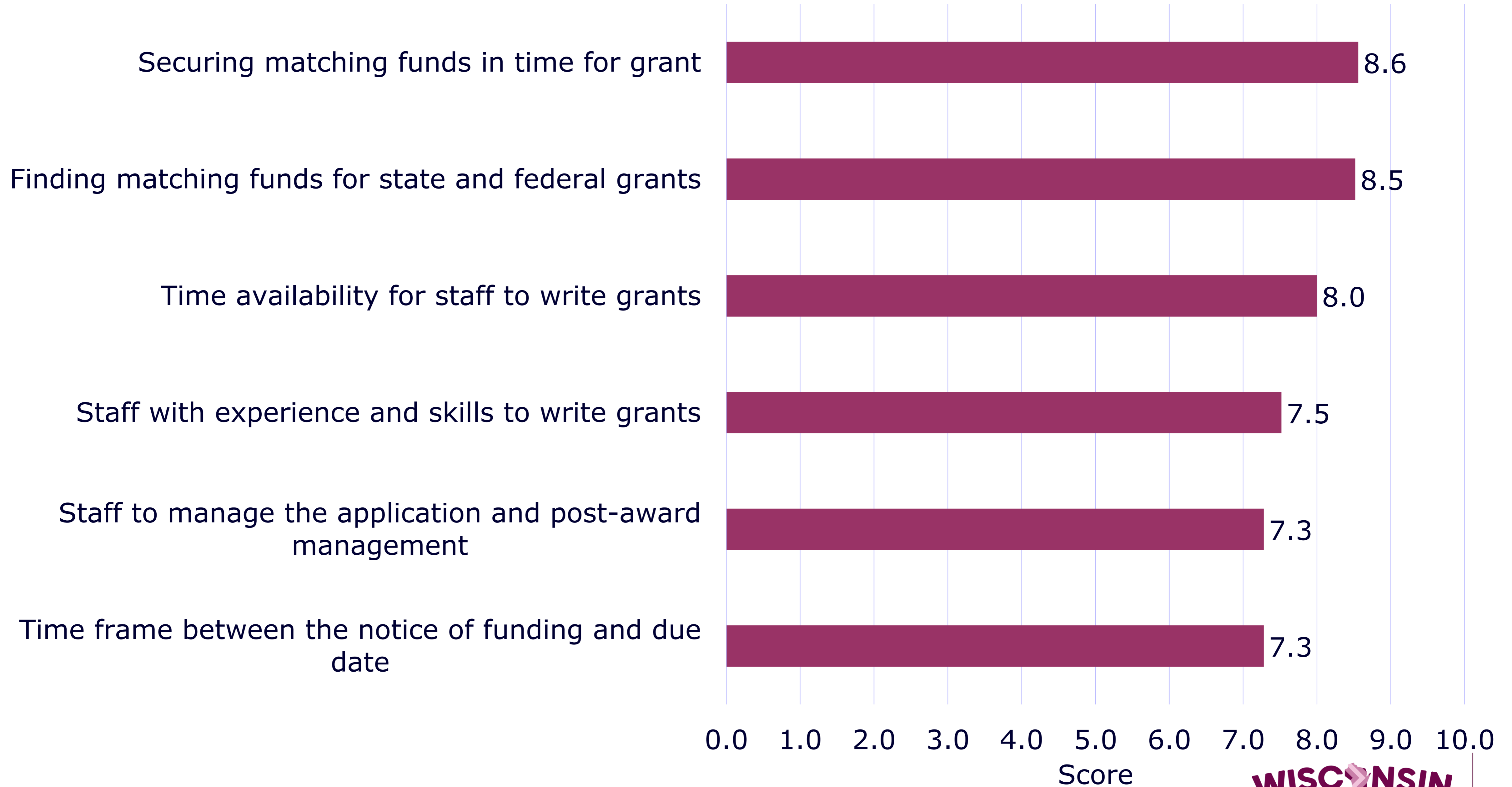


A Year of Building Collaborative Relationships

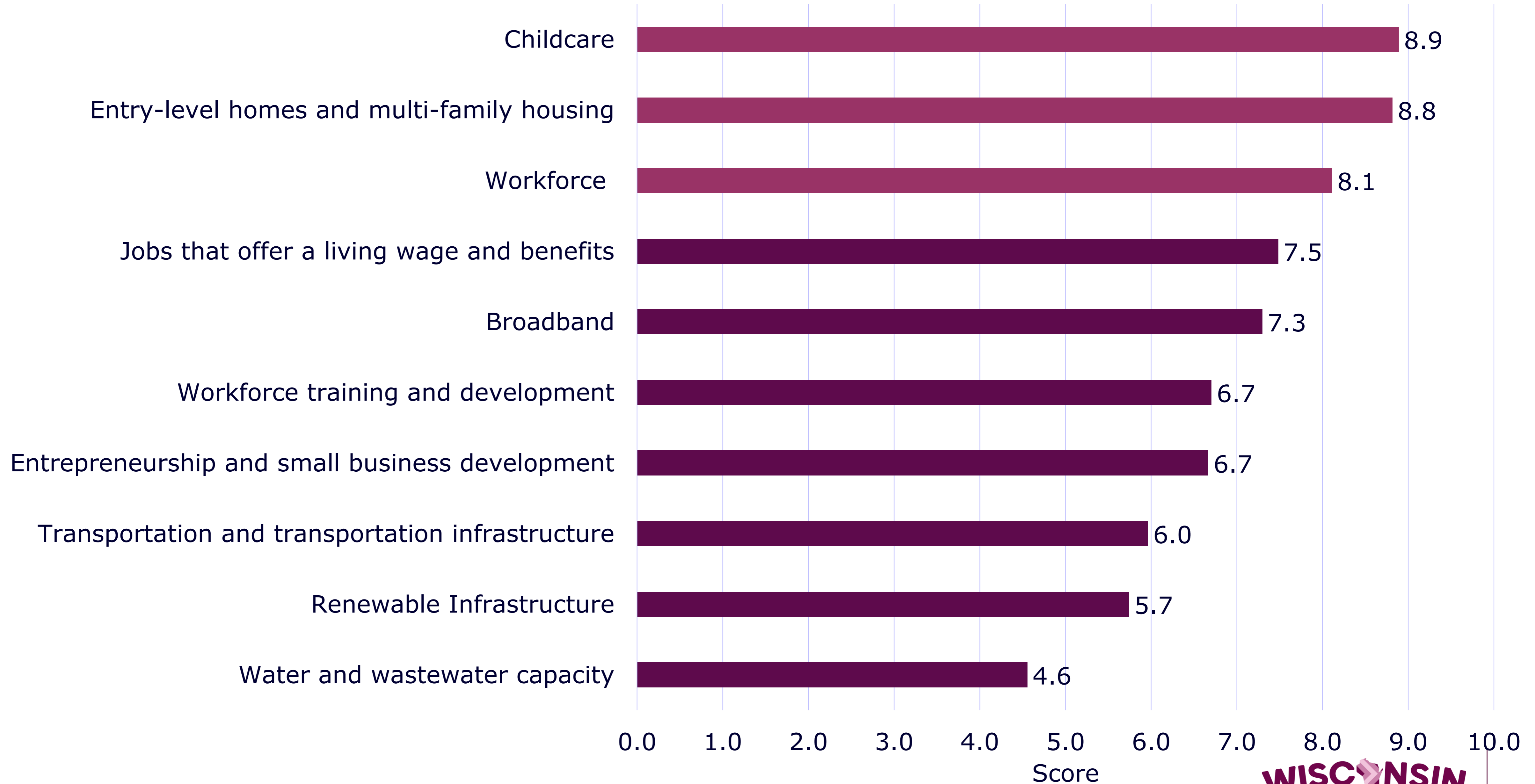
Academy Timeline



Challenges in Applying for Funding, Averages by Challenge (1-10)



County Project Needs, Average by Project Area (1-10)



Priorities

Common
Priorities



Childcare

Housing

Infrastructure/Transportation

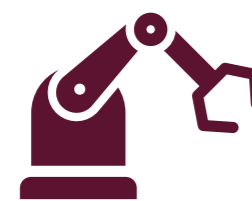
Unique Priorities



Climate Change

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Future Priorities



Artificial Intelligence

Agritourism

Statewide Challenges Identified by Regional Partners

- AI
- Amtrak
- Broadband
- Childcare
- Climate Migration
- Demographic Shift
- EV Plan
- Housing
- Move To Regional Collaboration
- Public and higher education funding
- Renewable energy
- Revenue Sharing
- Sustainable Funding Models
- Talent Attraction
- Transportation Funding

Tribal Nations Facilitated Engagement Discussions



Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc.

Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin

- **What are the Benefits of Strategic Alignment?**

- Focuses time and effort on right tasks
- Effectively prioritizes tasks and removes conflicting priorities
- Eliminates communication silos
- Fosters team collaboration
- Builds networks
- Focuses investment
- Get other perspectives and learn more about economic development and how to connect with other tribes

- **How Can Tribes Engage in this Process?**

- Need to understand what RPCs do and what is our relationship
- Leadership needs to prioritize ED to stay part of the conversation
- Market the benefits – it goes both ways
- Need some understanding of what is a partner
- Reality of a partner in it for the long haul
- Improve communication

- **What is Your Tribe Working On Now?**

- Housing
- Business Diversification
- Food sovereignty
- Small business development
- Education: Leadership roles/transition planning
- Sustainable forestry
- Protecting resources: Water, Etc.
- Health care development projects

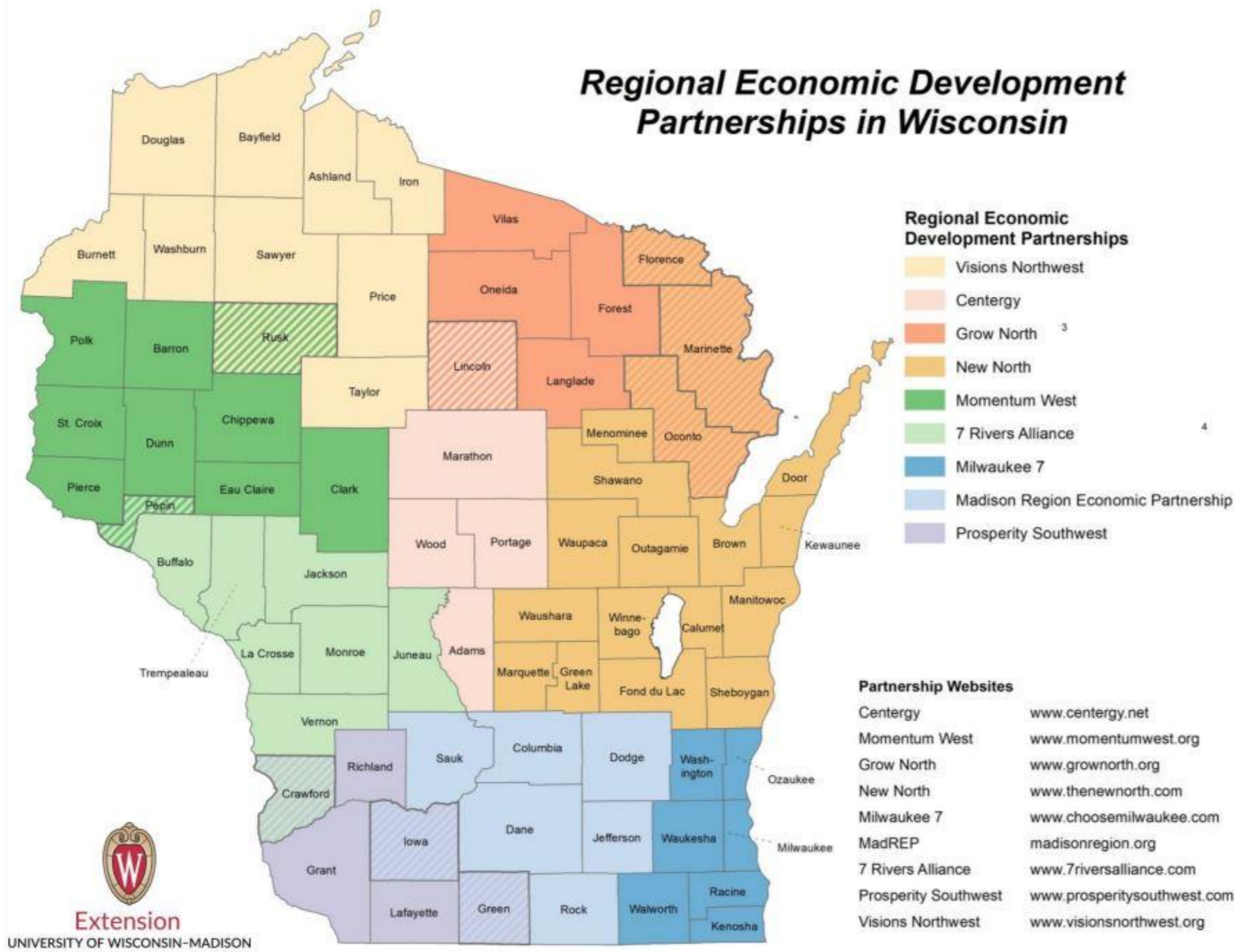
- **What Does it Take to be a Good Partner?**

- Think about the other partner
- Are the values the same?
- Show real commitment
- Understand our role on the team
- Provide accountability
- Show movement forward and momentum
- Understand that work done will be for the whole community and not just for each of us

Regional Alignment in Wisconsin: Challenges and Opportunities

Regional Alignment - A statewide challenge

WEDC REDOs

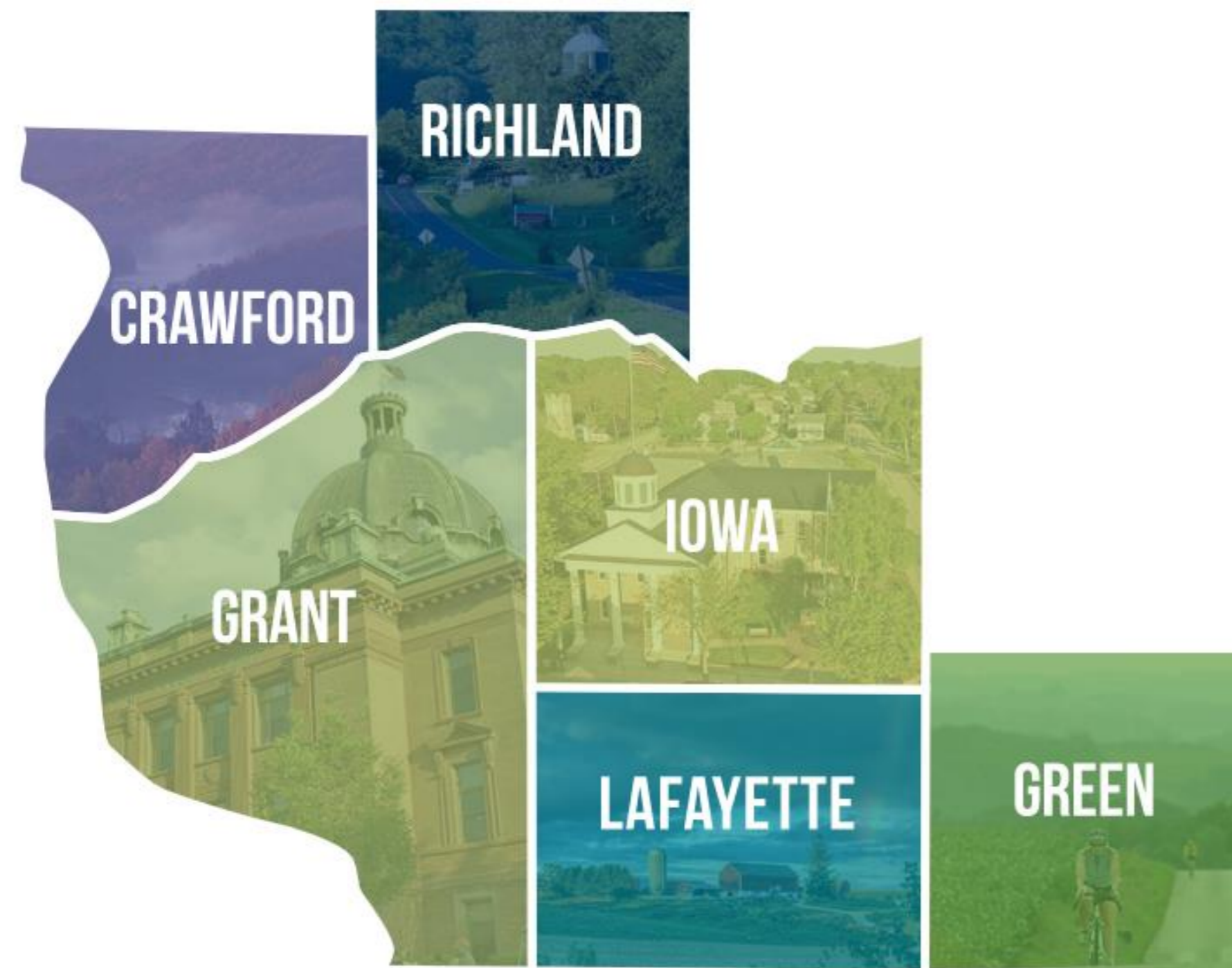


EDA EDDs / RPCs

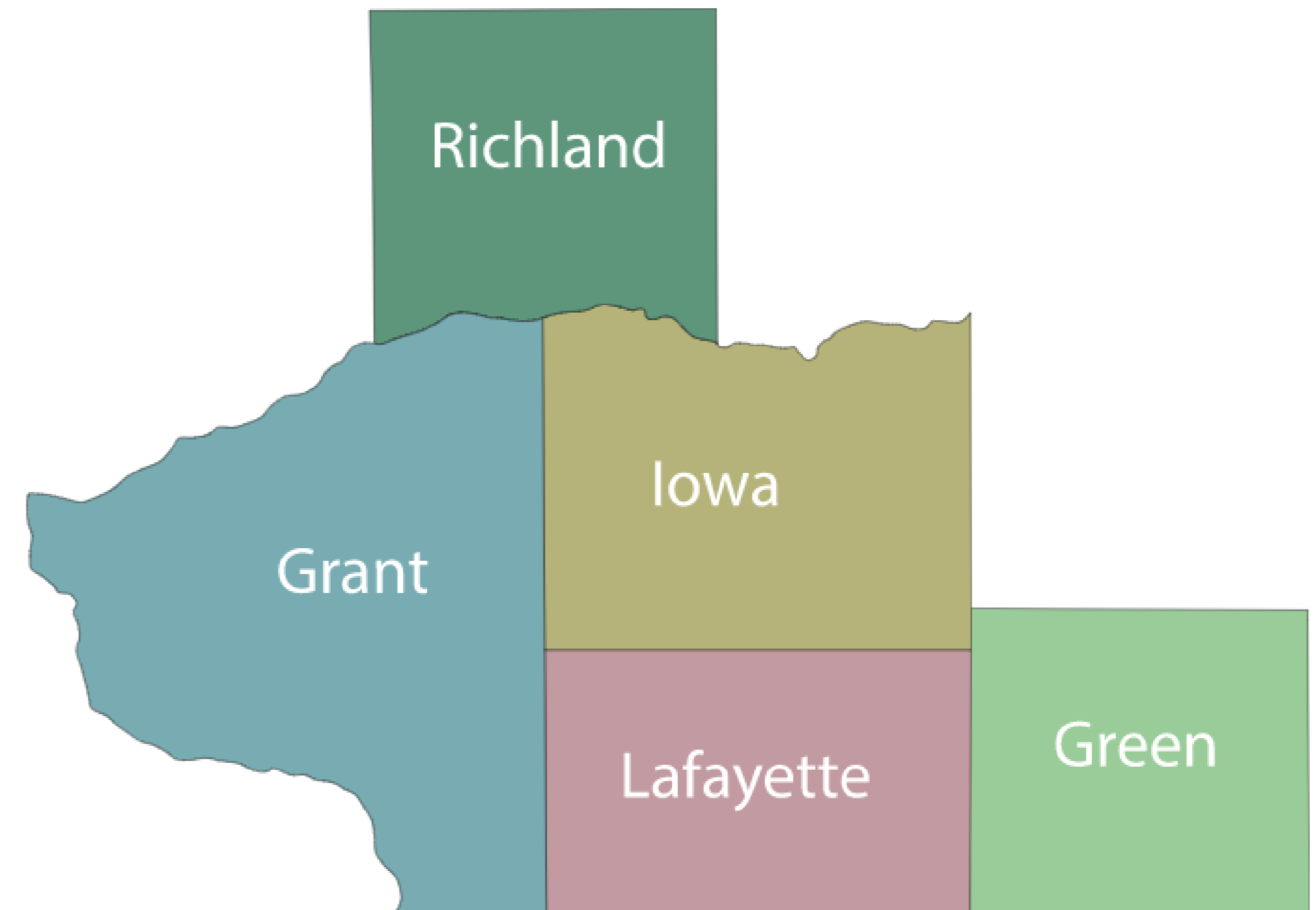


Geographic Misalignment

PSW



SWWRPC



Finding Unique Value – October 22



- Finding a unique value proposition usually involves a new way of segmenting the market
- A novel value proposition often expands the market

Overlapping Value

Services

- REDO: BRE, site selection, RFIs, direct business relationships
- RPC / EDD: data/mapping, planning, grant writing / admin, project-based business engagement

Customers

- REDO: Businesses, EDOs
- RPC / EDD: Local governments, businesses (through programs), EDOs

Revenue

- REDO: KSP funding, donations, some grants
- RPC / EDD: county levies, contracts, grants

Recommendations

- Encourage more collaboration between REDO, RPCs, Tribes, and the State
- Formalize relationships through board membership, MOUs, and ongoing strategic conversations
- Work to reduce administrative duties and identify efficiencies
- Track CEDs projects that WEDC funds through our investments and incentivize when possible
- Provide strategic investment to RPCs/EDDs that complement REDO services

Implementing & Sustaining Regional Collaboration Statewide

Rural Voices Report Recommendations

- **Continue efforts to make the needs and priorities of rural communities and Native Nations a forethought, rather than an afterthought.** Rural and tribal communities' needs should be considered in the design and implementation of state programs. There should be a government-wide commitment to apply an eye towards how well existing and latest programs work or will work in rural regions.
- **Ensure rural places and Native Nations in rural Wisconsin get a fair chance in accessing state and federal resources.** Examples of creative, responsive solutions might include rural-specific program set- asides; strengthening regional councils and regional capacity to collaborate; help with writing applications for grants, loans, and other assistance; and direct technical assistance to communities, counties, and Native Nations.
- **Look beyond Wisconsin's borders for innovative ideas.** Understand how other states across the country organize and prioritize their work in rural regions and with Native Nations. When model policies, programs or practices are realizing positive results for rural people, communities, institutions, and firms in other rural regions, bring them—and adapt them—to Wisconsin.
- **Rebalance state business incentives to ensure economic development prioritizes the assets of Wisconsin people, communities, and businesses.** Help foster local and regional development strategies and implementation in rural Wisconsin and in the Native Nations within Wisconsin's borders. In practice, this means that tax incentives for business attraction would support development and expansion of existing businesses, entrepreneurship, Main Street revitalization, childcare, broadband, transportation, and other investments essential to creating strong, thriving communities.

Thrive Rural Wisconsin Overview

- Providing technical and financial assistance to 10 rural Wisconsin communities between February 2024- November 2025
- Encouraging local and regional collaboration and connecting communities to experts and resources
- Filling a gap with predevelopment support to get projects ready to apply for state and federal funding with a goal of leveraging \$3-\$5 million in support for projects in Thrive Rural Wisconsin communities. Communities are eligible to apply for up to \$25,000 per year for two years through this program for capacity building funds.
- Engaging communities in a work plan process to build capacity for project implementation, providing 1:1 coaching and resource navigation, advising on grant proposals, facilitating trainings, and developing toolkits

Quarterly Regional Strategy Sessions

Purpose: Convene stakeholders for strategic conversations around common priorities and regional alignment.

- January/February: WEDA Governor's Conference on Economic Development
- April/May: Wisconsin Rural Partners Annual Summit
- July: State Convened Interagency Meeting
- September/October: WEDC Economic Summit

Rural Communities of Practice

Purpose: Convene rural practitioners and regional partners around key priority issues identified in the Policy Academy process

- Housing
- Small Business
- Sustainable Energy Projects/Infrastructure
- Childcare
- Workforce Development

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES TO ADVANCE COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS TOWARD ECONOMIC WELL BEING.



Elements of the Community of Practice



Identify action-oriented local, regional and statewide stakeholders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Develop synergies for collective goals and supportive practices.

Facilitated resource sharing, connections to technical experts, and opportunities for peer learning and workshopping projects and ideas.

Environment encourages learning and cooperation and broadens local networks to reduce isolation.

Convening leads to the identification and implementation of specific actions that create new knowledge, solve for problems, or advance projects within that issue area.

Transformational goals and metrics are identified to measure longitudinal success toward economic well-being.

Questions?