

Invest in Education – Fuel a Strong Biohealth Economy

The State of Wisconsin has a strong and growing biohealth economy. BioForward's [Wisconsin Biohealth Industry Economic Impact Report 2020](#) shows that the biohealth sector provides \$28 billion in state economic impact and generates over \$1 billion in annual state and local tax revenue. The average salary in this sector is \$87,000 annually, which is nearly twice the state average. Wisconsin's biohealth economy is growing at a rate of 8.0% per year, which is two times that overall state average. However, that economic growth is directly impacted and limited by access to a qualified and educated workforce.

Our industry is facing challenges. The biohealth economy, while growing, is seeing its national share erode slightly with overall job growth that is lagging just behind the nation. In addition, meeting the workforce demand challenge is critical to maintaining industry growth. Wisconsin is lagging the nation in both the growth of its clinical and non-clinical biohealth workforce. It is also behind the U.S. growth rate in degree graduates in key biohealth and life sciences fields.

The quality of our state's biohealth workforce directly impacts our companies' productivity and ability to expand in Wisconsin while competing for workers with other states. One critical foundation of our sector's ability to hire qualified workers is the strength and breadth of our K12 and higher educational systems. Education is linked to our ability to attract out-of-state talent and our ability to meet our long-term employment demands.

K12 education is a foundational pillar upon which Wisconsin's biohealth workforce stands.

Investments in our institutions of higher learning, including our 4-year universities and technical schools, are pivotal to providing an educated workforce for our biohealth companies.

BioForward and Wisconsin's biohealth companies are making the following direct investments in education:

- Talent Attraction – BioForward has launched a national social media talent attraction campaign, which has been active since 2019 <https://bioindustrywi.com/>
- Public Relations – BioForward initiated a national PR campaign beginning in 2020 posting media stories, blog posts, marketing our research institutions, supply chain and our Wisconsin biohealth companies
- STEM Education – BioForward provides support for statewide STEM education in the form of funding and personnel to support statewide programs and the creation of internships at biohealth companies

At BioForward, we are investing in short-term (PR and Talent) and long-term (STEM education) because both are critical to meet the demands of our companies' workforce challenges. There are currently over 1,000 open positions for highly educated and experienced science and engineering talent at Wisconsin companies. We must fill these talent demands in order to keep our biohealth economy thriving.

BioForward SUPPORTS State Investments in Education. In addition to our own investments and initiatives, we urge state lawmakers to continue to invest in education in order to further support our workforce needs in Wisconsin. We urge the Legislature to prioritize:

- Increased K12 funding with special emphasis on STEM programs;
- Funding and educator training for FAB Labs;
- Funding for UW-Madison and UW-System, including authorization for a critical renovation project at the UW-Madison School of Engineering;
- Investments in our technical college system to support ongoing science, technology, engineering and math programs; and
- Tuition assistance for low-income students seeking higher education either at a 4-year university or technical college particularly in the fields of science, technology, engineering, math and related healthcare fields.