

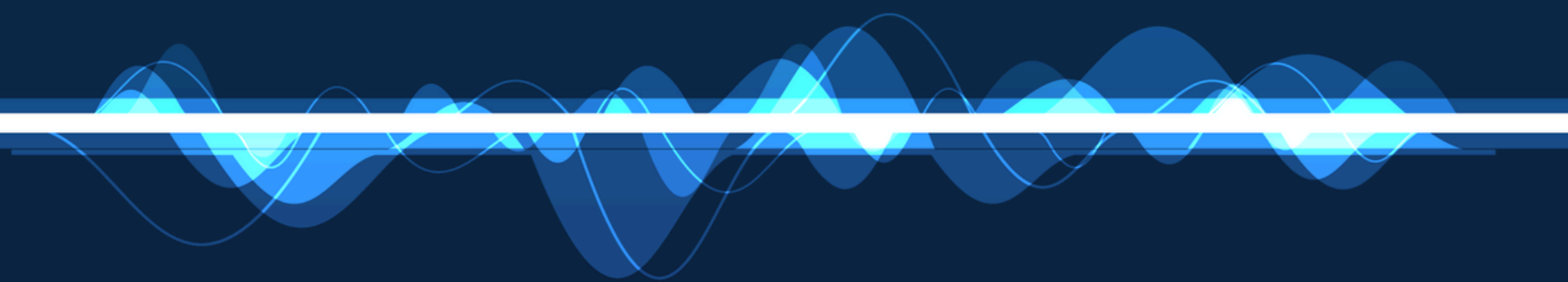


mke tech

2024 Impact Report

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Momentum through Collaboration: Shaping our Region's future in the Innovation Economy



Since the inception of the MKE Tech Hub Coalition, we've been guided by a bold vision of technology as an economic driver in the region. We've operated with a civic mindset, while constantly evolving to market needs and opportunities to address the region's most pressing needs in tech.

In 2024, we made great strides, which speaks to how far we've come as a region:



- [Microsoft's \\$3.3B investment](#) focuses on artificial intelligence and economic growth in Wisconsin
- [BioHealth Tech Hub designation](#) focuses on propelling Wisconsin into a global leader in personalized medicine and biohealth technologies
- [Water + Energy Forward engine](#) focuses on addressing the water-energy-waste nexus at small and medium-sized manufacturers and wastewater utilities in Wisconsin

On our path of scaling an innovation economy, big wins such as these create greater momentum in our region and state toward the goal of becoming a “superstar” tech hub. By collaborating regionally, we can “go far” together.

As we contribute to our region's collective momentum and maintain our commitment to transformational change, we concurrently invest in “go fast” initiatives which quickly respond to market needs and create immediate impact. Building a better, stronger and more diverse tech hub is anchored by our three strategy lanes: 1. Attracting Tech companies and Talent 2. Building a Diverse Tech Talent Pipeline 3. Scaling the Innovation Ecosystem. In 2024, we invested in new programs to help the region connect, invest, and adopt technology, including AI.

This Impact Report highlights key accomplishments from 2024 and our past five years. We're excited to showcase our progress in accelerating the economy in southeast Wisconsin.

-- *Kathy Henrich* & *Molly Mulroy*
CEO Board Chair

Mission Statement

**Working together to grow a vibrant,
inclusive ecosystem where tech and
innovation create enduring regional
prosperity and good jobs.**

Transformational Connections and Partnerships

The Power of the Collective: Regional Progression

This Impact Report is a walkthrough of the **progression of our tech-powered economy** at the macro and micro levels. Creating an inclusive tech ecosystem must be measured at a macro level to understand overall regional strengths and progress. Congratulations to all regional organizations for contributing to our collective growth.



25%

higher density
scientists/engineering talent
than national average
(WPF dashboard, 2024)

5.6%

growth in tech businesses
(CompTIA 2024, adding Racine/Kenosha)

2x

national growth rate in tech
talent, including remote
workers
(Tech Republic Study, 2024)

Acknowledgement of Large Projects to the Region

- **\$3.3B** investment of Microsoft in the region, including 7th Co-Innovation Center in the world at UW-Milwaukee
- **\$3B** Eli Lilly investment, including **750 new jobs**
- **\$49M** BioHealth EDA Tech Hub designation and federal grant
- Water+Energy Forward NSF Engine win, including Veolia Workforce Hub



**Microsoft Invests
\$3.3B in Wisconsin**

Playing a Role in Regional Wins

These large wins are not the result of one organization. They require years of **collaboration** to develop the right conditions for investment before directly competing for the investment. MKE Tech Hub Coalition's mission of inclusively growing our tech-powered economy creates the right conditions. We are also proud to have collaborated on either the acquisition or implementation of these investments in the region.



Driving Connections to Scale Impact

A successful tech ecosystem provides connections and mentoring to help accelerate growth (raise funds, gain customer insights, recruit talent, and form partnerships). We have facilitated over **1,800 meaningful connections** in 2024. These connections resulted in new employment, new investments, and critical mentoring opportunities.

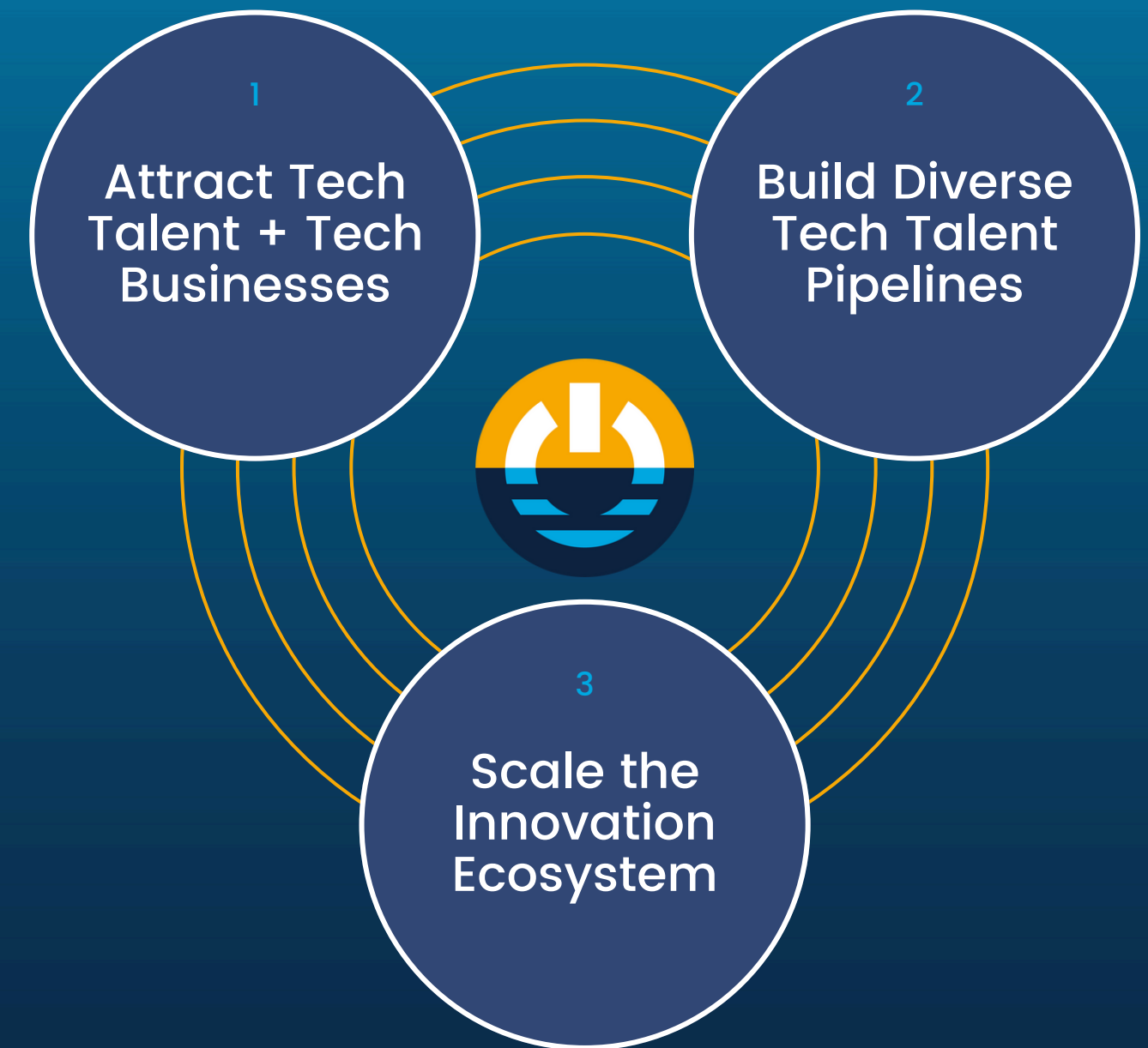
Ultimately, a growing Milwaukee benefits business, healthcare and education systems, making it easier to build, attract and retain talent and startup ventures. Tech and innovation are powering this growth at a rapid pace as they become further embedded in every industry and become critical to the creation of greater economic opportunities for people who choose to call southeast Wisconsin home.



Introduction

As indicated in the table of contents, we have structured the Impact Report by our three strategy lanes:

1. **Attracting Tech Companies and Talent:** A focus on establishing southeast Wisconsin as a nationally recognized hub for tech and innovation.
2. **Building a Diverse Tech Talent Pipeline:** A focus on bridging the talent gap by shaping tomorrow's tech talent, developing non-traditional pathways into tech, and continually skilling our talent in advanced technologies, while increasing racial and gender equity in tech.
3. **Scaling the Innovation Ecosystem:** A focus on supporting startups and driving adoption of advanced technologies to grow a thriving tech hub and innovation economy.



Attracting Tech Companies and Talent

The background features a dark blue gradient. A horizontal white line with a slight glow runs across the middle. Below this line, there are several overlapping, semi-transparent waves in shades of blue, green, and yellow, creating a dynamic, abstract pattern.

Showcasing the Identity of the MKE Tech Ecosystem

We believe Milwaukee is a great place to live and work, and we want to see it thrive, which is why we are helping answer the question, "Why Milwaukee for tech?" [ChooseMKETech.org](https://www.choosemketech.org) serves as a guide for those in tech looking for a job, relocation, and connection in the MKE Tech Ecosystem. The support for these efforts came from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

- Launched Job Board and Community Event Calendar in 1H2024
 - Averaged 750 jobs per month on the job board
 - Total events on calendar in 2024: 150+
- Total site visitation in 2024: **70K+**
 - The average monthly visitation was 6,375
 - Over 8,500 visits per month in Q3
- Expanded the story of tech in the region through blogs and digital advertising
 - Collection of over **100 regional stories** through [INNOVATE® MKE](#), podcasts, and blogs
 - Reached over **5.5M** individuals through social media advertising



choose
mke tech

Building a Diverse Tech Talent Pipeline

The background features a dark blue gradient. A horizontal white line with a soft glow runs across the middle. Below this line, there are several overlapping, semi-transparent waves in shades of blue, green, and yellow, creating a dynamic, abstract pattern.

Powering Students' Futures: MKE Hour of Tech

As AI shapes our future, it's important to account for our rising youths. Hour of Tech does just this, providing students with hands on experiences with AI, ML and data science. By bringing together schools, volunteers, and companies in the region, Hour of Tech serves as one of many initiatives shaping the future of tech. Partnering with company initiatives such as Northwestern Mutual's hi_Tech program are pivotal in reaching our youths in the region. Our volunteers are at the heart of this impactful work, many of whom are MKE Tech Hub members.

To all our region-wide volunteers, we greatly appreciate your time and effort in making this year's initiative possible. Additionally, thank you to our Program Manager Quentin Prince and Northwestern Mutual Assistant Director of STEM Outreach Stacy Zaja for your leadership. Pictured at MSOE's STEM Center are students from Notre Dame School of Milwaukee.



21K

hours of impact

12K

students reached

104

organizations engaged

The Power of FUSE

The FUSE program exists to prepare students for work in the era of AI, particularly those who are historically underrepresented in tech. For eight weeks during the summer, FUSE engages students in technical education, professional development workshops and interdisciplinary projects, which focuses on data visualization, Python and AI. This program is free and offered to students of all majors and industry backgrounds with no prior experience necessary. It augments higher education to prepare students for the future of work.

Each student has access to program mentors, who guide them in impactful coaching conversations and networking. Upon completion of the program, participants earn a UW-Milwaukee Higher Education Regional Alliance (HERA) learning badge, college credit, and continued networking opportunities. In 2024, we also piloted connecting the FUSE students to employer-led career development experiences including Molson Coors Beverage Company's Destination Innovation, which provided a special behind-the-scenes culture and operations tour for students.

Thanks to this year's sponsors: Generac, Molson Coors Beverage Company, Northwestern Mutual, Rockwell Automation, and WEC Energy Group.

115
participants from
17
different schools

260
total student alumni

65%
earned HERA badge

42
mentors participating
representing

84%
overall diversity

33
local companies



Insight from FUSE Alumni & Molson Coors



“FUSE is impactful for individuals who are new to technology and would like to step out of their comfort zone. With FUSE and Demo Day, it’s brought me some enlightenment on my path forward and my journey.”

— A'naji Brooks, FUSE Alumni



“With the FUSE curriculum, I was able to gain more knowledge and impact on what’s happening across industries and how AI is impacting them.”

— Vaanya Agarwal, FUSE Alumni



“Molson Coors Beverage Company participates in talent development experiences like FUSE because they help our early talent team build strong relationships with local students who possess technical knowledge and skills that are beneficial to our summer internships and rotational programs.”

— Bella Fergus, Molson Coors Talent Acquisition Partner

Evolving the Non-Traditional Pathways Into Tech: Meeting the Needs of Employers

When employers need talent, they can look to a variety of sources and business models. **Our role is to collaborate with employers to help them not just look beyond fulfilling their immediate hiring needs but to work to create a long-term strategy** that is inclusive of developing talent from overlooked talent pools.

The MKE Tech Hub Coalition's Tech Skilling Program provides solutions to qualify and retain diverse talent in southeast Wisconsin. Based on a market-responsive, employer-first design, the program reduces barriers and costs for employers to access, develop, and expand skilled talent capacity to meet business needs. This ensures our program broadens access to tech career pathways for untapped talent in alignment with demand and data trends.

Evolving the Non-Traditional Pathways Into Tech: Meeting the Needs of Employers

Non-traditional reskilling pathways for tech roles

- Skills to Build – Employ MKE
 - Skills to Build is an Employ MKE program funded by the US DOL Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs Grant Program, which invests in public-private partnerships to develop, implement, and scale worker-centered sector strategy training programs in H-1B industries and occupations critical to meeting the goals of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).
 - These include advanced manufacturing; information technology; and professional, scientific, and technical services occupations that support renewable energy, transportation, and broadband infrastructure sectors (occupations in the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors; broadband expansion and smart city grids; and electrical, industrial, and civil engineers and technicians who facilitate the design, construction, modernization, and maintenance of the nation's infrastructure).
 - We are a referral partner to Employ MKE on this program, allowing us to offer Tech Skilling Grants to our member employers and local startups.
 - There are four modes of training that are eligible for Skills to Build funding: **1. Internships 2. Registered Apprenticeships 3. Incumbent Worker Training/Upskilling 4. New Hire-on-the-Job Training.**

Evolving the Non-Traditional Pathways Into Tech: Meeting the Needs of Employers

- In 2024, we built the infrastructure and piloted processes to prepare for scaling the program in 2025+
- 14 interns at 13 employers from small early-stage startups to large companies
- Grant directly pays up to three months of wages to tech interns working up to 29 hours/week (an average value of \$5K per intern)

14
interns in 2024 from
13
employer sponsors

100%
retention

22
average age

50%
diversity

29%
women

Scaling the Innovation Ecosystem

The background features a series of overlapping, semi-transparent waves in shades of blue, green, and yellow. A prominent horizontal white line runs across the middle of the image, partially obscured by the waves. The overall aesthetic is modern and dynamic.

The Impact of FOR-M on the Startup Community

From idea to startup, FOR-M is a network designed to support the entrepreneurial journey. The program, powered by We Pivot, is free to increase community access. By participating in the program, alumni are eligible to compete for financial awards. These awards are determined by a panel of investors from the MKE tech community, providing expert feedback to all applicants to help them understand the steps required to receive funding.

FOR-M by the numbers:

- **56** FOR-M Founders participating in the 2024 spring and fall incubator
- **46** Coaches volunteering **84** hours of time
- **10** FOR-M startup companies (representing 16 FOR-M Founders) received a total of **\$100K** in grant funding from Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)
- Five FOR-M startup companies (representing eight FOR-M Founders) received a total of **\$180K** in loan funding (from Bader Philanthropies and WEDC)



The Impact of FOR-M on the Startup Community



“Supporting an early-stage company is a courageous act. That’s what makes FOR-M exceptional. They truly put their time, experience, money, and guidance in the hands of the community of MKE founders where it is needed most.”

— Dr. Grace Hameister, Food FiXR



“Too many ideas never see the light of day because of a lack of access to needed resources. Grants and educational platforms like FOR-M are critical to making sure that viable ideas gain the traction they need.”

— Wish Born, Spark



“Early-stage support like this is essential for tech startups, providing the resources and validation needed to scale and make a real impact in the community.”

— Naveen Kankate, Staythanks

The Power of Connection: Founders Day

In 2023, Ian Hathaway, author of *The Startup Community Way*, visited Milwaukee and met with leaders in our tech and entrepreneurial ecosystem. Hathaway left us with a key recommendation: Create opportunities for founders to receive ongoing mentorship.

Inspired by Hathaway's visit, the MKE Tech Hub Coalition launched Founders Day, a monthly gathering of local startup founders and professionals to engage in mentoring, coworking, and networking. Founders Day exists to create **more accessibility and connection** in the region, which is critical to strengthening a growing startup ecosystem. The program is made possible through partnerships with local community organizations: Ward4, CSA Partners, Midwest Founders Community, MKE Startup News, and We Pivot.

8

Founders Day sessions hosted in 2024

1,295 hours

collectively spent mentoring, networking, and coworking

423

founders and mentors participated

Lunch and Learns from MKE Startup News and Taureau Group



The Power of AI Workshops for Manufacturers and Startups

These workshops, which are made possible by the generous support of [7Rivers](#) and powered by [Midpoint Consulting](#), are designed to provide [business leaders in manufacturing](#) with practical knowledge and strategic guidance on the application of AI in their operations. The workshops are made up of four components: **1. AI Strategy Roadmap Guidelines** **2. Industry Applications** **3. Interactive Sessions** **4. Implementing AI in Your Businesses.**

Additionally, we believe early-stage startups need to be thinking about how AI can be leveraged in their products. Increasingly, a plan for integrating AI into a startup's product or service is required to acquire clients and funding. Typically, early-stage startups don't have the capacity to spend time on building AI roadmaps, nor do they have access to AI engineers with the expertise to guide them. Through a grant from WEDC, our [3-Week AI Roadmap Sprint](#) met this need for seed and Series A stage startups.



The Power of AI Workshops for Manufacturers

By the numbers, AI roadmaps for manufacturers:

- **25** companies participated, each learning how AI can help improve business outcomes

“I enjoyed the workshop, which was set up in a way that gave us space to brainstorm. As part of the brainstorming session, experienced AI experts spent time sharing their expertise to help us refine our ideas.”

— Marcease Warren, Vice President of Manufacturing, Sentry Equipment Corp.



The power of AI Roadmaps for Startups

By the numbers, AI roadmaps for startups:

- **Eight** startups participated, each receiving a roadmap developed by Midpoint Consulting
- **50%** of companies had founders from demographics underrepresented in tech (BIPOC, women, disabled, veterans)

“The roadmap provided practical steps for navigating different stages of our journey and emphasized the critical components of our tech stack necessary for scaling effectively. We’re excited to apply various insights from the workshop to support our growth. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this enriching experience!”

— Nitin Ranjan, Founder & CEO, Golgix



The Heart of AI Innovation: A Network of Technologists & Enthusiasts

Furthering the commitment to advancing AI in southeast Wisconsin, the MKE Tech Hub Coalition has formed an AI Talent Community. The makeup of this community includes:

- **AI Insider**, a biweekly newsletter designed to inspire and guide member's journeys in AI
- **AI Forum**, a monthly virtual discussion on various AI topics (E.g., How do you deploy a successful chatbot?)
- **AI Quarterly**, an in-person meetup to connect, learn, inspire and celebrate all AI efforts in the region (E.g., Tech Skills in the Era of AI)

The goal is to create meaningful connections for enthusiasts and technical talent to explore various AI topics and build lasting relationships. This community connects with like-minded individuals, engages in thought provoking discussions, and stays at the forefront of AI advancements.

875+
members

280+
companies

88%
community member growth
from beginning of the year

618
event registrations

The MKE Tech Hub Coalition: Summary of Impact

The MKE Tech Hub Coalition: Summary of Impact

Milwaukee has a high density of innovators advancing traditional industries. The MKE Tech Hub Coalition worked as a change agent with its members and partners to achieve the following results in 2024:

- Grew to **140** members
- Distributed over **\$340K** in grants
- Invested **24K** hours of mentorship in the region (FOR-M, Founders Day, FUSE, and Hour of Tech)
- Contributed **1700+** hours to transformational change in the region (E.g. Biohealth Tech Hub, Water+Energy Forward, NSF Engine, GROW MKE, AI & Manufacturing Initiative)



MKE Tech: Regional Progress in Five Years

Since there is no centralized database, we've aggregated these metrics to showcase the progression of the region. The intent is to provide a clearer picture of the region-wide investments in the last five years. We are proud to have contributed to this regional success.

- Grew regional tech talent at **2x the market rate**
- **\$4B** of new industry investment in region
- **\$55M** of new federal investment in the region
- **\$210M** of new VC in the region
- **\$12M** of new investments in skilling programs



The MKE Tech Hub Coalition: Summary of Impact in 5 Years

In the last five years, our strategies have guided our journey of transformational change. These metrics are more than numbers. We like to think they represent empowerment for people and businesses that call the region home as well as representation of a thriving Milwaukee, where our tech hub is alive and well.



1. Attracting Tech Companies and Talent

A focus on establishing southeast Wisconsin as a nationally recognized hub for tech and innovation.

- In 2022, we built choosemketech.org when research showed us that individuals were concerned about their tech career options in southeast Wisconsin. They wanted to know that there would be many career opportunities working on problems that matter with advanced technology while working on a diverse team.
- In 2024, we added aggregated events and job opportunities.
- Now, over **75K** individuals are learning about **#mketech** each year.



2. Building a Diverse Tech Talent Pipeline

A focus on bridging the talent gap by shaping tomorrow's tech talent, developing non-traditional pathways into tech, and continually skilling our talent in advanced technologies, while increasing racial and gender equity in tech.

- This has led to an early-stage exposure program, Hour of Tech, which has contributed **100K+ mentorship hours** in 4 years
- Our collegiate talent program, FUSE, has had a great impact on students: Nearly **400 students** in 5 years
- The number of new skillers/upskillers: **42** registered apprentices, **21** reskillers, **76** upskillers, **14** interns



3. Scaling the Innovation Ecosystem

A focus on supporting startups and driving adoption of advanced technologies to grow a thriving tech hub and innovation economy.

- The number of startups in which we've been part of their journey: **325+** founders with over **\$450K in grants** awarded and **\$120K** in loans granted
- Continued innovation: In 2024 alone, we launched our startup loans



Thank you to our members and partners for your continued support. Our work can only be accomplished through your generosity and engagement.

Acknowledgements

Our Board

Molly Mulroy, Chair, WEC Energy Group

Dan Renouard, Treasurer, Baird

Ahmed Azam, Northwestern Mutual

Rebecca Janutis, Kohls

Wendy Schafer, Advocate Aurora Health

Bradley Crotty, Incpetion Health & Froedtert Health

Gwenn Peters, Rockwell

Mara Lord, Medical College of Wisconsin

Matt Moeser, Coninusus Technologies

Gordon Nameni, PhD, August Brown

Dr. Victor Amaya, Data You Can Use

Jason Fields, Madison Region Economic Partnership

Our Team

Kathy Henrich, CEO

Sanjay Mohan, Executive Director of AI

Joe Poeschl, Director of Engagement

Antonio Davis, Director of Content

Joe Zaccaria, Director of Workforce

Aaron Drews, Director of Grants and Operations

Gwen Viegut, Digital Marketing Manager

Vanessa Rivera, Program and Event Management Specialist

A Special Thanks to

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Sarah Sewell, Tom Goodwin, and Mark Muro

Members

Gold

Northwestern Mutual
Advocate Aurora Health
Johnson Controls
Kohls
WEC Energy Group

Silver

Froedtert Health
Rockwell Automation

Bronze

Accenture
American Family Insurance
Associated Bank
AWS
Badger Meter
Baird
Brooksource
Capgemini
Children's Hospital Wisconsin
Clarios
Concurrency
Data Holdings
Deloitte
Ensylon
Ernst & Young
GE Healthcare Technology
Godfrey & Kahn

Bronze (cont.)

HSA Bank
Johnson Financial Group
Komatsu
Landmark Credit Union
Medical College of Wisconsin
Milwaukee Bucks Inc.
Molson Coors Brewing Company
PwC
Skygen USA
SysLogic, Inc.
TEKsystems
UFS
Verizon
West Bend Mutual Insurance

Community

Alliant Energy
August Brown
Aurora WDC
Bader Rutter & Associates
Beyond STEM
BioForward
Block Time Financial
Boothcentral
Carroll University
Cascade Asset Management
CGI
City of Milwaukee
Clifton Larson Allen
Codeworks

Community (cont.)

Collabera
Comcentia
Concordia University
Connective Consulting
Continuus Technologies
Cushman & Wakefield
Data You Can Use
Demantic
Dev10
Digital Intelligence
Dinvy
Eliassen Group
Employ Milwaukee
Expedient
Experis
Farwell
Findorff
Formlabs
Gearbox Labs Inc
Gofarwell
Harqen
Health Payment Systems
HPGM
Husch Blackwell LLP
i.c.stars
Ideawake
Journey House
Lanex
M3 Insurance

Community (cont.)

MARS IT Corp
Maydm
Midpoint Consulting
Milwaukee Area Technical College
Milwaukee County
Milwaukee School of Engineering
MMAC/M7
MSI Data
Multiple Listing Service
Naviant
NCWIT-WI
New Resources Consulting
NEWaukee
Newspaper Consulting
Northwoods
NVISIA
NVNG
Penrod
Penta Technologies
Pyramid Consulting
Randstad USA
Rex Academy
River Run Computers
SHARP Literacy
Sentry
Serving Older Adults of SE
Wisconsin
SHARP Literacy
Signalwire

Community (cont.)

Silver Linings Systems
Skills Pipeline
Salom
Society for Information Management
STEM Forward
Summerfest
SuperiorSupResources
Talimer
Taureau Group
TEALS
The Business Journals
The Water Council
Tutatara
United Way of Greater Milwaukee
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Vaco
Versiti
VISIT Milwaukee
Wisconsin IOT Council
Wisconsin Technology Council
Wisconsin Veterans Chamber of Commerce
Women in Technology Wisconsin
Xorbix Technologies
Yahara Software
Young Enterprising Society
Zizzl
Zywave

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