



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

January 28, 2022

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Suite 71014
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

On behalf of the State of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, we are writing you in support of our state's Round 2 application for a Build Back Better Regional Challenge Award.

The forest and paper products industry plays a vital and unique part in Wisconsin's economic, environmental, and social well-being. The largest in the nation, and providing high-quality jobs to nearly 63,000 workers, Wisconsin's forest product industry contributes nearly \$18 billion to manufacturing output in the state. With the highest concentration of paper manufacturing in the United States, our region is the leading domestic producer of paper products ranging from tissue to corrugated cardboard to specialty papers. These products supply national markets and drive more than \$1 billion in exports to 100 countries.

Last fall, we were pleased to provide a letter of support to a broad stakeholder coalition of the forest and paper products industry in its efforts to secure a Build Back Better Regional Challenge technical assistance grant to position and transform the industry for a successful and sustainable future.

We are delighted that the coalition, led by the Wisconsin Paper Council and comprising the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, Mid-State Technical College, Menominee Tribal Enterprises, UW-Stevens Point, the Department of Natural Resources and Sustainable Resource Solutions Inc was successful in its efforts and was recently named as one of 60 finalists to receive a \$500,000 planning grant.

Most importantly, the award positions the coalition to bid for up to \$100 million of federal funds to implement its work and create a more sustainable and durable future for Wisconsin's forest and paper products industry.

The coalition has already succeeded in raising more than \$11.8 million from numerous public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders to leverage those federal dollars as it prepares its funding bid. We want to assure you that the State of Wisconsin remains resolutely committed to ensuring the success of this project as well.

The State of Wisconsin is prepared to commit the necessary unencumbered state funds to support the coalition and ensure that a non-federal match contribution of 20 percent is available when the program is funded and for the duration of the project through September 2027.

The paper and forest products industry is vital to our entire state's economic well-being, particularly in our rural and tribal communities. The Build Back Better Challenge Grant offers an unparalleled opportunity to ensure the viability of this key industry for generations to come. The State of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation fully support the coalition's application and we respectfully urge the Department of Commerce to fund this important collaboration.

Respectfully,



Tony Evers
Governor
State of Wisconsin



Missy Hughes
Secretary and CEO
Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation