



WMC
WISCONSIN'S BUSINESS VOICE

Better Jobs, Brighter Futures

What Will it Take?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION 2008-2009

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WMC is a business association dedicated to making Wisconsin the most competitive state in the nation.

Better Jobs, Brighter Futures

What Will it Take?

At its most recent meeting, the WMC Board of Directors approved a plan, dubbed “Moving Wisconsin Forward” to expand our Legislative Agenda development process to include input from a broad array of opinion leaders. With that input we will work to coalesce the business community behind a unified agenda for improving the business climate, growing the economy and creating jobs.

BACKGROUND

Previously, WMC surveyed our membership, sought input from our policy committees and local chambers and worked with the WMC Board to develop the Legislative Agenda. We then used the document to guide our lobbying effort for the 2-year session. Many of the proposals were introduced as individual bills or amendments and each session some of them ultimately passed both houses and were signed into law by the Governor. The agenda also provided policy guidance in formulating WMC’s position on legislative proposals that would be adverse to business or made the business climate more hostile in Wisconsin.

As we look to the future, Wisconsin business faces new challenges. The financial crisis, deteriorating economic conditions, and a changing political landscape point to the need for a fresh approach to pursuing our core mission of improving the business climate, growing the economy, and creating good paying jobs in Wisconsin.

The central question is: What will it take for Wisconsin to have better jobs and brighter futures?

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the “Moving Wisconsin Forward” plan is to cooperate with all stakeholders to build a shared vision for economic growth and job creation in Wisconsin, and develop a broad coalition of business groups that will work together to pursue implementation of policies that will make that vision a reality.

To accomplish this objective we will:

- Reach out to all stakeholders, business, education, government, labor, community leaders, and the media for input on how best to grow the economy and create jobs.
- Build a broad coalition among business to support a common policy agenda aimed at making Wisconsin competitive and prosperous once again.
- Help the public and policy makers understand the connection between a strong economy and better jobs for our families, our communities, and Wisconsin’s future.



PROCESS

The following process includes information gathering, consensus building, and implementation aimed at accomplishing our objective of improving the business climate, growing the economy, and creating jobs in Wisconsin.

A. Member Input

1. Oversight – The business agenda building process will be overseen by a Public Policy Committee of the WMC Board composed of the Executive Committee and other board members.
2. Business Agenda Working Group – A Business Agenda Working Group of 15 key members will be established to conduct the consensus public policy agenda building process. The Working Group will include representatives of manufacturing and service companies, chambers of commerce, and specialized business trade associations. The Working Group’s purpose is to participate in the input gathering process and synthesize input from all sources into a preliminary 10 point policy agenda.
3. Member Survey – WMC members will be surveyed on key business climate issues with an opportunity to prioritize and solicit input on new initiatives. They will be asked to respond to the question: “What are the three most important things necessary for state government to reform in order to revitalize the Wisconsin business climate and help your company and your community prosper?”

B. Outside Input

1. Chamber Survey – Local chambers of commerce will be asked to distribute a business climate survey to their members to feed into the consensus agenda process. A customized survey will be prepared for chambers to use.
2. Listening Sessions – Listening sessions with local chamber of commerce boards will be conducted to get general business input. Similar sessions with industry groups will provide more specific input.
3. Business Association Input – We will solicit input from other general and specialized business trade and professional groups on what they view to be the key business climate/economic development issues facing Wisconsin. (i.e. Technology Council, Paper Council, NFIB, Cast Metals Association, Wisconsin Association of CPAs).
4. Political Leaders – We will interview key legislative leaders, the Governor and appropriate cabinet officials to discuss business climate issues and seek input.
5. UW Leaders – We will survey and meet with leaders from the University of Wisconsin to solicit input on the key business climate issues facing our state.
6. Other Opinion Leaders – We will interview leaders from the technical colleges, the economic development community, public policy organizations, organized labor, agriculture, and the media to get their input as to key business climate issues facing Wisconsin.

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What Will it Take?

PROCESS (cont'd)

C. Consensus Building Process

1. Issue Selection – Based on input from all of the key audiences outlined above, the Public Policy Committee will initially select 10 key public policy initiatives that will improve the business climate in Wisconsin and foster economic growth and job creation.
2. Issue Review – The initial top 10 issues will be submitted to chambers of commerce and specialized business trade associations.
3. Consensus Agreement – All participating business groups will be invited to engage in a consensus building process aimed at reaching agreement on a final 10-point policy agenda. The goal is to have as many chambers and business associations as possible sign on to become part of an active coalition working to enact the business agenda.
4. Specific Initiatives – Specific policy initiatives (legislation) will be developed to implement the 10-point plan. In developing these initiatives, emphasis will be placed on engaging all stakeholders (i.e. state agencies, legislators, local governments, unions, educational institutions, and environmental groups).

D. Advocacy

1. Business Day Event – The 10-point plan will be unveiled at the annual Business Day in Madison program in February 2009.
2. Coordination and Management – A coordinating committee of all coalition members will meet regularly to develop and implement lobbying strategy.
3. Research – Public opinion research will be conducted on the 10 key issues to gauge public support and determine proper messaging.
4. Lobbying – Specific initiatives will be advocated by the public affairs staff and programs of the signatory organizations and others involved in the consensus process.
5. Media – Regular updates with key media outlets will be provided throughout the process in an effort to build additional support for the final recommendations and resulting policy initiatives.

