
Wisconsin Legislative Council

AMENDMENT MEMO



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2023 Assembly Bill 540

**Assembly Substitute
Amendment 1**

2023 ASSEMBLY BILL 540

2023 Assembly Bill 540 creates branch campus redevelopment grants administered by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). Under the bill, WEDC must award grants to political subdivisions for costs, including planning costs, associated with the redevelopment of buildings or other sites owned by the political subdivision on a branch campus or former branch campus that are or will no longer be used for academic purposes. The bill defines a political subdivision as a city, village, town, or county. Branch campus, as defined by the bill, includes all of the following: University of Wisconsin (UW)-Barron County, UW-Manitowoc, UW-Marquette, UW-Sheboygan, UW-Washington County, UW-Waukesha, UW-Fond du Lac, UW-Fox Valley, UW-Baraboo/Sauk County, UW-Richland, UW-Marathon County, UW-Marshfield/Wood County, and UW-Rock County.

The bill requires WEDC to award a \$2 million grant to Richland County before awarding any other grants. Any grant awarded under this bill may not exceed \$2 million.

Finally, Assembly Bill 540 creates a continuing appropriation for the purposes of this grant program and allocates \$6 million to that appropriation for fiscal year 2023-24.

ASSEMBLY SUBSTITUTE AMENDMENT 1

Assembly Substitute Amendment 1 retains large portions of the bill, but changes the way the grant program is funded and creates additional criteria and requirements surrounding administration of the grant program.

Assembly Substitute Amendment 1, like the bill, creates an appropriation for the purposes of this grant program. However, unlike the bill, the amendment does not directly allocate any funding to this appropriation. Instead, the amendment requires WEDC to request that the Joint Committee on Finance (JCF) transfer funds from the JCF supplemental appropriation into the appropriation created by the amendment for each grant awarded. The amendment increases the JCF supplemental appropriation by \$20 million for the purpose of funding the branch campus redevelopment grants.

Assembly Substitute Amendment 1 retains the same criteria and requirements for administration of the branch campus redevelopment grants that are provided by the bill and creates additional criteria and requirements. First, the amendment provides that costs associated with branch campus redevelopment include not only planning costs, but also demolition costs. Additionally, the amendment defines planning costs as including, among other expenses, expenses incurred in connection with hiring consultants, site planning, viability studies, and environmental compliance or remediation activities.

The amendment further clarifies the purpose of these grants by providing that WEDC may only award a grant to fund activities that contribute to the overall economic improvement and enhancement of the community. Additionally, under the amendment, WEDC may only award a branch campus

redevelopment grant to a political subdivision if the political subdivision: (1) submits community letters of support for the grant; and (2) provides matching funding from local sources in an amount of at least 20 percent of the amount of the grant awarded. Further, a grant recipient must, within 90 days after completion of a project for which a grant is awarded, submit to WEDC and to each house of the Legislature a report that includes the name of the grant recipient, the amount of the grant, and a detailed description of how the grant funds were spent.

Finally, like the bill, the amendment requires that WEDC award a \$2 million grant to Richland County before awarding any other grants. The amendment also requires that, after Richland County has been awarded a grant, WEDC award grants to Fond du Lac County, Washington County, and Marinette County before awarding any other grants. These counties must still meet all of the requirements of grant applicants and recipients provided by the amendment.

BILL HISTORY

Representative Kurtz offered Assembly Substitute Amendment 1 on February 5, 2024. On February 7, 2024, JCF recommended adoption of the amendment and passage of the bill, as amended, on votes of Ayes, 15; Noes, 0.

For a full history of the bill, visit the Legislature's [bill history page](#).

EH:kp;jal