State of Wisconsin
2025 - 2026 LEGISLATURE

LRB-5743/1
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2025 SENATE BILL 809

January 2, 2026 - Introduced by Senators TESTIN, DASSLER-ALFHEIM, FEYEN, KEYESKI, RATCLIFF, SPREITZER and TOMCZYK, cosponsored by Representatives KURTZ, ARMSTRONG, BRILL, GREEN, KAUFERT, KITCHENS, MURSAU, NOVAK, SINICKI, STUBBS and KNODL. Referred to Committee on Government Operations, Labor and Economic Development.

AN ACT ***to repeal*** 238.143 (2) and 238.143 (3) (c); ***to amend*** 238.143 (3) (a), 238.143 (3) (b) (intro.), 238.143 (4) and 238.143 (6); ***to repeal and recreate*** 238.143 (3) (title); ***to create*** 238.143 (3) (cm) of the statutes; **relating to:** the opportunity attraction and promotion program administered by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill makes various changes to the opportunity attraction and promotion program administered by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

Under current law, WEDC must establish and administer an economic development program for the purpose of attracting major opportunities and events to this state. Currently, any city, village, town, or county, American Indian tribe or band, area visitor and convention bureau, business improvement district, or private entity (eligible applicant) may apply for a grant under the program, and WEDC must award grants to eligible applicants for major opportunities and events projects that meet certain criteria. The bill eliminates the grant program and instead requires WEDC to sponsor eligible applicants for major opportunities and events initiatives that meet the current law criteria.

Under current law and, except as described below, under the bill, an eligible applicant must expend all moneys received from WEDC on a project (initiative

under the bill) to attract to this state or host in this state, or both, a major opportunity or event that is open to the public, whether or not free of charge. Specifically, WEDC moneys may be used to undertake a project (initiative under the bill) to do one or more of the following: 1) bid against other states or jurisdictions outside this state to attract an opportunity or event that will draw national exposure and drive economic development and visitors to this state or 2) host an opportunity or event that will attract national exposure and drive economic development and visitors to this state that the eligible applicant has secured through a competitive bid against other states or jurisdictions outside this state.

The bill authorizes WEDC to award sponsorship moneys to eligible applicants to expend on initiatives to attract or host in this state major opportunities or events that are not open to the public if WEDC determines that the opportunity or event will attract national exposure to this state or contribute substantially to statewide or regional economic growth. Under the bill, WEDC must give special consideration to applications for such sponsorship moneys for initiatives WEDC determines would occur during a tourist offseason or a period of economic need for the state. Additionally, no such sponsorship moneys may be for opportunities or events that WEDC determines are regularly scheduled or rotate destinations within this state.

Under current law, an eligible applicant must include in its application an estimate of projected direct and indirect economic benefits of the proposed opportunity or event and a related cost-benefit analysis concerning the opportunity or event. The bill eliminates that requirement and instead requires WEDC to estimate the projected direct and indirect economic benefits of an eligible applicant's proposed opportunity or event before awarding a sponsorship to the eligible applicant.

Under current law, an eligible applicant must secure from nonstate sources an amount equal to the amount of the proposed grant award. The bill eliminates the requirement that matching funds must be nonstate sources and provides that matching funds for sponsorship awards may be cash or in-kind contributions.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 238.143 (2) of the statutes is repealed.

SECTION 2. 238.143 (3) (title) of the statutes is repealed and recreated to read:

238.143 **(3)** (title) OPPORTUNITY ATTRACTION AND PROMOTION SPONSORSHIPS.

SECTION 3. 238.143 (3) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

238.143 **(3)** (a) The corporation shall ~~award grants to~~ sponsor eligible applicants for major opportunities and events ~~projects~~ initiatives as provided under

~~par.~~ pars. (b) and (cm). The corporation shall prescribe the form of sponsorship application and the information required to be submitted with ~~an~~ a sponsorship application~~, which shall include an~~. Prior to awarding a sponsorship, the corporation shall estimate ~~of~~ the projected direct and indirect economic benefits of the proposed opportunity or event to the state ~~and a related cost-benefit analysis concerning the opportunity or event~~.

SECTION 4. 238.143 (3) (b) (intro.) of the statutes is amended to read:

238.143 **(3)** (b) (intro.) ~~An~~ Except as provided in par. (cm), an eligible applicant shall expend all ~~grant~~ sponsorship moneys on ~~a project~~ an initiative as specified in the application to attract to this state or host in this state, or both, a major opportunity or event that is open to the public, whether or not free of charge. Specifically, ~~grant~~ sponsorship moneys may be used to undertake a project to do one or more of the following:

SECTION 5. 238.143 (3) (c) of the statutes is repealed.

SECTION 6. 238.143 (3) (cm) of the statutes is created to read:

238.143 **(3)** (cm) An eligible applicant may expend sponsorship moneys on an initiative, as specified in the application, to attract to this state or host in this state, or both, a major opportunity or event that is not open to the public if the corporation determines that the opportunity or event will attract national exposure to this state or contribute substantially to statewide or regional economic growth. The corporation shall give special consideration to applications for sponsorship moneys under this paragraph for initiatives the corporation determines would occur during a tourist offseason or a period of economic need for the state. No sponsorship moneys may be expended under this paragraph for opportunities or events that the

corporation determines are regularly scheduled in this state or rotate destinations within the state. In each fiscal year, of all the moneys the corporation allocates to the program under this section, no more than 25 percent of those moneys may be expended under this paragraph.

SECTION 7. 238.143 (4) of the statutes is amended to read:

238.143 **(4)** MATCHING REQUIREMENT. The corporation may not award a ~~grant~~ sponsorship under sub. (3) unless the eligible applicant has secured ~~from nonstate sources~~ cash or in-kind contributions in an amount equal to the amount of the proposed ~~grant~~ sponsorship award.

SECTION 8. 238.143 (6) of the statutes is amended to read:

238.143 **(6)** ANNUAL REPORT. No later than October 1 of each year, the corporation shall submit a report to the joint committee on finance for the previous fiscal year that includes a detailed description of each ~~grant~~ sponsorship awarded under sub. (3), including the ~~eligible applicant's analysis~~ corporation's estimate concerning the opportunity or event.

(END)