

A plan to help Wisconsin business grow, prosper

By Sen. Judy Robson

Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2009

Cranberries, military trucks, orthopedic medicine. These are some of Wisconsin's economic strengths: agriculture, manufacturing and biotechnology.

Building on our strengths is the best way to rebuild Wisconsin's economy. And that is the goal of CORE, Connecting Opportunity, Research and Entrepreneurship, which state Senate Democrats unveiled last month.

Research by Wisconsin scientists can turn into family-supporting businesses. For example, Jonathan D. Smith, who has a doctoral degree in cranberry plant physiology from UW-Madison, found a way to remove 75 percent of the acidity from the cranberry but keep the juice intact. Smith is working with several major food manufacturers to develop cranberry-laden products.

Flex Biomedical, which develops innovative treatments and diagnostics for orthopedic diseases, recently moved its operations from Massachusetts to Wisconsin.

The WiSys Technology Foundation identifies innovations developed throughout the UW System and brings them to the marketplace.

The three primary functions of WiSys are patenting and licensing, facilitating research and development, and building collaborations.

Another way to tap into the ingenuity of university students and staff is the UW System Business Plan Competition. The UW-Madison business plan's competition helped Chad Sorenson launch his first company, Fluent Systems. He eventually sold it for \$1.5 million and started another.

To train workers for the jobs of today and tomorrow, CORE designates a half million dollars for advanced manufacturing training grants. The previous \$1 million worth of grants was used up quickly by 103 companies to train 4,135 workers. Among the companies that used this funding were Regal Beloit Corp., Fishers Barton, Johnson Refrigerated Truck Bodies, Orion Energy Systems and Badger Mining.

CORE infuses \$1 million into the Wisconsin Development Fund. This fund has been successful at keeping businesses here and attracting new ones. Some recent successes:

n Enzymatic Therapy is moving to Green Bay from Utah due in part to a \$500,000 Development Fund Loan.

n General Binding is consolidating and bringing more jobs to Pleasant Prairie due to a \$750,000 Development Fund Loan and a tax credit.

n Oshkosh Corp. just won a \$3 billion contract to produce 23,000 military trucks and trailers. Oshkosh Corp. got \$35 million in Enterprise Zone Credits to better compete in the military contracting market. The contract is expected to employ 2,000 production workers.

CORE recognizes that successful businesses started out as one person's dream. Wisconsinites who have dreams of starting small businesses and have promising business plans but need extra financing may benefit from the microloan program created in CORE. Microloans of between \$1,000 and \$25,000 will be available, up to a total of \$500,000.

For a complete list of measures contained in the CORE Jobs Act, please go to www.judyrobson.net.

Sen. Judy Robson, D-Beloit, is a member of the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee. She represents Wisconsin's 15th Senate District, which includes Janesville. Readers can write to her at sen.robson@legis.wisconsin.gov or at P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882 or call her at 1-800-334-1468.

Published at: <http://www.GazetteXtra.com/news/2009/dec/29/plan-help-wisconsin-business-grow-prosper/>