

Counties at Work

Waukesha County, Wisconsin Case Study



Rashida Brown
Associate Program Director, Children, Youth & Families

Arabella Pluta-Ehlers
Program Manager, Children, Youth & Families



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About NACo:

The [National Association of Counties](#) (NACo) **strengthens America's counties**, serving nearly 40,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees. Founded in 1935, NACo unites county officials to:

- **Advocate county priorities** in federal policymaking;
- **Promote exemplary county policies** and practices;
- **Nurture leadership skills** and expand knowledge networks;
- **Optimize county and taxpayer resources** and cost savings; and
- **Enrich the public's understanding** of county government.

The National Association of Counties Research Foundation (NACoRF) is a non-profit organization recognized by the U.S. Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service as a 501c3 public charity providing education, technical assistance and research to counties. NACoRF's mission is to ascertain, develop and distribute knowledge about county governments and training of public officials, prospective public officials and other interested parties.

About NACo's Landscape Analysis:

In partnership with the [ECMC Foundation](#), NACo conducted a national landscape analysis on counties' role and decision-making authority in post-secondary education. This analysis identified impactful county efforts including directly allocating local funds, pursuing regional and intergovernmental partnerships to leverage federal resources and coordinating post-secondary education systems with county systems, such as health and human services, as well as with local private industry. Such efforts maximize educational and employment opportunities and increase access for residents. Recently, counties have led and supported their post-secondary education institutions in mitigating local challenges related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Through an electronic survey and group and individual interviews, NACo examined how county leaders:

1. Make decisions affecting the post-secondary education sector;
2. Allocate public funding impacting higher education institutions;
3. Create partnerships with the post-secondary education sector to strengthen its connection with other systems; and
4. Work to slow the spread of COVID-19 in post-secondary education settings.

In conjunction with NACo's report ["Counties At Work: Counties Support Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Opportunities for Residents."](#) NACo published a set of case studies sharing county examples and best practices in creating cross-sector partnerships with higher education systems to improve economic resiliency and mobility, workforce preparedness, educational attainment and gainful employment for residents. County leaders representing local colleges and universities, workforce boards and human services agencies participated in a series of interviews with NACo to share their local efforts and best practices. For more information, please contact Rashida Brown, Associate Program Director for Children, Youth and Families at rbrown@naco.org or Arabella Pluta-Ehlers, Program Manager for Children, Youth and Families at aplutaehlers@naco.org.

Counties Support Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Opportunities for Residents

Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Interviewees: James M. Boling Jr., Youth and Family Educator, Extension Waukesha County 4-H Staff; Jerry Braatz, Extension Area Director, Extension Waukesha County; Paul Decker, Chairman, Waukesha County Board of Supervisors; Tom Michalski, Supervisor, Waukesha County and Board Member, Waukesha County Technical College

County name, state: Waukesha County, Wisc.

Rural, suburban, or urban: Suburban

Population: 403,072

Poverty rate: 5.0%

Unemployment rate: 2.7%

Number of post-secondary education institutions in the county: 6

Student enrollment in the county's post-secondary education institutions: 16,000



About Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Waukesha County, Wis. is a mid-sized county and the third largest county in Wisconsin. It neighbors Milwaukee County, Wisc. and is located 15 miles west of the city of Milwaukee and 100 miles north of Chicago, Ill. Major industries include manufacturing, particularly food manufacturing services, and retail trade. The county has 21,000 acres of state, county and municipal public parks and is home to more than 77 lakes, offering residents and visitors a range of outdoor recreational and park services, including fishing, boating, hiking and camping.¹

The county role in post-secondary education

Waukesha County is governed by a 25-member Board of Supervisors, elected to two-year terms. The county board serves as the legislative branch of Waukesha County government and sets policy by adopting ordinances and resolutions. The board is responsible for adopting the county's annual budget, which in 2020 was \$106.2 million.ⁱⁱ Waukesha County residents also elect a County Executive, who serves a four-year term and is responsible for coordinating and directing administrative and management functions of the county.ⁱⁱⁱ The county is home to a number of colleges and universities, including Carroll University and campuses of the University of Wisconsin and Ottawa University.

Wisconsin has 16 state technical colleges, each of which serves a designated geographic district. Each technical college appoints a board, which makes policy decisions, levies property taxes for facilities and equipment, develops the annual budget and approves hiring decisions. Waukesha County, along with Jefferson, Dodge and Racine counties, is served by Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC). WCTC's board members are appointed by the county board chairs from the four counties in its district. Because

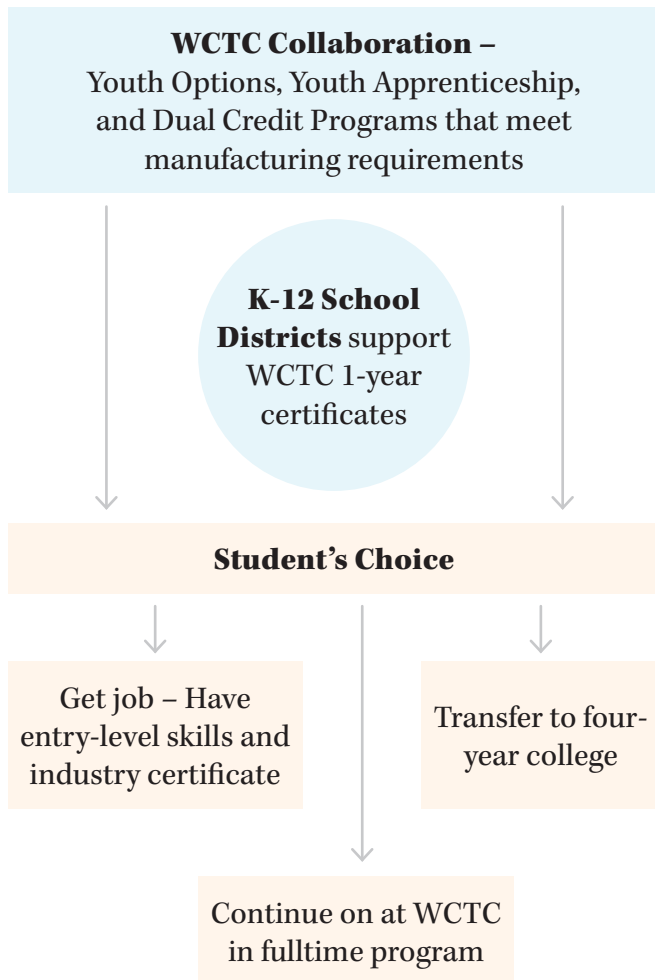
Waukesha County accounts for 95 percent of WCTC's district, the chairperson of the Waukesha County Board serves as the district board appointment chair for WCTC.^{iv}

Funding for post-secondary education institutions and programming

WCTC is funded through a combination of state, local and private funds. The majority of WCTC's funding is allocated in the state's annual budget. WCTC also receives funding from local property taxes from the counties within its district. In 2018-2019, the tax was \$2.11 per \$1,000 of equalized value. County property tax is the third largest source of property tax revenue, after state and local.^v

Counties also provide funding for the University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison Extension Offices across the state. UW's land-grant extension offices operate research centers and offer educational programs to local residents. The Waukesha County UW-Madison Extension Office (Extension Waukesha County) offers programming on community and leadership development, agriculture and horticulture and nutrition and food resource management.^{vi} In its 2020 budget, Waukesha County provided \$348,763 to support the Extension Waukesha County office.^{vii}





Coordination and collaboration for improved workforce outcomes

Through youth apprenticeship programs and the Dual Enrollment Academy, Waukesha County is creating career and post-secondary education pathways for youth while supplying businesses with well-trained talent. WCTC's Dual Enrollment Academy allows students to earn college credits while enrolled in high school. The Academy's programs support students in cultivating the skillsets needed for high-demand fields in the county, such as working with automation systems and obtaining careers in construction, early childhood education and welding.^{viii} WCTC also operates a Youth Apprenticeship (YA) program for high school juniors and seniors that combines classroom education with paid work experience. Apprentices are paired with a workplace mentor and receive on-the-job training and a state-issued skills certificate. On average, 80 percent of seniors who completed the YA program were offered employment based on their training.^{ix}



Through the Waukesha County Center for Growth, Waukesha county government collaborates with the countywide chamber of commerce and local municipalities to connect businesses with the resources they need to succeed. Waukesha County government joined state and local partners to create and fund the Center for Growth. The center also partners with higher education institutions to attract new talent to the county and retain and skill up the existing workforce. In addition to collaborating with educators and families to increase employment opportunities for students, the center works with local businesses to encourage their participation in youth apprenticeship and dual enrollment programs.^{xi} To help inform their decisions, the center collects and shares county-level data with stakeholders, identifying where local companies are sourcing talent. The center also launched a Workforce Readiness Dashboard for school districts in the county to assess K-12 workforce skills development.^{xi}

With support from Waukesha County government, the Extension Waukesha County provides youth services and community development. The extension office's 4-H program serves over 500 youth between the ages of 5-19 and engages 200 adult volunteers to lead over

50 projects across the county. In addition to agriculture-focused programs, 4-H programs offer subjects in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), photography and arts and life and leadership skills. The extension office partners with middle and high schools to reach students, particularly African American students, to connect them to afterschool programming that offers workforce development training and post-secondary educational opportunities and help fill equity gaps. Services include obtaining counseling on selecting a college major and gaining and accessing leadership development programs. The 4-H program also organizes college tours for students at four-year institutions, community colleges and technical and vocational colleges and arranges meetings with business and manufacturing companies to expose students to both career and post-secondary education opportunities. These tours and meetings are continuing virtually during COVID-19.

Extension Waukesha County also works with community and county partners, including the Waukesha County Park System and county-operated Retzer Nature Center, in creating 4-H programming that connects youth to agricultural and outdoor activities. As a part of this program, youth are also connected to master gardeners and nutrition experts and receive health and physical education. This type of youth programming is crucial for developing agricultural and other skills necessary for local jobs in this field. To extend agricultural and educational programming to at-risk youth, the extension office is exploring ways to work with the county's teen courts to align their efforts with restorative justice programs for youth.

Slowing the spread of COVID-19 in post-secondary education settings

Waukesha County Public Health is working closely with the president of WCTC to develop policies that slow the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). WCTC has switched most in-person classes to virtual, but also safely offers applied and hands-on courses when distance learning is not an option. Courses held in-person are conducted on campus using social distancing protocols and other health and safety standards. Moreover, all buildings on campus are electronically secure where students and staff must use a key fob system to enter and exit campus buildings. Doing so captures data on who has accessed campus buildings, which will be shared with contact tracers to identify possible exposure if someone on campus tests positive. During COVID-19, Waukesha County government also partnered with Carroll University, a private four-year institution, to create a contact investigator training badge program, which increased the number and capacity of contact tracers in Waukesha County.^{xii}

Conclusion

Waukesha County government is focused on creating a well-trained workforce and supporting and attracting employers to the area. Workforce development efforts start as early as middle school, with Extension Waukesha County playing a major role in exposing youth to career in agriculture and community development and other post-secondary education opportunities. WCTC also coordinates with county government and community partners to connect high school students to education and training programming. Throughout COVID-19, county and post-secondary education partners are collaborating to reduce and monitor access to WCTC's campus and increase the county's supply of contact tracers.



Endnotes

ⁱ Waukesha County. (n.d.). *About Waukesha County*. <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/About>

ⁱⁱ Waukesha County. (n.d.). *Waukesha County Board of Supervisors*. <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/county-board/county-board-supervisors/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Waukesha County. (n.d.). *About the Office of County Executive*. <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/countyexecutive>

^{iv} Waukesha County Technical College. (n.d.). *Board Appointment*. <https://www.wctc.edu/about/leadership/district-board/board-appointment.php>

^v Waukesha County Technical College. (2020). *Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Document*. https://www.wctc.edu/_site-pdfs/financial-reports/2020-21-adopted-budget.pdf

^{vi} Extension University of Wisconsin-Madison. (n.d.). *Funding to UW-Madison Division of Extension*. <https://blogs.extension.wisc.edu/wacec/files/2019/05/CARET-Extension-Overview-Final.pdf>

^{vii} Waukesha County. (2020). *A Brief Guide to the 2020 Waukesha County Adopted Budget*. https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/globalassets/administration/budget/2020-adopted-budget/web_2020-budget-in-brief.pdf

^{viii} Waukesha County Technical College. (n.d.). *Dual Enrollment Academy*. <https://www.wctc.edu/academics/programs-courses/high-school-dual-credit/dual-enrollment-academy/index.php>

^{ix} Waukesha County Technical College. (n.d.). *Youth Apprenticeships*. <https://www.wctc.edu/academics/programs-courses/high-school-dual-credit/youth-apprenticeships.php>

^x Waukesha County Center for Growth. (n.d.). *Workforce Development*. <https://www.waukeshagrowth.org/workforce-development/>

^{xi} Waukesha County Center for Growth. (n.d.). *Develop*. <https://www.waukeshagrowth.org/workforce-development/develop/>

^{xii} Carroll University. (2020, July 15). *Contact Tracing Training Program Launched*. <https://www.carrollu.edu/articles/academics/2020/07/contact-tracing>

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660 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NW
SUITE 400 • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001
202.393.6226 • WWW.NACO.ORG



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