



Monroe County Economic Development & Tourism Spring Conference

April 10-11, 2025 | Three Bears Resort | Warrens, WI

Please Note: This is a draft agenda and is subject to change.

For more information visit exploremonroecounty.org/conference

Day One - Thursday, April 10

Welcome and Opening Remarks (9:15 AM - 9:30 AM)

Opening Keynote Speaker (9:30 AM - 10:00 AM)

- **Speaker:** State Representative Jill Billings
- **Organization:** State of Wisconsin Assembly District 95

Break (10:00 AM - 10:15 AM)

Session 1 (10:15 AM - 11:00 AM)

- **Speaker:** Diane Monahan, Dean, College of Business, Leadership & Ethics
- **Organization:** Viterbo University
- **Topic:** Workforce Culture & Political Climate

In today's polarized political landscape, organizations must navigate external turbulence while maintaining a strong, cohesive culture. This session explores the impact of political instability on workplace dynamics and provides practical strategies for leaders to foster resilience, inclusivity, and adaptability. Through real-world examples and leadership insights, attendees will gain tools to sustain a positive organizational culture despite external challenges.

Session 2 (11:00 AM - 11:45 AM)

- **Speakers:** Mallory Pierce
- **Organization:** WWBIC - Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation
- **Topic:** From Idea to Impact: WWBIC's Role in Small Business Development

Discover how WWBIC supports entrepreneurs by offering essential resources, funding opportunities, and expert guidance to help turn ideas into thriving small businesses. Through tailored mentorship, financial assistance, and educational programs, WWBIC empowers individuals from diverse backgrounds to overcome challenges and achieve sustainable success. By fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, WWBIC plays a crucial role in driving economic growth, creating jobs, and strengthening local communities. Whether you are just starting out or looking to expand, WWBIC provides the tools and support needed to navigate the journey of business ownership with confidence.

Lunch (11:45 AM - 12:30 PM)

Session 3 (12:30 PM - 1:15 PM)

- **Speaker:** Dan Schmitz and Amanda Langrehr
- **Organization:** AMS Micromedical, CESA 4
- **Topic:** Department of Workforce Development Youth Apprenticeship Program

Spotlight (1:15 PM - 1:30 PM)

- **Organization:** P&P Products

Break & Networking (1:30 PM - 2:00 PM)

Session 4 (2:00 PM - 2:45 PM)

- **Speaker:** Derek Daley and Marie Barry
- **Organization:** Tomah Health and Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative
- **Topic:** Caring for the Workforce

The availability and affordability of quality childcare is an economic development issue and a barrier to labor force participation. This panel discussion will provide broader, regional context about childcare challenges being experienced by families and employers alike, provide data on the effect of childcare shortages on the Tomah workforce, and examine the goals laid out in Tomah to improve childcare access as a means to growing our local workforce and economy.

Spotlight (2:45 PM - 3:00 PM)

- **Speaker:** Jesse Todd
- **Organization:** Family Promise of the Great Rivers

The presentation will introduce the organization, its mission, the communities it serves, and its locations. It will provide a brief backstory on its origins, leading into an overview of the programs and services currently offered, along with its community outreach efforts and partnerships. The presentation will conclude with a summary of the organization's impact in 2024, its ongoing initiatives, and future goals.

Break (3:00 PM - 3:15 PM)

Session 5 (3:15 PM - 3:45 PM)

- **Speaker:** Teresa Pierce
- **Organization:** Workforce Connections
- **Topic:** Future-Proofing the Workforce: Retention, Reskilling, and Economic Resilience

Workforce disruptions—from federal job cuts to shifting industry demands—are creating uncertainty for businesses and workers alike. In this session, we'll explore key workforce trends, the impact of job security concerns, and how communities and employers can adapt. We'll discuss the role of economic development in workforce stability and share practical strategies for retaining talent, reskilling workers, and preparing for future workforce shifts. Attendees will leave with insights on how to navigate these challenges and build a more resilient workforce.

Session 6 (3:45 PM - 4:15 PM)

- **Speakers:** Tina Thompson, Brent Hanifl, Amy Gabay
- **Organization:** Tomah Chamber, River Travel Media, and Monroe County
- **Topic:** Countywide Tourism Collaboration

Explore Monroe County is a countywide tourism collaboration dedicated to showcasing the unique attractions, events, and experiences that make our communities special. By working together, we strengthen our local economy, support small businesses, and highlight the rich history, outdoor adventures, and cultural opportunities Monroe County has to offer. Whether you're a business owner, community leader, or passionate resident, we invite you to get involved, stay informed, and help shape the future of tourism in our region. Join us in promoting Monroe County as a must-visit destination—connect, collaborate, and see what we're up to!

Cocktail Reception Brought to you by the Tomah Chamber & Visitors Center.(4:30 PM - 5:00 PM)

Dinner with entertainment to follow (5:00 PM - 8:00 PM)

Day Two - Friday, April 11

Breakfast (7:00 AM - 8:00 AM)

Welcome and Introductions

Session 1 (8:00 AM - 8:30 AM)

- **Speaker:** Jed Olson
- **Organization:** Outdoor Recreation Alliance
- **Topic:** We Don't Need Trails: the Social Capital of Outdoor Recreation

What do we really need to be healthy and happy? Trails and outdoor recreation are one of the most efficient pathways to positive personal and community impact. Come explore and share how trails can provide lifestyle improvements, economic impact, and sense of place as a high ROI investment in your life and your town. ORA Trails is building happy, healthy, and resilient communities through sustainable and equitable outdoor recreation opportunities... and you can too.

Break (8:30 AM - 8:45 AM)

Spotlight (8:45 AM - 9:00 AM)

- **Speaker:** Joe Villacrez

- **Organization:** Bogs Edge Brewing
- **Topic:** Microbrewery in Warrens, WI

The brewer for the Bog's Edge Brewing Company is Joe Villacrez. He has a deep-rooted history in the beer making business. He worked at the Jos. Huber Brewing company in the late 70's and attained his degree in Chemistry in the mid 80's and has been home brewing since 2001. The Bog's Edge Brewing Company is named as a tribute to the world-famous cranberry bogs that are throughout northern Monroe county and the great state of Wisconsin.

Session 2 (9:00 AM - 9:30 AM)

- **Speaker:** Andrew Nussbaum
- **Organization:** Travel Wisconsin
- **Topic:** The Power of Wisconsin Tourism – Are You Connected with this \$25 Billion Industry?

The shared Wisconsin Brand Promise is a tangible, authentic benefit that makes Wisconsin a desirable place to visit and it's a promise that all of us in Wisconsin can stand behind. When we all amplify a unified message, our voice is louder and farther reaching. Attracting visitors to our region requires a clear message about the experiences we offer. Providing great destinations begins with providing great customer service. Join us for a discussion about the economic impact of the tourism industry, effective marketing to today's travelers, the ever-changing world of social media, the importance of outdoor recreation, heritage and cultural tourism, and the basics of welcoming guests when they arrive at our doorstep.

Break (9:30 AM - 9:45 AM)

Spotlight (9:45 AM - 10:00 AM)

- **Speaker:** Chris Schrier
- **Organization:** Tomah Tractor Pull
- **Topic:** Monroe County Agricultural Society

Session 3 (10:00 AM - 10:30 AM)

- **Speaker:** Janine Smith
- **Organization:** Sparrow Consulting LLC
- **Topic:** Building a Stronger Workforce: Hiring Military Community Talent

The military community represents one of the most highly skilled, adaptable, and underutilized talent pools in today's workforce—let's talk about why hiring veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses is not just the right thing to do, but a strategic business advantage.

Break (10:30 AM - 10:45 AM)

Session 4 (10:45 AM - 11:15 AM)

- **Speaker:** Sawyer Meisel, Regional Economist
- **Organization:** Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development
- **Topic:** County Profile: A look into Monroe County

The presentation will provide an overview of local economic and labor market information available in county profiles produced by Wisconsin's regional economists, which can be found on the WisConomy website. It will cover topics such as population demographics, population projections, industry and occupational employment statistics, AI impact, and unemployment rates.

Closing Keynote Speaker (11:15 AM - 12:00 PM)

- **Speaker:** Missy Hughes
- **Organization:** WEDC
- **Topic:** Business & Community, Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Closing Remarks and Giveaways (12:00 PM - 12:15 PM)