



Wisconsin
Evaluation
Collaborative

Talking Points for “Grow Your Own” Biennial Budget Grant Request

The 2023-25 biennial budget includes [a request for \\$10M GPR \(called Teacher Pipeline Capacity Building Grants\)](#) to reimburse districts or charters for the cost of establishing Grow Your Own (GYO) educator programs. These talking points are drafted for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction in anticipation of the reintroduction of that request for the 2025-27 budget.

Grow Your Own Programs As a Recruitment and Retention Strategy: All states and districts confront challenges in attracting and retaining highly-qualified staff as well as diversifying their educator workforce to more closely resemble their student populations. As detailed in [DPI’s 2022 Educator Preparation and Workforce Analysis Report](#), Wisconsin schools are no exception, having experienced significant challenges in recent years with recruiting and retaining educators. GYOs are increasingly recognized as one promising solution to address educator shortages.

Local, Community-Centered Recruitment and Preparation: GYOs are typically designed to recruit and assist either high school students or adults (current non-certified school staff or community members) in becoming licensed teachers. These programs reflect strong partnerships between districts, higher education institutions and community organizations to ensure alignment between coursework, clinical experiences, and local school needs. By recruiting from within, schools are able to provide structured supports to engage prospective educators and help them complete licensure programs. Emerging research on GYO programs suggests that young adults and community members familiar with the context of their local schools are more likely to stay on as educators in their communities.

Expansion of Grow Your Own (GYO) Programs: While GYO initiatives are locally-developed, states play a key role in creating the conditions (including sustainable funding) that allow them to launch and flourish. Between 2020 and 2024, the number of states funding GYO programs expanded from 18 to 35 (source: [New America 50-State Scan](#)). Wisconsin lags behind many other states by not having a competitive, statewide GYO grant program run through its state education agency. States that fund competitive GYO grants include Midwestern peers (MN, IL, MI) as well as others around the country (MD, TX, etc.). While Wisconsin is one of 22 states with a policy specific to GYOs (Wisconsin: [Wisc. Stat 106.277](#)), we could benefit greatly from a competitive GYO grant program that reflects the successful features of other states’ programs (such as structure, funding, and evaluation of impact).

Current GYOs in Wisconsin: In early 2024, the first-ever [inventory of GYO programs in Wisconsin](#) identified more than 14 programs which could be models for evaluation, sustainability, and scale-up. Districts in this GYO inventory identified challenges in establishing and expanding their programs, with one program noting their GYO “helped address barriers to licensure and increased staff retention in hard to fill positions” but more resources would be required to address their need for special education teachers.

Removing Barriers and Supporting Aspiring Teachers: By providing comprehensive supports, such as advising, financial aid, paid work experience, and mentoring, GYO programs remove barriers for individuals who want to become teachers, leading to higher retention rates and benefits for schools and students. Increasing funding for local, district-initiated GYO programs would give all Wisconsin school districts the opportunity to prepare and retain members of their community to teach their children.

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