

PRESS RELEASE



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Two New North talent-development initiatives receive state, national honors *gener8tor Upskilling earns top WEDA recognition; New North Hires Heroes also saluted*

NEW NORTH, October 13, 2021 – Two talent-development initiatives of New North Inc. have been recognized at the state and national levels for their innovative design and effective outcomes. The organization’s gener8tor Upskilling program was honored by both the Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA) and the University Economic Development Association, while its New North Hires Heroes initiative also received accolades from WEDA.

New North Inc. was the recipient of the 2021 WEDA Community & Economic Development Award in the Talent Development category for gener8tor Upskilling. The award recognizes programs that have driven successful talent-development efforts to strengthen the Wisconsin workforce.

“Economic developers and the businesses and entrepreneurs they work with daily are the unsung heroes of the economy. They work tirelessly to help make their communities thrive,” says WEDA President and CEO Mary Perry. “New North really walks the talk when it comes to diversity and inclusion. Its gener8tor Upskilling platform, under President Barb LaMue’s leadership, focused on reaching and serving underserved and underrepresented persons. In the Northeast Wisconsin cohorts, 44 percent were women and 34 percent were persons of color.”

The gener8tor Upskilling initiative, launched in August 2020, is a free concierge program for individuals ready to learn digital skills in order to apply for in-demand jobs. It is a partnership between New North Inc., Microsoft, Thrivent and the Steve Stricker American Family Foundation.

The first such program in the nation, it is based around a self-paced, virtual curriculum to earn industry-recognized certifications, along with one-on-one support from the gener8tor team on resume writing and interview skills. gener8tor Upskilling since has expanded to six additional states, and the fourth cohort of the program within the New North region currently is taking place.

In the fourth cohort there were 111 applicants, of which 27 were selected to take part, the majority in IT Administration. One-third of the participants were women, and the same number identified as BIPOC. The majority of those in the fourth cohort were ages 25-44, while 37 percent were unemployed.

Another New North program focused on talent attraction – New North Hires Heroes, a partnership with Mission Wisconsin – also was a finalist for the WEDA award. This initiative centers around connecting transitioning service members and their families with businesses and communities in the New North region. The third finalist also was from the New North region.

The award was accepted by Rebecca Deschane, vice president-talent development for New North, at the 2021 WEDA Community and Economic Awards Ceremony, held Sept. 15 in Madison, Wis.

“We are honored to have the New North gener8tor Upskilling program recognized for its efforts to bring digital skills training and career coaching support to help unemployed and underemployed individuals pivot into new careers,” says Deschane. “It is a great example of a partnership between the public and private sectors to quickly activate a solution to a pressing workforce development challenge.

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“Having three finalists from Northeast Wisconsin reflects the multi-pronged approach needed to address the various talent development and attraction needs of our diverse economy.”

The University Economic Development Association also recognized the gener8tor Upskilling program at the 2021 UEDA Summit, held Sept. 19-20 in Savannah, Ga. A finalist for UEDA’s “Awards of Excellence” in the Innovation + Talent category, the awards represent the top university-based economic development initiatives in the country, as judged by their peers.

Deschane, who was joined by Tia Torhorst of gener8tor and Jeff Sachse of UW Oshkosh, presented on gener8tor Upskilling to event attendees, who then voted a winner. Judging criterion was projects and initiatives that best synergistically connect talent and innovation, to create innovators of many kinds.

Deschane also was chosen to present on talent initiatives at the recent WEDA Best Practices Conference, providing updates on gener8tor Upskilling and New North Hires Heroes.

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New North, Inc., is a 501(c) 3 non-profit, regional economic development corporation fostering collaboration among private and public sector leaders throughout the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin, known as the New North region. The New North brand unites the region both internally and externally around talent development, brand promotion and business development, signifying the collective economic power behind the 18 counties. The counties include Outagamie, Winnebago, Calumet, Waupaca, Brown, Shawano, Oconto, Marinette, Door, Kewaunee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Florence, Menominee and Waushara.
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