“Building a better tomorrow starts today; the choices we make today individually and as a community will impact our natural environment for the rest of time.”

Aaron Ruff, Marathon County Health Department
Prosperous Section Summary

SUCCESS AND PROGRESS

- All school districts in Marathon County have a higher graduation rate than the state average.

- Marathon County has a strong economy that positively impacts the greater region. The county had a gross regional product (GRP) of 6.1 billion dollars and 10.2 billion dollars in sales in 2014. It is a regional economic hub that provides job opportunities for county residents and commuters from outside of the county’s borders.

- Marathon County’s labor force participation rate remains strong at 69.2% and is above both state and national averages.

- Over 90% of children entering kindergarten in Marathon County pass literacy screening.

- There were 71,000 jobs in the county during 2016. This was a 3.1% increase from 2014 and a 9.9% increase from 2010, at the height of the recent economic recession.

- Individual industries play a key role in the strength of our local economy. Manufacturing generated a 1.5 billion dollar gross regional products (GRP) which produced 5.1 billion dollars in exports. The Finance and Insurance industry reported an 800 million dollar GRP with 1.1 billion dollars in exports.

- Students in Marathon County continue to surpass state scores in reading proficiency (Grades 3-8).

- Marathon County ranked 10th out of all Wisconsin counties in direct visitor spending, or tourism, in 2015. From 2014 to 2015, spending increased 2.7%, totaling 235.9 million dollars.

- Since 2008, Marathon County Government has completed 42 energy conservation projects in collaboration with Focus on Energy and Wisconsin Public Service. Marathon County is committed to being an environmentally responsible county government which includes policies and programs that conserve energy, and reduce fuel, utility, and resource consumption. This approach saves tax dollars that can be redirected to support services to the public.

- Local foundations and grants are making child care more affordable for eligible families in Marathon County with Good Start Grants.

- The quality of child care continues to increase in Marathon County based on YoungStar ratings.
Prosperous Section Summary

From 2012 to 2022, the North Central Wisconsin Region can expect to add between 14,000 and 16,000 more jobs to its economy. Training to job demand will be key to delivering the workforce needed with in-demand skills (technical know-how or specialized skills) to fill upcoming vacancies created by retirement and additional new job growth, especially in health services and education. There is also a need to promote training and education to not only fill those openings but to encourage people to move into higher paying jobs.

Since 2010, Marathon County has lost more than half of its regulated childcare providers and a wait list exists in 82% of programs serving children under 2 years and 71% of programs serving 2-4 year olds.

Marathon County households have less buying power than they did fifteen years ago. Since 2000, incomes have not kept up with inflation while housing prices and rents hit record highs. Many single-parent households with two or more children are not even meeting living wage requirements. Housing and child care costs have the heaviest impact.

Schools throughout Marathon County are struggling with managing mental health of children as a result of childhood trauma.

Even with financial support through grants and the Wisconsin Shares childcare reimbursement program, the affordability of childcare continues to be a significant barrier to many families causing parents to seek often unsafe, unregulated care or preventing parents from entering the workforce.

Marathon County schools continue to serve high numbers of children living below the federal poverty line in excess of 30% and in some schools above 70%.

In Marathon County 51.7% of people living in poverty, 16 years if age and older, are in the labor force. Organizations need to pay a living wage that allows employees to participate in the local economies.

CALLS TO ACTION

2017-2019 LIFE in Marathon County: Local Indicators for Excellence
OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION

For Individuals

- Seek educational and training opportunities that meet the county workforce needs now and for the future.
- Serve on advisory committees and boards to assure training and education is relevant based on employer’s needs.
- Choose or encourage regulated child care as a profession to offset the decrease in child care providers in Marathon County.
- Advocate for increased pay, benefits and quality training opportunities for child care providers for added quality child care in our area.
- Talk, read, sing and play with children from the day they are born. Mentor a child or consider becoming a foster parent. These efforts will positively impact the health, happiness and lifelong success of children in our community.

For Organizations

- Organizations need to pay a living wage that allows employees to participate in the local economy.
- HR Departments should partner with higher education to meet workforce demands.
- Employers and low-income families must work together to eliminate barriers to full-time employment.
- Continue Chamber of Commerce efforts to bring together educators and local employers through its Workforce Hub Program which supports programs such as INSPIRE and The Branch.
- Advocate on behalf of child care agencies for higher reimbursement rates through Wisconsin Shares, so families can afford quality child care and remain in the workforce.
- Work together to strengthen family resiliency and reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences thereby strengthening the future workforce, reducing health costs and improving the lifelong social, emotional and economic success of children.

For The Community

- Recognize and advocate for change regarding poverty in our county and the adverse impact it has on our schools, children and families.
- Invest in infrastructure to support low-income employees entering the workforce including access to transportation, affordable housing and quality child care.
- Develop public/private partnerships to increase child care availability and grant opportunities for families to afford quality child care.
- Continue funding for programs providing professional agency training for childhood trauma, mental health treatment and building family resiliency to reduce adverse impact of early year’s experiences like abuse, neglect, family violence, serious accidents, illness, or medical procedures.
- Provide resources and encourage participation in local higher education opportunities.
### Regional Economic Drivers

**DATA HIGHLIGHTS**

- Manufacturing was the County’s top industry, employing 16,230 people in 2016, 2.7 times more than the national average. This was a 5.2% increase from 2014.

- Wood Product Manufacturing had the highest concentration of employees with an LQ of 11.07, employing 2,126 people in 2016. This was a 1% increase from 2014.

- Paper Manufacturing had the second highest LQ of 9.06, employing 1,678 people in 2016. This was a slight increase from 2014.

- Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing rose to third place in 2016, employing 1,068 people with an LQ of 5.30.

- Crop and Animal Production was the second most concentrated industry in 2016 with an LQ of 1.67. It employed 1,051 workers in 2016.

- Finance and Insurance had an LQ of 1.51 which made it the fourth highest LQ, but employed the second highest number of people at 4,413 in 2016.

### COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Marathon County is a strong economy that positively impacts the greater region. The county had a gross regional product (GRP) of 6.1 billion dollars and 10.2 billion dollars in sales in 2014.

There were 71,000 jobs in the county during 2016. This was a 3.1% increase from 2014 and a 9.9% increase from 2010, at the height of the recent economic recession.

- Economic Modeling Specialists International

In 2016, Marathon County had eight export industries. An export industry produces goods and services to meet consumer demands in and out of a particular region. Outside industry sales bring new money into the regional economy, rather than simply circulating money that is already here, as retail or restaurants do.

Exporting industries in a region can be determined by calculating an industry Location Quotient (LQ), which compares the industry’s share of regional employment with its share of national employment. Companies with a high LQ and a large number of jobs are vital to the region’s economic base and likely have a large multiplier effect (impact on dependent businesses). This can be seen in the quadrant location quotient analysis above, which analyzes Marathon County industries from 2016 to 2026. All the industries above the horizontal axis have a LQ greater than one. All of the industries to the left of the vertical axis are projected to lose jobs while industries to the right are expected to increase jobs. The size of the bubbles represents the number of jobs in that industry in 2016.

Over the next ten years, employment in manufacturing is projected to decrease -1.4% or by 235 jobs. Crop and animal production is expected to increase 11.6%, or 122 jobs. An increase of 5.2% is expected in the finance and insurance industry which equates to 228 jobs. Overall, jobs are projected to increase by 8.2% in Marathon County by 2026.
**INDICATOR 2**

**Regional Labor Shed**

**DATA HIGHLIGHTS**

Jobs Counts by Counties Where Marathon County Workers Live. Includes all Jobs 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Counties</td>
<td>69,245</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marathon</td>
<td>43,850</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>2,985</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>2,779</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portage</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>1,304</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawano</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oneida</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langlade</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td>11,366</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 63.3% or about 44,000 Marathon County residents are employed within the county borders.
- More than 25,000 workers flow into the county from other counties.

**SOURCES**

- U.S. Census Bureau [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
- Map (LEHD) 2014

**COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES**

Marathon County is a regional economic hub that provides job opportunities for county residents and commuters from outside of the county’s borders. The impact of the urban center is seen in county-to-county commuting patterns.

About 65 percent, or about 44,000, of employed county residents worked within the county borders in 2014; this is a slight increase from 2012 which was 64.3%. Roughly, 25,000 workers flowed into the county from other counties. Incoming commuters increased 6.2 percent from 2012 to 2014.

About 24,000 workers commute out of Marathon County for employment.
From 2012 to 2022, the North Central Wisconsin Region can expect to add between 14,000 and 16,000 more jobs to its economy.

Overall, Education and Health Services will experience the largest net increase in jobs, adding roughly 5,000 jobs over the ten year period. This is followed by the Trade, Transportation, and Utilities industry which is expected to add about 2,500 jobs.

Fastest growing industry is Professional and Business services, which is expected to grow 18.19% by 2022, which equates to 1,794 jobs.

The Manufacturing industry is expected to increase 1.44%, or by 444 jobs.

Natural Resources and Mining is expected to shrink 8.60%, or by 250 jobs.

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Office of Economic Advisors, 2015.

The Office of Economic Advisors provides workforce projections for the North Central Wisconsin Region, which is nine counties including Marathon. In 2022, the projected employment for the North Central Wisconsin Region is 204,652 workers, including those who are self-employed. This is an increase of 7.35% from 2012. The service providing sector will see the largest percentage increase at 8.95%. This sector includes professional and business services industry as well as the educational and health services industry. The goods producing sectors are expected to increase 3.22%, which includes construction and manufacturing.

Annually, North Central Wisconsin is expected to have 6,108 average job openings over the next ten years. The majority of these positions, 72.43%, will be open annually due to replacement needs while the rest of the openings will be due to new job growth. Job openings are in a variety of occupations and the region will need people with a diverse set of skills, interests, and educational backgrounds to fill these positions.

The region is facing modest employment growth overall but is also needing large numbers of skilled workers to replace retirees and to incorporate new technologies. Many companies are reducing costs and improving efficiency through innovations and automation, decreasing the need for some positions but increasing the need for people with technological skills. Furthermore, manufacturers are relying on contractors and temporary workers to perform functions that are not part of their core operations.
DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- A High School diploma is the education required for the highest percentage of jobs in our region. In Marathon County 39% of jobs require a high school diploma or equivalent. This is a 5% drop from the previous projections, from 2010 to 2020.

- About 3% of jobs in our region require an advanced degree (Master’s, Doctoral or Professional Degree).

- Bachelor’s and Associate’s degrees are required for only 17% of jobs in our region. In 2015, 11% of county residents over the age of 25 had an Associate’s Degree and 14% of residents had a Bachelor’s Degree.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Among the job openings anticipated between 2012 and 2022 in the North Central Wisconsin Region, 32% will not require a high school degree. Occupations in this group include cashiers, combined food preparation and serving workers such as retail salespersons, waiters and waitresses and bartenders.

Of the other job openings, 39% will fall into the high school or equivalent category. Some examples of occupations in these categories are truck drivers, heavy and tractor-trailer, office clerks, customer service representatives, receptionists and information clerks and childcare workers.

A post secondary non-degree award will be needed for 9% of job openings. Some examples of occupations in these categories are nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants, hairdressers, hairstylists and cosmetologists, licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses, first-line supervisors/managers of production and operating workers and emergency medical technicians and paramedics.

An Associate’s Degree will be needed for 6% of job openings. Some examples of occupations in these categories are registered nurses, general and operations managers, preschool teachers, radiologic technologists and technicians and dental hygienists.

Additionally, 12% of openings will require a Bachelor's Degree. Some examples of occupations in these categories are elementary, special education and secondary school teachers, accountants, auditors, and human resource professionals.

The percent of residents in Marathon County with a Bachelor or Advanced degree continues to be slightly less than the state average, but higher for Associate degrees.

Each occupation is assigned to one of eight education paths. The assignment only gives a general indication of the education typically needed in the occupation. There may be other pathways into the occupation, as well as additional educational, training, or licensing requirements. The pie chart below illustrates the percentage of job openings anticipated in each education and training group.
The unemployment rate is a measure of the number of individuals who are both unemployed and actively seeking employment as a ratio of the total workforce population. This is a place of residence measure, meaning that it only considers individuals who live in Marathon County, for example.

The unemployment rate has rapidly declined over the last six years after reaching a local high of 11.6% in February 2010. In comparison, the most current rate of 3.1% (October 2016) is about a fourth of the previous peak.

In 2015, the Labor Force Participation Rate in Wisconsin was 68.15%.

In 2015, Marathon County saw unemployment levels not seen since 2005 at 4.1%. This was spurred by increasing employment opportunities and the number of jobs available in the county.

The labor force is made up of residents who are employed or unemployed but actively seeking work, aged sixteen and older. The labor force in Marathon County peaked in 2006 at 74,976 people before declining to 73,573 in 2009. Since this time the labor force has increased modestly to 74,676 people in 2015. However, the Labor Force Participation Rate, the number of people employed and actively seeking work as a percentage of the population aged 16 and older, has declined by roughly 6 points since the peak in 2005. This can be partially contributed to an increasing percentage of the population who have reached the retirement age of 65, up 1.5 percentage points since 2000 to 2015 as well as more people taking advantage of post-secondary education opportunities, which has increased 1.2% among Marathon County adults. The decline in participation rates could also be contributed to the long-term unemployed who are dropping out of the labor force, but unfortunately data was not available. The county’s labor force participation rate in 2016 remains strong at 69.2% and is above both state and national averages.
The 2015 median household income in Marathon County was $54,083 ($26.00 per hour). The median household income meets the minimum threshold for two adults (one working) with children, but does not meet the minimum threshold for one adult households with two or more children.

The required annual income before taxes to meet the living wage threshold for a single adult is $20,934 and for two adults is $33,842. The 2015 per capita median income in Marathon County was $28,457 ($13.68 per hour).

The required annual income before taxes to meet the living wage threshold for a single adult with 3 children is $78,933, for two adults (one working) with 3 children is $52,828, and 2 adults (both working) with 3 children is $81,185.

Child care is the typically the largest monthly expense for families. On average, child care for one child is $8,160; 2 children is $15,969; and 3 children is $23,778 per year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hourly Wages</th>
<th>Living Wage</th>
<th>Poverty Wage</th>
<th>Minimum Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Adult</td>
<td>$10.06</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Adult 1 Child</td>
<td>$22.17</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
<td>$7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Adult 2 Children</td>
<td>$28.96</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Adult 3 Children</td>
<td>$37.95</td>
<td>$11.00</td>
<td>$7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Adults (1 Working)</td>
<td>$16.27</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
<td>$7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Adults (1 Working) 1 Child</td>
<td>$19.93</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Adults (1 Working) 2 Children</td>
<td>$22.40</td>
<td>$11.00</td>
<td>$7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Adults (1 Working) 3 Children</td>
<td>$25.40</td>
<td>$13.00</td>
<td>$7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Adults 1 Child</td>
<td>$12.30</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Adults 2 Children</td>
<td>$15.78</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Adults 3 Children</td>
<td>$19.52</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
<td>$7.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.6% of individuals in Marathon County live below the federal poverty line in 2015

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Living Wage Calculator, 2015 [www.livingwage.mit.edu](http://www.livingwage.mit.edu)

U.S. Census Bureau [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov), American Community Survey, 2015

The living wage is the hourly rate that an individual must earn to support their family, if they are the sole provider and are working full-time (2,080 hours per year). The data assumes that for single adult families, the adult is employed full-time. For two adult families, both adults are in the labor force, both adults are assumed to be employed full-time. For two adult families where one adult is not in the labor force, one of the adults is assumed to be employed full-time while the other non-wage-earning adult provides full-time child care for the family’s children. Full-time work is assumed to be year-round, 40 hours per week for 52 weeks, per adult.

Families with one child are assumed to have a ‘young child’ (4 years old). Families with two children are assumed to have a ‘young child’ and a ‘child’ (9 years old). Families with three children are assumed to have a ‘young child’, a ‘child’, and a ‘teenager’ (15 years old).

The living wage in Marathon County ranges from $8.14 per hour for a two adult two income household to $37.95 per hour for a one adult household with three children. In general, households with two working adults require lower per hour salaries to meet the living wage threshold.
Workforce Attraction and Retention

Key Measure: Net Migration in Marathon County, 2011-2015

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- Affordable workforce housing is an essential part of retaining the workforce. The available workforce housing can be measured by the percentage of households that are ‘cost burdened’, or paying more than 30% of their income on housing, which was 26.6% in 2015, compared to 25.7% in 2010. This suggests that housing costs are rising for households and that it may be difficult to find housing given a household’s income.

- The U.S. Department of Housing suggests that housing vacancy rates of 5% are favorable, as very low vacancy rates may drive up housing prices to unaffordable levels and very high vacancy rates may lead to decreases in safety and surrounding property values. In Marathon County, the homeowner vacancy rate is 1.7% while the rental vacancy rate was 4.4%.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Attracting and maintaining a skilled workforce is essential to the health of an economy. One indicator of attracting and maintaining a workforce is net migration. Net migration is the difference between the number of people, age one and older, moving to Marathon County from another Wisconsin county, another state, or from abroad and the number of people moving away from a county. From 2010 to 2015, Marathon County had a net migration of minus 973 people. This statistic, in addition to capturing the workforce population, also includes children and retirees.

Demographics of those moving from Marathon County was not available; however, 25.9 years is the median age of those moving here from another county and 29.6 for those moving from another state. Twenty-three percent of those moving here are 18-24 years old while this group makes up only 8.1% of the total county population. Twenty-two percent moving here are 25-34 compared to 15% of the general population. Marathon County median age is 40.6 years old. While more people overall are leaving Marathon County, the largest percentage are those moving here are young adults.

The young adults moving here have lower individual incomes as 52% of the migrants make $25,000 or less. Twenty-one percent of the general population makes $50,000 or more, only 16% of migrants were in this category. This group may be more educated, but their young age could possibly indicate that they have less work experience, leading to lower individual incomes.

Retaining students in the area is also an important indicator. Northcentral Technical College (NTC) reported that for its Class of 2015, 76% of graduates worked within the NTC District.

SOURCES
INDICATOR 8  Poverty/Living Wage

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- In Marathon County 51.7% of people in poverty, 16 years and older, are in the labor force.
- Most people below the poverty line commute to work by car, as there are few public transportation options in the county.
- In 2015, 7.2% of families lived below the federal poverty level while 8.5% of all households experienced poverty.
- Of the 14,000 individuals living under the poverty level, 77.5% are white, but those that self-report as black were more likely than any other race to be in poverty in Marathon County.
- In Marathon County, 8.4% of veterans live below the federal poverty line, of these 21% are age 18 to 34 years (largest age group).
- In 2015, 10.8% of households in Marathon County received food stamps (SNAP).
- In Marathon County, 18% of people living in poverty have a disability.

SOURCES

- U.S. Census Bureau www.census.gov

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Over the past fifteen years, poverty rates have risen across the nation. In 2000 the poverty rate was 12.4% nationally and 8.7% in Wisconsin. Historically, poverty rates increase during economic recessions, however, after the 2001 recession, poverty rates continued to increase through the recovery. In 2015, the poverty rate was 15.5% for the nation and 13% for Wisconsin.

In 2000, in Marathon County, 6.6% of all individuals lived under the federal poverty level. In 2015, that number had grown to 10.6%. The poverty rate peaked in 2014 in Marathon County at 11.4%. The small recovery in 2015 is largely contributed to wage increases and a drop in unemployment.

Stagnate incomes contribute to increasing poverty. Since 2000, incomes have not kept up with inflation while housing prices and rents hit record highs. In 2015, the national median household income increased for the first time since 2007. In Marathon County, the median household income was $54,083, still less than household income in 2000. If median income for households had increased with inflation it would be $63,851. This means that households have less buying power than they did fifteen years ago.

In 2015, 15.6% of children under the age of 18 were living in poverty in Marathon County, compared to only 7.4% of seniors. While children are the most vulnerable age group, 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 age groups have high rates of poverty, at 15.3% and 13.4% respectively. Age groups between 35 and 65 and 65 and older experienced poverty at a rate of about 7%, half that of the other age groups.
Regulated Child Care and Quality

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- There is a positive trend in YoungStar ratings and the overall quality of child care in Marathon County with a decrease in 2 Star programs and an increase in 3, 4 and 5 Star programs.

- To increase the quality of child care, in 2016, Childcaring, Inc. provided 78 trainings to providers. From January to May 2017, 32 trainings have occurred.

- Availability of child care programs has decreased, leaving current programs with wait lists. A survey conducted by Childcaring, Inc. shows that 39% of programs have a wait list for children under 2, with over a year wait.

- 9% of LIFE Survey respondents were dissatisfied with the availability of child care in Marathon County. This increased from 6.6% since the last survey in 2015.

- To increase the supply of regulated child care, Childcaring, Inc. is providing free information sessions to help answer questions about becoming a provider.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

The loss of regulated child care is occurring locally, statewide and nationally. The decline in family child care has a significant impact on children and families, particularly in rural areas.

Overall, in Marathon County there has been a 51% decrease in the number of regulated child care programs (both group centers and family child care) from 2010-2017. As a result of this decline, over 1,000 spots for children are no longer available in regulated child care programs. According to the US Census Bureau, 74% of Wisconsin’s labor force have children under age 6. Through the referral service Childcaring, Inc. parents share about the difficulties families face finding available child care in Marathon County, especially when families need infant care or second and third shift care. Families in central Wisconsin also have 60% fewer choices for child care than in 2005.

Expanding public-private partnerships and looking at intentional, creative community-level planning could have a huge benefit for children and families in central Wisconsin.

Research suggests that investing in early child development and care makes sense socially and economically. The importance of focusing on early childhood development is affirmed by both emerging neuroscience and economic research.

SOURCES

- Childcaring, Inc. www.childcaring.org
- Wisconsin Department of Children & Families www.dcf.wisconsin.gov
DATA HIGHLIGHTS

To help supplement the high cost of child care, Marathon County families have access to programs that pay a portion of their child care tuition.

- Jan–June 2017: 1,499 Families, and 2,415 children received assistance.
- Guidelines for assistance: Income below 185% of the federal poverty level, participate in an approved activity, and attend a child care program rated 2 stars or higher.

Good Start Grants (Program of Childcaring, funded by United Way of Marathon County, B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation, Dudley Foundation, Women In Action).

- 2016: 70 families, and 112 children received grants.
- As of May 2017: 29 families, and 65 children received grants.
- Guidelines: Under 300% of the federal poverty level, have been denied Wisconsin Shares, participate in an approved activity. Must attend a child care program rated 3 stars or higher.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

According to Child Care Aware® of America’s 2016 Parents and the High Cost of Child Care report, the cost of child care is one of the highest in a family’s monthly budget. It is often higher than the cost of housing, college tuition, transportation or food. Families all across the country know that it can be hard to find quality child care that is affordable.

While quality child care programs may cost more, the fact remains that it is important for children to have quality care. A safe and nurturing early learning environment allows children to get ready for school, and their parents are able to focus on work or school knowing that their child is in a healthy, caring environment.

While child care is expensive for families, you can see from the data above that child care professionals are barely making minimum wage. Many child care programs struggle with the “trilemma” — balancing affordability, accessibility, and quality. The challenge is to figure out how to run a quality program that parents can afford to use and that teachers can afford to work in. It is extremely difficult to balance all the necessary expenses (like staff salaries, appropriate space and equipment, healthy meals and snacks, insurance, supplies, etc.) with what families can afford to pay. Simply, families cannot afford to pay more; the child care programs need outside investments.

SOURCES

- Child Care Aware® of America’s 2016 Parents and the High Cost of Child Care report
- Childcaring, Inc. www.childcaring.org
Kindergarten Readiness

Key Measure: Percent of Students Meeting the PALS-K Benchmark, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- A recent report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation – “The First Eight Years: Giving Kids a Foundation for Lifetime Success” – explains how the reading gap can widen when children don’t have access to books or live in a language-rich home. For children growing up in poverty or suffering with health problems from birth tend to have slow cognitive, social, and emotional development which impacts reading proficiency later on.

The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening – Kindergarten (PALS-K) was Wisconsin’s required literacy screener from 2012-13 until 2015-16. Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, districts had the option to continue to use PALS or select a different assessment of reading readiness.

Reading readiness assessments are designed to measure skills predictive of future reading success such as phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge. PALS-K and other reading readiness assessments are not comprehensive and do not evaluate other necessary reading skills such as vocabulary comprehension and rhyming. However, results from literacy screening helps schools identify children needing academic interventions at the start of their kindergarten year.

Reading readiness is not the only part of school readiness. In fact, other skills such as the ability to maintain attention, follow directions, follow social rules and regulate behavior can significantly affect a student’s performance. The ACES Study Data at Indicator 37 of this report highlights the need to reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences. School districts throughout the county are noting the educational impacts of these experiences and have initiated social/emotional/behavioral screening for students in addition to training to help teachers understand and reduce the effects of childhood trauma.

Communities and families can improve readiness by mitigating the impact of poverty through early intervention programs like Head Start, educating parents how to care for children to improve cognitive skills and having access to quality child care.

### SOURCES

- PALS-K Assessment Data (Per School District)
- Annie E. Casey Foundation [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org)

### COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

### 2017-2019 LIFE in Marathon County: Local Indicators for Excellence

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**District** | **# Students Screened** | **# Meeting Benchmark** | **% Meeting Benchmark**
---|---|---|---
Athens | 21 | 21 | 100.00%
D.C. Everest | 401 | 363 | 90.52%
Edgar | 46 | 45 | 97.83%
Marathon City | 39 | 38 | 97.44%
Mosinee | 114 | 106 | 92.98%
Spencer | 46 | 44 | 93.65%
Stratford | 63 | 61 | 96.33%
Wausau | 578 | 519 | 90.79%
County | 1308 | 1197 | 91.51%

*WISEdash Secure*
**INDICATOR 12**

**Enrollment by Race or Ethnicity**

**DATA HIGHLIGHTS**

- 73% of Marathon County students attended the urban districts of Wausau or D. C. Everest in 2014-15.
- 32.9% of Wausau students and 22.2% of Marathon County students identified as a race or ethnicity other than white in 2016-17.
- While Asians remain the second largest ethnicity in county schools, Hispanics are the fastest growing, followed by students of two or more races.
- While both Marathon County and Wisconsin total enrollments have decreased slightly, the number of students identified as a race or ethnicity other than white and the number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students have increased.

**COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES**

While only about 8.7% of the entire Marathon County population identified as non-white in the last 2010 census, 22.2% of county students do and 32.9% in Wausau. Schools are indicators of impending community change, and, while a mostly white older generation still skews demographics, it is clear from school-age data that the ethnic make up of Marathon County is becoming more diverse.

Also notable, while Marathon County remains below statewide percentages for non-white students, it continues to serve a higher percentage of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, although that percentage is trending slightly down from 7.8% in 2015-16 to 7.5% in 2016-17.

Marathon County serves students in eight different school districts. Wausau and D.C. Everest are urban districts, while the other six are rural. Populations within those districts range from under 500 to more than 8,400 and serve a wide range of students from a variety of circumstances.

**District Enrollments 2016-17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Enrollments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar</td>
<td>617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.C. Everest</td>
<td>5,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marathon City</td>
<td>717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosinee</td>
<td>1,998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spencer</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratford</td>
<td>949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wausau</td>
<td>8,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19,698</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Data Highlights

- All 8 school districts in Marathon County had a decrease in the percent of economically disadvantaged students in 2015-16 but an increase in poverty county-wide in 2016-17, which was reflected at the state level as well.
- Urban districts with multiple elementary schools (Wausau and D.C. Everest) see disparities among schools largely because of wealthy and impoverished neighborhoods within those school boundaries.
- In 2016-17, Wausau schools had an average economic disadvantage of 43%. Elementary schools range from South Mountain at 14% (the district’s lowest) to Lincoln at 80.7% (the district’s highest).
- Wausau has three elementary schools with economic disadvantage percentages above 65%.
- While D.C. Everest schools have an average economic disadvantage of 28.6%, its elementary schools range from Hatley and Riverside both at 19.2% to Weston at 58%.

### Community Perspectives

Education research has revealed a strong correlation between poverty and learning challenges for students. To improve learning outcomes, the number of individual students living in poverty needs to shrink. By reducing poverty in our communities, learning improves and lessens the challenges of poverty on our schools in Marathon County.

The economic downturn continues to impact the number of economically disadvantaged students in Marathon County schools, from 23% in 2001-02 increasing to 34% in 2016-17. While the last two years have seen slight decreases from peak numbers, the percent of economically disadvantaged students still remains well above pre-recession levels.

There exists disparities between districts in Marathon County—with Wausau and Spencer having the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged students at 47% and 46% respectively and Marathon City having the lowest at 21%. There are similar disparities within the larger urban districts, especially at the elementary school level. For instance, of Wausau’s 13 elementary schools, five fall below 30% while three exceed 65%. Only one—Riverview Elementary—falls within 5% of Wausau’s district average.
**INDICATOR 14**

**School District Expenditures**

**DATA HIGHLIGHTS**

- At $14,010, Athens continues to have the highest per pupil TEC in the county. Stratford continues to have the lowest at $10,822. TEC per pupil do not include the cost of food service or community service activities but does include transportation and facility costs.

- The statewide expansion of the School Voucher program has had an impact on the per pupil dollars that a district is able to keep within its schools.

- Districts throughout Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin are struggling financially due to lack of funding increases at the state level.

- Legislation to support rural schools in Wisconsin led to a spike in funding for rural districts in Marathon County.

- In the last 3 school years, 5 of 8 Marathon County School Districts sought financial assistance through referendum. Districts seeking referendum state-wide increased from 71 in 2013 to 154 in 2016.

**SOURCES**

- WI Department of Public Instruction WISEdash Public Portal wise.dpi.wi.gov/wisedash
- Robert W. Baird & Co. Referenda Results April 4, 2017

**COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES**

With the exception of a recent investment in rural schools statewide, funding for education in Marathon County has stayed relatively flat since the 2008-09 school year—hovering just above or below $12,000 per pupil. With 75% of students in Marathon County attending urban schools, additional funding for rural schools did not have an impact on the overall educational investment for the county.

With the cost of operations continuing to rise and the statewide expansion of the School Voucher Program, districts have had to work with fewer dollars even as total dollars have slightly increased. School districts throughout Marathon County are experiencing funding reductions due to the expansion of the Wisconsin School Voucher Program. Marathon County schools lost a total of $487,169 during the 2015-16 school year voucher program. With the expansion of that program the total dollars lost is expected to increase.

Wisconsin overall has an average per pupil spending rate of $776 per pupil. With much needed building maintenance and updates, schools are seeking additional funding through referendums. In the past three years schools seeking funding through referendums has dramatically increased, with 61.5% of referenda questions passing on April 4, 2017. Locally the Mosinee School District went to referendum for the past two years but has not received the votes required to pass.
Key Measure: Percent Achieving Reading Proficiency, 2010-2016

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 48.3% of Marathon County students score Proficient or Advanced on the Wisconsin Academic Standards (WSAS) reading assessments, surpassing the state average of 42.5%.

- There has been variability in scores in recent years due to several changes in assessments administered. The 2016-17 school year marked the first time the same assessment was used in back-to-back years since the 2013-14 school year.

- In 2015-16, Edgar had the highest rate of closing the achievement gap with a score of 73.4. Seven of eight school districts in Marathon County exceeded the state average in the Student Growth Priority Area.

- All school districts in Marathon County met or exceeded expectations for performance on the Wisconsin School Report Card.

SOURCES


COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

State standardized assessments gauge how well students are doing in relation to the Wisconsin Academic Standards and measures students’ preparedness for college and employment. In 2015-16 and 2016-17, the Wisconsin Forward Exam was selected to measure student performance of educational standards. From those results, Marathon County schools continue to exceed state averages.

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) produces annual Accountability Report Cards for every district and school in Wisconsin which includes data for multiple indicators over multiple years in four priority areas including Student Achievement and Student Growth. Student Growth measurements show how rapidly students gain knowledge and skills from year to year in the areas of reading and math. Unlike Student Achievement, which is based on the levels of performance students have attained, Student Growth focuses on the pace of improvement in students’ performance compared to the growth of similar students in other Wisconsin schools. The state recognizes schools and districts for helping students reach higher performance levels by measuring student progress over time, across assessments.

A district’s or school’s Overall Accountability Score places the district or school into one of five ratings. All school districts in Marathon County meet expectations for performance according to these ratings. Three districts, Edgar, Marathon City, and Stratford exceeded expectations.
**DATA HIGHLIGHTS**

- With 88% of high school freshmen graduating within four years, Wisconsin ranks in the top ten in the country for high school graduation rates.
- Marathon County graduation rates have dropped over the past two years from 94.1% in 2013-14, to 92.7% in 2014-15, and 92.0% in 2015-16.
- Edgar and Spencer both had 100% graduation rates for 2014-15, and Athens had 100% rate in 2015-16.
- All districts in Marathon County continue to have a higher graduation rate than the state average.

**SOURCES**


**COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES**

Wisconsin has historically been a leader in the nation with its ability to graduate seniors on time from high school. Marathon County continues this tradition with 92% of its students graduating with their four-year cohort. This rate continues to exceed the state average, however, there has been a decline in the Marathon County graduation rate in recent years. Since 2011, there has been increased emphasis placed on students graduating within four years. All states use the same graduation rate formula which provides a uniform method for reliable comparisons among states. The new method of determining graduation rates does not affect students who take more than four years to graduate, including at-risk students and students with disabilities. When students do earn a regular diploma in five or six years, they are credited in the extended year graduation rates as appropriate. Due to this calculation process, district graduation rates are often higher when they include students who obtained a regular diploma within six years.

A timely graduation sets county students up for a successful future, increasing the likelihood of attending college or finding a stable job after graduation. An increasing number of jobs require a high school diploma and graduating on time signals to employers a work ethic and reliability they look for in employees. Investing in efforts to maintain or improve the graduation rate in Marathon County will continue to have benefits for the county.
College and Career Readiness

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- Marathon County’s 8 districts ACT scores average 20.35 compared to the state score average of 20.3. Two of our county’s school districts exceed the state average and 6 districts performed below the state average by a minimal range of 0.1-0.6.

- At 20.35 Marathon County has maintained an average ACT composite score above the state average for five testing cycles, although the gap continues to narrow.

- Marathon County’s 8 district average ACT participation rate is 94.85% compared to the state participation rate of 91.4%.

- Secondary instruction focuses much of its efforts on preparing students for their lives after high school in hopes that graduates are well prepared to participate in society either as students or workers. While students have a variety of post-secondary options, a strong majority of high school graduates in Marathon County will continue their education at a vocational or technical college or at a private or public university or college.

SOURCES

- WI Department of Public Instruction WISEdash Public Portal wise.dpi.wi.gov/wisedash
- The American College Test (ACT) www.act.org

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

For four-year college students, the ACT (originally an abbreviation of American College Testing) is a strong indicator of pupil preparedness for post high school education and career readiness. A 36 is the highest possible composite score achievable for the ACT.

While results from previous years reflected only the scores for students who were headed to college, this year’s data reflects all high school junior students’ achievement, yielding the opportunity to assess college and career readiness for all students. First year comparison of the graduation data results between this year and the previous years is similar and supports previously seen scores.

In the recent Marathon County LIFE Report Survey, respondents were asked about the affordability of post high school education. Of those responding 19.2% were very concerned, 13.8% concerned and 19.4% were somewhat concerned. Overall, for this survey post high school education scored relatively low in comparison to other concerns highlighted in the survey.
**Data Highlights**

The 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Report indicate that of the population 25 years and over in Marathon County:

- 4% have less than a 9th grade education
- 5% 9th-12th, with no diploma
- 37.1% High School Graduate
- 18.5% Some college, with no degree
- 11.7% Associate's Degree
- 16.1% Bachelor’s Degree
- 7.6% Graduate or Professional Degree

State of Wisconsin General Purpose Revenue Expenditures for the UW System in 2016 was $993,500,000 and $1,086,000,000 in 2015. In 2016, the amount for the Wisconsin Technical College System was $516,000,000 and $511,000,000 in 2015.

- In 2016-17 UW-Marathon County awarded $158,000 in scholarships and Northcentral Technical College awarded $388,802 in scholarships.

**Community Perspectives**

Marathon County is a very giving community that supports our area institutions through a variety of scholarships and other donations.

Many Marathon County residents expressed some level of concern about the affordability of post high school education. The Wisconsin average student debt is $29,460 for public and private non-profit four year institutions. Marathon County higher education institutions offer a variety of opportunities for students to lower the cost of their college education. The UW-Marathon County and Northcentral Technical College have awarded over $540,000 in scholarships in 2016-17 and over 12,400 dual enrollment credits in 2015-16. These dual enrollment programs provide high school students the chance to earn college credits while still in high school, lowering the total cost of their college tuition and reducing time to graduation.

Marathon County offers its residents many programs to continue their education, including UW-Marathon County, Northcentral Technical College and Rasmussen College along with partnerships with Concordia University, Edgewood College, Lakeland College, Marian University, Silver Lake College, Upper Iowa University, UW-Green Bay, UW-Stevens Point, UW-Stout and Viterbo University.
Energy Conservation and Generation

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- The 2017 LIFE Survey indicated that 18.6% of respondents are very concerned about energy conservation.
- Diverse Energy Sources: Weston Power Plant coal and natural gas, Domtar Rothschild biomass plant, Wausau hydroelectric dam, Fiber Recovery Corporation landfill biogas plant and an increasing number of solar photovoltaic installations at homes and businesses.

Table: Marathon County Focus on Energy efforts on energy efficiency between year 2014-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
<th>Energy bill savings per participant ($)</th>
<th>Incentives dollars per participant ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>6,021</td>
<td>33.69</td>
<td>39.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,259</td>
<td>66.18</td>
<td>106.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>35.19*</td>
<td>5.20*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>2,200.61</td>
<td>3,316.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>4,169.30</td>
<td>3,543.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1,034.14*</td>
<td>69.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2,018.67</td>
<td>2,846.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>6,622.73</td>
<td>8,142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>771.93*</td>
<td>67.69*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus on Energy, a program coordinated by the State of Wisconsin with utility providers, offers statewide energy conservation and renewable energy programs for residents and businesses. These programs provide financial incentives, education and consultative services to encourage and implement projects such as appliance recycling, lighting upgrades, and installation of energy efficient equipment and renewable energy.

Marathon County government has implemented a significant number of energy conservation and efficiency projects in their various departmental buildings and facilities. The energy efficiency improvement measures helped keep the county utility budget steady in terms of electricity and natural gas usage between 2008 and 2016.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

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Marathon County government has implemented a significant number of energy conservation and efficiency projects in their various departmental buildings and facilities. The energy efficiency improvement measures helped keep the county utility budget steady in terms of electricity and natural gas usage between 2008 and 2016.

Types of fuel used in Marathon County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Capacity (Megawatt)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>1.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydro</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BioMass</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BioGas</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel Oil</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Gas</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wind</td>
<td>&lt;.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCES

- http://evaluations.focusonenergy.com/#!/maps
- Focus on Energy: http://evaluations.focusonenergy.com/#!/maps; *per capita
- RENEW Wisconsin; Source: http://www.renewwisconsin.org/data/projectswimap.html
  (Updated data through personal communication with Tyler Huebner, Executive Director, RENEW Wisconsin)
- Public Service Commission, https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Home.aspx (Personal communication with Holly O’Higgins, Data Analyst)
  http://www.renewwisconsin.org/data/installcountywimap.html
  http://www.renewwisconsin.org/data/projectswimap.html

Figure: Upgraded energy efficient boilers at Marathon County Library in 2015