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Monday, February 5, 2007  
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## **New Tool Offers Regional Economic Data, Promotes Strategic Growth *Secretary Gassman Says Metrics Measure Progress, Help Chart Further Success***

**Madison** – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced the Regional Metrics Benchmarks, which provide Wisconsin's seven new economic regions with comprehensive, regional data crucial to local strategic planning efforts.

"In his Grow Wisconsin initiative, Governor Doyle encouraged economic and workforce development leaders to reach across geographic boundaries to create regional partnerships and strategies to effectively use our resources to compete at the high end. DWD is pleased to provide this new tool to support these efforts so Wisconsin's economic regions can check their vital signs, better focus their efforts and measure their progress," said Secretary Gassman.

The Regional Metrics Benchmarks provide 36 vital signs of the economic regions taking shape under the Governor's Grow Wisconsin agenda. These indicators can be viewed by going to the DWD website, <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/oea/grow.htm>, and clicking on an interactive map or a list of the regions.

"Until now, all of this information was gathered at the county level by various agencies and published in a variety of different reports," said Dennis Winters, DWD chief labor economist and OEA director. "We are now providing comprehensive data through one point of easy customer access and at a regional level."

Although targeted for policy makers, anyone interested in economic and workforce development can use the DWD website for the latest available data on key employment sectors and job growth, per capita income, education levels, diversity, cost of living, average commute and basic demographics utilizing regional, state and national comparisons.

DWD's Office of Economic Advisors (OEA) has developed the regional metrics with guidance from the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment (CWI). While designing the metrics tool, DWD worked with the Council on Workforce Investment on a parallel initiative, the Growing Regional Opportunities in Wisconsin (GROW) grant program. Nearly \$1 million GROW grants have been awarded over the past two years to help fund the emerging regional partnerships, encouraging collaboration in economic development, workforce development, and education. Regional Metrics Benchmarks will help the partnerships target their resources.

"These metrics will provide a major boost to the state's economic regions working to clarify their regional visions and strategies," said Paul Linzmeyer, a Green Bay businessman and chairman of the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment. "Giving regions a clearer picture of where they are will help them steer their efforts, focus their resources, and measure their progress."

Two regions extend beyond Wisconsin's borders, and the metrics tool includes data from portions of neighboring states. The seven regions and the counties they cover are:

- **Southeast Regional Workforce Alliance** – Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha;
- **New North** – Brown, Calumet, Door, Florence, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Sheboygan, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago;
- **North Central Wisconsin Regional Partnership** – Adams, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas and Wood;
- **Northland Works GROW** – Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor and Washburn; **Minnesota** counties Carlton and St. Louis;
- **West Central Wisconsin Regional Development Coalition** – Barron, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce, Polk and St. Croix;
- **Seven Rivers Region Workforce Development Partnership** – Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon; **Minnesota** counties Fillmore, Houston, Olmsted, Wabasha and Winona; **Iowa** counties Allamakee, Clayton and Winneshiek;
- **Southwest/South Central GROW** – Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Marquette, Richland, Rock and Sauk.