



### Idea Fund of La Crosse

A new source of venture capital in Wisconsin is weighing its first investments.

The Idea Fund Of La Crosse said it has raised \$8 million that will be funneled into young companies around Wisconsin over the next several years.

Managing director Jonathan Horne said the Idea Fund is the first venture fund to qualify for an investment from the Badger Fund of Funds.

Established in 2015, the Badger Fund of Funds raised more than \$10 million from private investors to go along with a \$25 million investment from the state of Wisconsin. The money is to be distributed to a series of funds around Wiscon-

sin, such as the Idea Fund, which will, in turn, pump cash into promising companies around the state.

Horne said he has reviewed about 140 startups from around the state — and a few just over the border in Minnesota that would move to Wisconsin. He has narrowed the list of possible recipients to about 25 businesses.

“I’ve been really impressed with the deal flow so far,” Horne said. He said he expects the Idea Fund to choose 10 to 12 early-stage companies for investments, to start.

It is a risky type of investment, Horne acknowledged, but he said at least one or two of the startups will have to have “the potential to drive our return to investors.”

Horne said he hopes to raise up to \$4 million more. He said so far, investors in the Idea Fund include some Wisconsin residents who “have never done venture investing before.”

He said he expects to take about four years to make the initial investments, while holding onto about half of the cash for follow-on funding as the successful startups grow.

Horne, a La Crosse native and former investment banker with J.P. Morgan in New York, said he is excited about the prospect of adding jobs and technology, and “the greater good this is going to do for the state.”

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