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**TEMPO FOUNDATION INVESTS IN 12 WOMEN LEADERS  
THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS**

**MILWAUKEE (April 23, 2026)** — At its Annual Meeting on April 16, TEMPO celebrated the recipients of the 9th Annual TEMPO Foundation Professional Development Grants, awarding funding to 12 women pursuing leadership development, technical certifications, entrepreneurship, and conference attendance.

**About the Grants**

The TEMPO Foundation, established in 2011 as TEMPO's 501(c)(3) charitable arm, has provided more than \$525,000 in educational scholarships and over \$100,000 in professional development grants to both emerging and experienced women leaders in the Milwaukee community. TEMPO's grants are specifically designed to invest in the professional growth of Milwaukee area women at every stage of their careers.

The grants address a critical need in our region. TEMPO's recent "Voices of Women at Work: The Milwaukee Experience" research—a survey of 212 women across Southeastern Wisconsin—revealed significant gaps in sponsorship, professional development access, and organizational support for women leaders. The study found that many women in our community face barriers to advancing their careers, including leadership development opportunities. The TEMPO Foundation Professional Development Grants remove financial barriers so women can pursue programs, conferences, and credentials that accelerate their leadership trajectories.

"When women in Milwaukee have the resources to grow professionally, the entire community benefits," said TEMPO President and CEO Jennifer Dirks. "Grant recipients go on to lead organizations, launch businesses, and mentor the next generation of women leaders." The ripple effect of a single professional development investment strengthens workplaces and contributes to talent retention in a region where keeping experienced leaders is essential to long-term economic vitality.

The diversity of this year's recipients—spanning immigration law, human resources, executive education, financial planning, data privacy, community violence intervention, and more—reflects the breadth of industries and sectors where Milwaukee women are leading and growing.

**The 2026 TEMPO Foundation Professional Development Grant recipients are:**

**Lauren Anderson-Stepanek** – American Immigration Lawyers Association

**Jennifer Berry** – SHRM Program

**Sarah Borden** – Kellogg Executive Education – Northwestern University Training Program

**Bridgett Brown** – Vertigus Group

**Samantha Burgos** – Equine Experiential Education Program



**Alea Cross** – UWM – Continuing Education Program

**Danitia Kwidama-Hall** – Kaplan Financial Education

**Molly Madonia** – International Association of Privacy Professionals

**Ashley Schneider** – Elaine Lou – Career & Business Program

**Tiquila Thomas** – GIFFORDS Community Violence Intervention Conference

**Jessica Verdejo** – ICS Inventory LLC

**Christine Wolf** – The Forum on Education Abroad

*“Receiving the TEMPO Foundation Professional Development Grant will allow me to utilize strategic skills to learn and take back to be immediately effective in my role at my company,” said Sarah Borden. “I’m so grateful to TEMPO.*

*“We do not get to this place alone and it’s important that we lean on each other and ask for support, which is why TEMPO is so great” said Jennifer Berry. “It’s such a network of great, supportive women.”*

“Every year, the caliber of our applicants reminds me why this program matters so deeply to our community,” added Dirks. “These twelve women are not just investing in themselves—they are investing in the organizations they lead, the communities they serve, and the women who will follow in their footsteps.”

The TEMPO Foundation’s Professional Development Grants are made possible through the generous support of TEMPO members, Emerging Women Leaders, corporate partners, and community supporters. Individuals and organizations interested in supporting the Foundation’s grant and scholarship programs can learn more at [www.tempomilwaukee.org/professional-development-grant](http://www.tempomilwaukee.org/professional-development-grant).

#### **About TEMPO Milwaukee:**

TEMPO is a network of more than 500 executive women and nearly 300 emerging women leaders who have spoken up, risen above and defied conventions to succeed. Its mission is to further the impact of women leaders in our community. TEMPO serves its diverse membership of executive, senior, and C-level leaders through educational programming and professional development, networking opportunities, relationship building, and mentoring, with the goal of empowering women to achieve and sustain leadership roles. TEMPO’s Emerging Women Leaders group represents the future generation of our organization. For more information on TEMPO visit [www.tempomilwaukee.org](http://www.tempomilwaukee.org).