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## Secretary Newson Announces DWD's Intent to Award over \$900,000 in Wisconsin Fast Forward Grants to Train 1,829 Workers

***\$3.4 million in Round Two awards announced in May for worker training grants, bringing the program's total investment to over \$6 million to equip over 6,600 workers for skills for new jobs or higher pay at 172 businesses***

MADISON – Department of Workforce Development Secretary (DWD) Reggie Newson today announced DWD intends to award 16 applicants \$908,529 in worker training grants through the Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) initiative. The grant awardees cover 33 employers representing 16 Wisconsin counties and will train approximately 1,829 workers in information technology, health care and small businesses with 50 or fewer workers.

Today's announcement culminates the second round of Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training grants totaling \$3.4 million to train workers in manufacturing, construction, information technology, financial services, healthcare, small business and transportation.

Since its creation last year, Wisconsin Fast Forward has achieved the following milestones:

- **Announced the intent to award more than \$6 million in grants to support innovative, collaborative efforts to deliver skills training based on employer demand.**
- **Up to 6,636 Wisconsin workers will develop skills to fill new jobs or receive wage increases at their current employers.**
- **Funding covers occupational training in manufacturing, construction, health care, information technology, transportation, financial services, customer service and small businesses.**
- **Awards cover activities in 44 of 72 counties and include up to 172 businesses, including some that are expanding in or relocating to Wisconsin.**

"Thousands of workers across Wisconsin are getting the training they need to fill jobs that employers have available today, thanks to Governor Walker's Wisconsin Fast Forward initiative," Secretary Newson said. "These employer-driven training programs are creating new opportunities for working families, helping companies create or retain jobs, and cementing Wisconsin as a leader in collaborative efforts to address the skills gap today and in the years to come."

Governor Scott Walker proposed the Wisconsin Fast Forward grant program in early 2013. Both houses of the legislature approved the bill with significant bipartisan majorities. \$15 million was appropriated to fund flexible, demand-driven training for companies that have identified a specific workforce need. Employers can partner with other businesses as well as training providers, workforce development boards, economic development organizations, technical colleges, and others.

DWD's Office of Skills Development (OSD) was created when the Wisconsin Fast Forward legislation passed. OSD is responsible for administering the WFF program and has developed a transparent and accountable process that enables companies to easily apply for grants. All applications are evaluated by representatives from OSD, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Wisconsin Technical College System, and local chambers of commerce.

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<http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/>

OSD is responsible for closely monitoring grantees to ensure that funds are spent appropriately and that agreed-upon outcomes on hires and wage increases are met.

During his 2014 State of the State address, Governor Walker proposed a \$35.4 million expansion of the WFF worker training program as part of his *Blueprint for Prosperity* to focus on three populations:

- Reducing wait lists at Wisconsin technical colleges in high-demand fields like manufacturing and information technology;
- Developing innovative school-to-work collaborations between businesses, school districts, technical colleges, and other partners that result in industry-recognized certifications in high-demand areas; and
- Enhancing employment opportunities for workers with disabilities as part of the Governor's Year of the Better Bottom Line initiative that seeks to connect disabled individuals with employment.

In May, the Department awarded \$2.1 million in Wisconsin Fast Forward-Blueprint for Prosperity grants for 30 school-to-work collaborative projects to train up to 949 high school pupils in partnership with up to 153 employers.

Summaries for today's announced grant awards are available [online](#).

For additional information on Wisconsin Fast Forward and Wisconsin Fast Forward-Blueprint for Prosperity awards, visit <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/wff/reports.htm>

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