

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (DWD) PROGRAM NARRATIVES

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Program

WISCONSIN FAST FORWARD

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Version

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Website

<http://wisconsinfastforward.com/>

Agency

DWD

Inception

2013 Act 9

Expected Outcomes

The Office of Skills Development has issued contracts of more than \$45 million in grants to date. Grants support more than 420 workforce training projects benefiting more than 836 businesses and more than 32,000 trainees at an average cost of \$1,430 per trainee.

Program Goal

The Wisconsin Fast Forward standard grant program funds customized skills training for currently employed workers and job seekers through Wisconsin employers and their partners. The goals of the program include:

- Increasing high-demand skills attainment in the local and regional workforce
- Influencing the number of new jobs created
- Reducing layoffs due to skilled labor shortages
- Helping unemployed and underemployed people gain full-time employment
- Providing current workers with wage increases, increased functionality, and job security

Incentives and Available Funding

Grant awards for sector grants range from \$5,000 to \$400,000 and require a cash or in-kind match equal to 50% of the award amount. All grantees are limited to \$400,000 in Wisconsin Fast Forward funds per calendar year.

Program Description

The standard Wisconsin Fast Forward program is designed to provide demand-driven worker training grants to employers in collaboration with training providers and their local workforce and economic development partners. The program accepts grant proposals for customized, short- and medium-term skilled worker training projects for all sectors. Qualifying proposals must be supported by current and projected labor market information, demonstrate the need for training, and state the intent to hire trainees or raise current worker wages. The long-term goal of the program is to encourage statewide economic growth by assisting employers to train workers and fill positions, as well as to ensure meaningful economic advancement for trainees. The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Office of Skills Development administers the program through a transparent and accountable process. Since the program's inception, the Office of Skills Development has awarded grants to support worker training demands in the following industry sectors and occupational areas:

- Agriculture and related fields
- Construction trades and related occupations
- Customer service
- Financial services

Program

WISCONSIN FAST FORWARD (CONTINUED)

- Health care and related fields
- Information technology
- Manufacturing
- Transportation, logistics, and distribution
- Wisconsin small businesses with 50 or fewer full-time employees

A summary of each grant award is available on the WFF website: wisconsinfastforward.com/reports.htm

Program Activity

During fiscal year 2023, the office awarded standard Wisconsin Fast Forward grant contracts totaling:

- Amount: \$5,158,796
- Number of grants: 36
- Number of trainees: 2,139
- Number of businesses: 42

In 2023, the Wisconsin Technical College System Board was awarded a \$791,204 grant to reduce waiting lists for enrollment in programs and courses in high-demand fields such as health care, advanced manufacturing, and other occupations within science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

EXPANDED WISCONSIN FAST FORWARD

During the fiscal year 2023, the Office of Skills Development also awarded grants under the programs initiated through the 2021-23 biennial budget. These program awards included:

- Technical Education Equipment Grant Program: This grant program was made available to Wisconsin school districts to acquire advanced manufacturing equipment. It also includes software necessary to operate the equipment and any instructional material necessary to train students to run the equipment. Grant amounts varied from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The Office of Skills Development awarded 35 grants to school districts, for a total of \$1 million in awards.

Eligibility Requirements

Wisconsin Fast Forward grant opportunities are available to any public or private organization with documented workforce training needs in all industry sectors. Allowable expenditures include curriculum development, instructor or trainer costs, instructional materials and supplies, consultant fees, contractual services, facility costs, and administration costs up to 5% of the total project budget.

Recommended Changes

The program continues to evolve as the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development develops its vision for Wisconsin Fast Forward. There are no other current recommended changes.