

# Gov. Walker: Discusses importance of strong Wisconsin workforce at 2017 WIOA State Roundtable

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Contact: Tom Evenson, [\(608\) 266-2839](tel:6082662839)

**Appleton** - Governor Scott Walker joined Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Ray Allen as well as workforce development and Wisconsin Technical College System leaders today in Appleton for the 2017 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) roundtable discussion. WIOA, which was signed into law in July of 2014, consolidated all federally-funded job training programs into a single funding stream.

“Wisconsin is working – at 3.4 percent, our unemployment rate is the lowest it’s been since April of 2000 and on top of that, our most recent Labor Force Participation Rate is 68.4 percent, 5.4 percent higher than the national rate,” Governor Walker said. “While Wisconsin is on the right track there’s still much work to be done, and we won’t stop until everyone who wants a job is able to find a job and a good-paying career. Roundtable discussions like the one here in Appleton today are crucial as we form a plan to make our workforce development programs more effective for our taxpayers.”

“Under Governor Walker’s leadership, DWD is Wisconsin’s premier talent development agency, advancing proven employment solutions to equip workers with the practical skills they need to fill employer job openings and succeed in high-demand jobs,” said DWD Secretary Allen. “Roundtable discussions provide us with an invaluable opportunity to strengthen workforce development partnerships across the state and further develop a robust talent pipeline.”

A top priority for Governor Walker as he continues to move Wisconsin forward is workforce development. His 2017-2019 biennial budget increases funding for Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF), Wisconsin's flagship workforce development program, by \$12.6 million over the budget – a 47 percent increase. In addition, the governor's budget proposal includes several other initiatives to support workforce development in Wisconsin, including:

- **Education Workforce Development** – Governor Walker's budget proposal creates a new Teacher Development Program, which supports collaborations between schools of education and school districts to provide intensive curriculum and classroom training for certain school employees to earn a teaching license.
- **Dual Enrollment** – The budget proposal allows WFF to support dual enrollment programs with technical colleges and local businesses to help students earn college and high school credit while being paid for their work by a local business.
- **Healthcare Workforce Initiative** – The budget proposal allocates \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2017-18 through WFF to provide grants to community-based organizations for public-private partnerships to create and implement nursing training programs for middle and high school students.
- **Summer Jobs** – The budget proposal permits WFF funding to support programs to assist students in finding summer jobs.
- **Internships** – The budget allows WFF to support internship programs so students have the opportunity to gain initial workforce experiences.
- **Apprenticeships** – The budget allows WFF funding to be used for registered apprenticeship programs, youth apprenticeship programs, and Apprenticeship Completion awards, which recognize individuals for completing apprenticeship training.
- **Technical Colleges** – The budget allocates \$5 million in training grants for technical colleges designed to fill high-demand jobs. These grants will be competitive for technical college districts and distributed through WFF.
- **Employer Resource Networks (ERNs)** – The budget allows WFF funding to be used to establish employer resource networks (ERNs), in which consortiums of businesses come together to support the hiring of a social worker who will help employees access the services they need to stay connected to the workforce.
- **Correctional Institutions** – Governor Walker's budget increases investments in job training programs in correctional institutions, including:

- \$1 million in General Purpose Revenue (GPR) annually to expand the Windows-to-Work Program and Vocational Training Programs. This helps offenders build the skills they need for employment upon re-entry to society.
- \$1 million in GPR in fiscal year 2017-18 and \$50,000 in GPR annually through WFF to expand the mobile classroom program in correctional facilities, which provides job skills training for inmates as they prepare to re-enter the workforce.

“As we continue to look towards Wisconsin’s future, one of the most important areas for us is workforce development,” Governor Walker added. “Our budget makes significant investments in workforce development programs like Wisconsin Fast Forward to ensure future generations of workers are equipped with the practical skills and training they need to succeed in high-demand jobs.”