

DWD: Awards three grants to fund employee resource networks that support nearly 2,900 workers

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Awards funded through Governor Walker's Wisconsin Fast Forward program

MADISON – Today, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) announced three Wisconsin Fast Forward Grants that will fund Employee Resource Networks (ERN) – public/private partnerships with the goal of uniting businesses and community partners to improve job retention and advancement for entry-level, low-wage, and low-skilled workers. A distinguishing feature of an ERN is that participating businesses pay a share of network costs in exchange for membership.

“Through these partnerships, workers will have on-site support in the form of a case manager or success coach, providing assistance in the form of employment support service to address various barriers to continued employment, improve worker performance and increase workforce retention for local employers,” DWD Secretary Ray Allen said. “With Wisconsin’s unemployment rate at a historic low of 2.8 percent, ensuring that individuals remained employed while reducing costs for businesses due to turnover is another way we are supporting and growing Wisconsin’s workforce.”

The grant contracts announced today include:

- DWD awarded \$25,321 to **Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Workforce Development, Inc.**, (WOW WDI) to develop and pilot an ERN in Waukesha and Ozaukee counties, in partnership with local non-profits, workforce programs, economic development resources and employee partners. Employee partners include Felss Rotaform LLC, Generac Power Systems Inc., Jorgensen Conveyors Inc., SPX Transformer Solutions Inc., and Weldall Manufacturing Inc.
- **Workforce Resources, Inc.**, of Menomonie received \$43,959 to support its Eau Claire Employee Resource Network pilot. In partnership with American Phoenix Drylock Technologies, United Way of Greater Chippewa Valley, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Chippewa Valley Technical College and the Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Resource will provide employment support services to address various barriers to continued employment, to improve worker performance and to increase workforce retention.
- The **Next Door Foundation, Inc.**, of Milwaukee has received \$89,700 to support its Early Head Start Childcare Partnership Employee Resource Network pilot for childcare providers engaged in its Federal Early Head Start Childcare Partnership grant. Working with Employ Milwaukee, Milwaukee Area Technical College, local non-profits workforce programs, economic development resources and employer partners, Next Door Milwaukee will offer its childcare providers training and employment support services to address the barriers to continued employment, to improve worker performance and to increase workforce retention.

The Wisconsin Fast Forward program is a nationally recognized, innovative talent development solution driven by Wisconsin businesses to train and retain highly skilled workers. Under Governor Walker's leadership, more than \$200 million has been invested over the past four years and over \$140 million was included in the current biennial budget to support workforce development, including funding to expand the Fast Forward program to support the development of innovative training solutions to meet regional workforce demands.

For more information, visit <http://wisconsinfastforward.com/>