

# Joint Audit Committee: Audit Examines Wisconsin Fast Forward Program

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MADISON - Today, the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) released its audit of the Wisconsin Fast Forward Program (report 19-24). The Fast Forward standard program was created by 2013 Wisconsin Act 9, and the expanded program was created by legislation enacted in the following years. The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) administers the program by awarding grants to public and private organizations for workplace training activities. From fiscal year (FY) 2012-13 through FY 2018-19, program expenditures totaled \$62.7 million, including \$47.4 million (75.6 percent) for grants and \$15.3 million (24.4 percent) for administration. Through FY 2018-19, DWD awarded 514 program grants, not all of which had ended at the time of the audit.

As a result of all 209 standard program grants that ended through December 2018, LAB found that 9,451 individuals completed program training, were counted as program successes, and received an average wage increase of \$1.85 per hour. These individuals represented 52.9 percent of the 17,881 individuals whom grant recipients were contractually required to train. LAB also found that the results of these 209 standard program grants varied considerably.

LAB found that DWD did not attempt to verify the accuracy of the information grant recipients submitted to it about the results of their grants. LAB also found that DWD included inaccurate information in its statutorily required December 2018 report. LAB recommended that DWD make improvements, take additional actions to assess program results, and use the assessment results when awarding future program grants.

“It is critical to accurately verify the results of our workforce training and economic development programs to ensure that our state’s investment is being realized. Utilizing data that is already collected by this Department to verify the results of the grant awards is a “no-brainer” and should have been implemented from the beginning. Working with DWD to incorporate the recommendations of this audit will help to improve the administration of this program moving forward,” said Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay).

“I’d like to see longer-term tracking of program successes. Knowing whether these individuals remained employed or continued to receive increased compensation would provide a more complete measure of success,” said Representative Samantha Kerkman (R-Salem Lakes). “Likewise, additional assessment of program results such as determining which types of entities or training activities are most successful will help maximize the Fast Forward investment in our workforce.”

LAB reviewed DWD’s files for 242 program grants totaling \$57.0 million. LAB found that DWD did not consistently comply with statutes and administrative rules when awarding grants, require recipients to repay grant funds for not meeting contractually specified results, or provide sufficient management and oversight of all contracts. LAB made recommendations for DWD to improve program administration.

Copies of LAB’s report (report 19-24) may be obtained from its website at [www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lab](http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lab) or by calling (608) 266-2818. Report concerns related to state government activities to LAB by calling the toll-free hotline at 1-877-FRAUD-17.