

# Dept. of Workplace Development: Receives \$3 million U.S. Department of Labor grant for IT upgrades

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MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has been awarded a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to support its comprehensive upgrade and modernization of the Job Center of Wisconsin system and an internal case management system to better connect job seekers with employment opportunities.

The Comprehensive and Accessible Reemployment through Equitable Employment Recovery National Dislocated Worker grant will benefit workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent labor market disruption. DOL announced the availability of \$43 million nationwide for the grant in June 2021, with a maximum award of \$3 million.

“The far-reaching effects of COVID-19 on our labor market demand a continued, intense focus on solutions to help job seekers and employers in Wisconsin,” said DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek. “These funds will support significant technological updates that will allow us to better connect with those we serve, regardless of where they’re located in the state.”

Upgrades to the IT systems will allow for better case management and improved access to an array of services from partner agencies, including the Wisconsin Departments of Health Services; Children and Families; Corrections; workforce development boards; and other regional and local workforce partners. The improved case management by both state and local partners is expected to help historically disadvantaged populations including people of color, migrant workers, people with disabilities, veterans, low-income individuals, and those who have been

unemployed for an extended period.

The projects are expected to be implemented by late 2023. The work represents another major component of DWD's comprehensive effort to improve service for customers – employers, job seekers, current employees and those experiencing disruption in their employment. In recent months, DWD also has introduced improvements to its virtual Job Center of Wisconsin, added a chatbot feature to help job seekers and employers connect, entered into a partnership with Google Cloud to expedite processing of unemployment insurance claims; and contracted with Flexion to overhaul its legacy Unemployment Insurance processing system.