

# Gov. Evers: Announces nearly \$60 million in projects aimed at developing long-term solutions to state's workforce challenges

Posted on Tuesday, Dec 14, 2021

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Contact: [GovPress@wisconsin.gov](mailto:GovPress@wisconsin.gov)

*12 regional projects through Workforce Innovation Grants will help bolster Wisconsin workforce in counties across the state*

EAU CLAIRE — Gov. Tony Evers today, together with Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes and Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek, announced 12 regional projects aimed at developing long-term solutions to Wisconsin's workforce challenges. Gov. Evers directed \$100 million to invest in the Workforce Innovation Grant program [announced earlier this year](#). The projects announced today will receive up to \$59.5 million in grants through the first round of the Workforce Innovation Grant Program.

Among the projects funded in the first round of grants are public-private partnerships to train and attract healthcare workers throughout rural Wisconsin; develop next-generation advanced manufacturing employees in west-central and southeast Wisconsin; expand affordable, high-quality childcare in Door County, Green County, and south-central Wisconsin; create pipelines of young, educated workers in Milwaukee; train construction and skilled craft workers throughout the state; foster a culture of entrepreneurship in Kenosha; and enable incarcerated individuals to earn undergraduate degrees from the University of Wisconsin.

“Wisconsin has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country and we have high labor participation, but our state faces long-standing workforce challenges that existed for years before the pandemic,” said Gov. Evers. “There is no one-size-fits-all solution to addressing the workforce challenges across our state, so these funds are critically important to encourage regions and communities to develop cutting-edge, long-term solutions to the unique workforce challenges they face. These investments will make a big difference for our workers, families, and communities and the long-term success of our state.”

The grant program is funded by \$100 million directed by Gov. Evers using resources available through the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). A second round of grants will be awarded in 2022.

“We asked business, education, and local leaders to think big and share how they would best meet their communities’ workforce needs, not just now but with an eye to the future,” said WEDC Secretary and CEO Hughes. “These regional workforce projects represent the kind of creative, practical thinking that has always made Wisconsin a leader in finding answers to some of our nation’s biggest challenges.”

“We have heard from employers around the state that, while we are facing statewide workforce challenges, individual employers and communities also have unique issues that require tailored solutions,” said DWD Secretary-designee Pechacek. “These grants offer communities and employers the flexibility to respond to specific local workforce needs and implement solutions that will work for them.”

Gov. Evers, Secretary and CEO Hughes, and Secretary-designee Pechacek announced the grants this morning in Eau Claire where they highlighted two regional projects. The first, led by the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in collaboration with the Mayo Clinic, will increase the availability of healthcare and social workers in rural communities. The second, led by Chippewa Valley Technical College, will provide training and job placement support to metal fabricators and advanced manufacturing workers, the top priority identified by business leaders in the 21-county region.

The 12 regional projects that will receive up to \$59.5 million in grants through the Workforce Innovation Grant Program include:

**Chippewa Valley Technical College | up to ~\$10 Million**

Serving Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau CLaire, Jackson, Pepin, Pierce, St. Croix,

Taylor, and Trempealeau counties, Chippewa Valley Technical College proposed using these funds for the Restoring Employment through Support, Training, Outreach, Recruitment, and Education (RESTORE) project. This project will use a multi-pronged approach to address the need for skilled workers in metal fabrication across the manufacturing sector through outreach, short-term training with integrated educational pathways, and contextualized and work-based learning opportunities. The project model includes multi-purpose training centers and mobile labs, strategically integrated in rural regions, to be utilized by high schools and employers

### **University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire | up to ~\$9.4 Million**

Serving 16 counties across the state, the proposal provided by the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire provides a comprehensive, multi-pillared approach to alleviate workforce shortages in key areas of healthcare, education, and social services while improving the health and wellbeing of families and individuals in rural regions of Wisconsin. Partnering with local school districts and social services organizations, the University will work to place education and social work students in rural settings to encourage them to stay and build their careers. The program will also partner with Mayo Clinic Health System-Northwest WI to create innovative curriculum and clinical experiences to graduate more nurses. Additionally, this proposal includes building a foundation for long-term talent development in high demand, family sustaining careers by creating new degree programs in growing healthcare fields, including public health, healthcare management, and psychiatry. This proposal also looks to partner with Mayo to pilot a new innovative care-coach model and rural healthcare hubs to bring better care and upskilled career possibilities to rural communities. Finally, in partnership with Mayo, WiSys, and the University's Small Business Development Center, the plan will provide main street business owners will skills to innovate, adapt to challenges, and grow.

### **Mid-State Technical College | up to ~\$9 Million**

Serving Wood, Portage, Adams, Waushara, Juneau, Jackson, Clark, and Marathon counties, Mid-State Technical College, Centergy, and their partners have proposed using the funds to build a regional collaboration around workforce challenges in the central region of Wisconsin to target 2,500 unemployed, underemployed, underserved communities, and youth with skill training and barrier-removing support services. This includes the construction of the Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering Technology, and Apprenticeship Center in the region.

### **University of Wisconsin Administration | up to ~\$5.7 Million**

Serving counties across the state through the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, the University of Wisconsin Prison Education Initiative (PEI) will deliver workforce-ready curriculum to teach employable skills to students while incarcerated and continue supporting them post-release through program completion and career placement. Piloting the program will engage six regions of the state with programs through UW-Oshkosh, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Parkside, UW-Green Bay, and UW-Madison, along with Extended Campus.

### **Gateway Technical College | up to ~\$5.6 Million**

Serving Kenosha, Racine, and Walworth counties, Gateway Technical College was awarded these funds for the Southeast Wisconsin's Talent Optimization Project (SWTOP) to address the biggest regional workforce challenges, including the urgent need for educated workers in high-demand fields and the large number of adults who cannot address that need due to lacking high school credentials. This project will offer a 4-week pre-HSED (High School Equivalency Diploma) program, followed by a 16-week Work Ready (WR) HSED program. Courses will be offered in-person and online, onsite classes will be centrally located and offered both during the day and in the evening, transportation and childcare services will be sourced as needed, and individual case management will provide support services and guidance to keep students on track.

### **City of Kenosha | up to ~\$990,000**

Serving Kenosha County, the city of Kenosha proposed using these funds to partner with Gener8tor to bring an entrepreneurship skilling program to the city, specifically to work with startup founders of color and women founders in Kenosha. The programing, known as gBETA, will provide coaching, mentorship, and networking needed to develop the workforce of entrepreneurs in the city to build strong, sustainable companies, and therefore, create strong, sustainable jobs.

### **Green County Family YMCA | up to ~\$3.7 Million**

Serving Green County, Green County Family YMCA will use these funds to facilitate the addition of a 5,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art daycare and preschool wing for licensed programs and classes, as well as an addition of a 6,000 sq. ft. Youth Development Wing. Through a partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters, Vitality Youth Services, Jacob's Swag, Avenue's Counseling, and the Multicultural Outreach program this investment will help Green County Family YMCA meet the diverse needs of area youth.

### **United Way of Door County | up to ~\$3.5 Million**

Serving Door County, United Way of Door County were awarded funds to make changes to existing childcare facilities in the county. Following the work of United Way of Door County's community childcare task force, two local nonprofit licensed group childcare centers are revising their business models. These new business models require changes to the childcare facilities and United Way of Door County was awarded these funds to make those changes to the existing space, as well as construct a new space.

### **Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee, Inc. | up to ~\$3.3 Million**

Serving Milwaukee and Waukesha counties, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee and its partner agencies and employers plan to use these funds for the Ready Center Collective (RCC) to launch a new approach to teen workforce training, credentialing, and employment engagement. In partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools, Employ Milwaukee, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Herzing University, and more than a dozen large scale employers serving Milwaukee, the RCC is an alliance of workforce partners intent on increasing the rate in which Milwaukee's teens are positively engage in the area's workforce. The training building will include seven classroom training spaces and the programmatic approach is multi-tiered, providing teens the opportunity to sample career pathways, immerse themselves in occupational skills training experiences, and engage in internships and apprenticeships.

### **Operation Fresh Start | up to ~\$3.3 Million**

Serving Dane County, Operation Fresh Start proposes using these funds for an innovative program design to solve trades employment workforce issues in the south-central region of Wisconsin, known as Build Academy. Build Academy is an innovative industry-informed collaborative job training and education program designed to prepare the next generation of construction and conservation workers for successful careers, providing real life on-site work experience with classroom and training lab education.

### **Madison Area Technical College (MATC) | up to ~\$2.9 Million**

Serving Adams, Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Juneau, Marquette, Richland, Rock, and Sauk counties, Madison Area Technical College proposed using funds to address two significant pandemic-related workforce issues in South Central Wisconsin, including childcare and training and upskilling for in-demand jobs. MATC plans to bolster the pipeline of high-quality childcare professions by leveraging partnerships to provide more care, support childcare facilities in improving quality ratings and accessing financial resources, and support working families with

dedicated navigational support at MATC. Additionally, MATC plans to develop new avenues to accessing in-demand skills training in advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology through collaborative community partnerships.

### **Sauk Prairie School District | up to ~\$2.4 Million**

Serving Columbia, Dane, and Sauk counties, the Sauk Prairie School District plans to use these funds to provide an innovative solution to address the workforce needs of the region's advanced manufacturers, agricultural science employers, and healthcare providers. Currently, needs are not being met due to outdated training spaces and equipment, creating a skills gap in the area. This project will lead to sustainable training for apprentices, current students, and current employees by bringing employers into the school building and students into the region's employers.