

Gov. Evers: DWD announce \$20 million in Workforce Advancement Initiative Grants to 11 regions in Wisconsin

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today, together with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), announced \$20 million in grant awards to 11 regions in Wisconsin to help more than 2,300 Wisconsinites as part of the much-anticipated [Worker Advancement Initiative](#). The initiative, announced [earlier this year](#) and funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), will serve Wisconsinites whose previous employment has not come back since the pandemic, as well as those who were not attached to or were not successful in the labor market prior to the pandemic, by offering subsidized employment and skills training opportunities with local employers.

“We’re working hard to make sure Wisconsin rebounds and recovers from the pandemic, but we know part of that work is ensuring workers, families, and communities are bouncing back with us,” said Gov. Evers. “Whether through job training or providing quality childcare, affordable housing, or accessible transportation, our workforce innovation funds will support folks working to overcome challenges specific to their community and their family and help get workers back in the workforce so we can ensure our state’s economic recovery.”

DWD will administer the program through the [local workforce development boards](#) in partnership with community-based organizations to provide subsidized employment and skills training opportunities to participants, including a focus on those who will be co-enrolled in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs.

“We are very excited to be working closely with the local workforce development boards that serve every region of Wisconsin,” DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek said. “This \$20 million investment will allow us to effectuate change at a local level that will help people most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Clients served will benefit from a continuum of services, including: paid work experience opportunities to develop and/or enhance job skills (wage subsidies); hard and soft-skill training so participants can acquire occupational skills connected to in-demand jobs along with critical work-based skills needed to succeed; on-the-job training opportunities that will lead to economic self-sufficiency; and supportive services to address related barriers to employment, which may include assistance for childcare, housing, transportation, and worker stipends.

DWD received a proposal submission for the Worker Advancement Initiative grants from each of the 11 boards. Below is a summary of each grant award, which will be conducted during a two-year grant cycle.

Southeastern Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (SE WI WDB) - Racine, Kenosha, and Walworth counties: DWD awarded \$487,464 in grant funding to serve 150 participants.

SE WI WDB will provide Computer Numeric Controlled (CNC) machinist training in small cohorts through Gateway Technical College’s iMet Center. Participation in these training programs will be subsidized with a stipend, paid hourly for each hour of participation. Multiple employers have provided Letters of Support indicating their intent to be involved with the training cohorts and extend subsidized or unsubsidized offers of employment to program graduates.

Employ Milwaukee, Inc. (EMI) - Milwaukee County: DWD awarded \$5,255,005 in grant funding to serve 500 participants.

EMI is launching *Skillful Transitions Program*, which will provide individualized assessment of skills, experience, and job readiness. The program will be coupled with CareerWork\$ job readiness training and paid work experience (transitional jobs/on-the-job training). The Skillful Transitions Program will conduct targeted, specialized outreach to justice-involved individuals, veterans, homeless individuals, individuals with limited English language proficiency, individuals with disabilities, LGBTQ individuals, human trafficking survivors, and other traditionally underserved populations through partnerships with various state, county, and local government agencies, community-based organizations, and faith-based

institutions.

EMI will also leverage existing ties with the business community to establish work site host locations in the targeted industries of Construction, Hospitality, Healthcare, Financial Services, Manufacturing, Information Technology, and Transportation/Logistics. In addition to traditional supportive services (childcare assistance, transportation assistance, exam fees, work-related equipment, and worker stipends), EMI will partner with existing not-for-profit organizations to provide access to technology and connectivity.

Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Workforce Development Board (WOW WDB)- DWD awarded \$1,188,512 in grant funding to serve 120 participants.

WOW WDB will offer traditional career services and supportive services in conjunction with incentivized paid work experiences or on-the-job training programs. They will expand eligibility by serving individuals ages 17 and older who have no work history or have a demonstrated pattern of limited or poor work history with no additional eligibility criteria or income limitations.

Fox Valley Workforce Development Board(FVWDB) - Waupaca, Outagamie, Waushara, Winnebago, Calumet, Green Lake, and Fond Du Lac counties: DWD awarded \$1,085,001 in grant funding to serve 100 participants.

FVWDB will launch The Dream Academy, which will serve anyone who is out of work or working reduced hours due to COVID. This will include laid off individuals, as well as those who quit jobs due to dependent care or health concerns during the pandemic, or who have been unable to return to the traditional workforce due to long-haul COVID effects. A significant focus will be on mental health challenges related to the pandemic and will include an investment in mental health counseling. FVWDB will increase diversity by focusing on underserved racial/ethnic groups, the LGBTQ population, justice-involved individuals, non-custodial parents, and individuals with disabilities. Individuals in The Dream Academy will receive an interest assessment, a series of sessions with a trained counselor to help identify barriers to employment, opportunities to interview local employers, a one-month Workplace Essentials soft skills training aligned with targeted industries (manufacturing, IT, logistics, etc.), transitional job placement, and post-job follow-up activities.

Bay Area Workforce Development Board (BAWDB) - Florence, Marinette, Oconto,

Menominee, Shawano, Brown, Kewaunee, Door, Manitowoc, and Sheboygan counties: DWD awarded \$1,613,436 in grant funding to serve 160 participants.

BAWDB will connect grant participants with employment opportunities in locally identified driver industries. Targeted grant participants will include underrepresented racial/ethnic populations, justice-involved individuals, and long-term unemployed. BAWDB will use grant funds to hire a Worker Advancement/Community Engagement and Program Coordinator to conduct outreach and coordinate referrals for the grant. Participants will receive employment/job placement services through a local staffing agency to provide work experience and will also have access to training opportunities in high-demand skills/occupations, including digital literacy education.

North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (NCWWDB) - Vilas, Oneida, Forest, Lincoln, Langlade, Marathon, Wood, and Portage counties: DWD awarded \$999,900 in grant funding to serve 100 participants.

NCWWDB will conduct five short-term training projects in healthcare, childcare, tourism, welding, and construction/renewable energy. These will be offered in conjunction with the local technical colleges. The focus will be on engaging unemployed individuals and underemployed workers. Targeted populations will include unemployed/underemployed, re-entry populations, individuals in AODA treatment, and individuals with disabilities. NCWWDB will also leverage its existing industry partnerships to identify work-based training opportunities.

Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board (NWWIB) - Douglas, Bayfield, Ashland, Iron, Burnett, Washburn, Sawyer, Price, Rusk, and Taylor counties: DWD awarded \$2,260,437 in grant funding to serve 225 participants.

NWWIB's proposal will target justice-involved individuals, non-custodial parents, long-term unemployed individuals, tribal members, individuals with disabilities, individuals with no work history or gaps in employment, new entrants into the workforce ages 17 and older, individuals at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, and referred victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Participants will receive the 28-hour Move to Manufacturing curriculum, as well as wraparound services provided through a local staffing agency.

West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (WCWWDB) - Polk, Barron, Chippewa, Clark, St. Croix, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pierce, and Pepin counties: DWD awarded

\$2,000,000 in grant funding to serve 369 participants.

WCWWDB will provide on-the-job training with higher wage subsidies than currently offered by previous programs, as well as the academy style trainings, Manufacturing Works and Healthcare Works. Targeted participants will include justice-involved individuals, non-custodial parents, long-term unemployed, tribal members, individuals with disabilities, retired individuals, and individuals unable to enter/reenter the workforce due to limited childcare options. The focus will be on jobs leading to economic self-sufficiency and sustainable wages.

Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (WWWDB) – Buffalo, Trempealeau, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Juneau, Vernon, and Crawford counties: DWD awarded \$1,500,000 in grant funding to serve 150 participants.

WWWDB will use grant funds to provide paid work experience opportunities, hard and soft skills training in in-demand jobs, on-the-job training opportunities, and enhanced supportive services, including childcare, housing, transportation, and worker stipends. Targeted populations will include justice-involved individuals, tribal members, individuals with disabilities, and unemployed/underemployed. Targeted industries include transportation, manufacturing, healthcare, construction, and IT.

Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin (WDBSCW) – Marquette, Sauk, Columbia, Dodge, Dane, Jefferson counties: DWD awarded \$2,000,000 in grant funding to serve 200 participants.

WDBSCW will use grant funds to augment ongoing Career Pathways work by bridging young adults to careers through subsidized employment, subsidizing wages for pre-apprentice work crews, subsidizing wages for re-entry populations engaged in work-release programs, augmenting traditional on-the-job training engagements with technical skills training, and integrating compensated digital literacy work-and-learn interface in those strategies. Targeted populations will include veterans, low-income individuals, individuals with disabilities, justice-involved individuals, dislocated workers, older workers ages 55+, homeless individuals, youth in or aged out of foster care, English language learners, individuals who are basic skills deficient, individuals facing substantial cultural barriers, single parents and single pregnant women, racial/ethnic minorities, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, long-term unemployed, individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime TANF eligibility, and displaced homemakers. Targeted industries for training and employment include construction, health and social

assistance, manufacturing, IT, and tourism.

Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (SWWDB) - Grant, Richland, Iowa, Lafayette, Green, and Rock counties: DWD awarded \$1,610,242 in grant funding to serve 296 participants.

SWWDB's proposal includes several projects including Essential (Child) Care, Accelerated Industrial Maintenance, Power Skills: Transferable-Employability Program, Truck Driver Short-Term Training, and Construction Up.

Essential (Child) Care will fund tuition and subsidized or unsubsidized job placement for 20 participants entering childcare/early childhood education training programs.

Accelerated Industrial Maintenance will provide academy-style training in Industrial Maintenance resulting in an embedded technical diploma through Blackhawk Technical College. Employer commitments to hire in subsidized or unsubsidized positions after graduation.

Power Skills: Transferable-Employability Program provides soft skills training in communication, teamwork, adaptability, and leadership. This will be offered in conjunction with other occupational-based programming through WAI grants and partner programs.

Truck Driver Short-Term Training will provide 170-hour short-term CDL Class A or B training. Employer commitments to hire in subsidized or unsubsidized positions after graduation.

Construction Up will offset costs of apprenticeship training up to \$5000 and will also provide a participation stipend of \$1000 after 1000 hours of training.