

Dept. of Safety and Professional Services: Secretary-designee Dan Hereth announces opening of round two of youth fire fighter training grants

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The grants of up to \$25,000 are designed to help fire departments and their technical college and high school partners develop or expand recruitment programs geared toward juniors and seniors.

Madison, Wis. – Department of Safety and Professional Services Secretary-Dan Hereth announced the opening date for the second phase of the agency grant program that provides funding for youth fire fighter training programs. The grants of up to \$25,000 are designed to help fire departments, technical college partners and school districts develop or expand training programs for high school juniors or seniors. The application window is open between September 9 and October 7, 2022. The department will also host a virtual Q&A forum at 9 a.m. on September 13 to answer questions about the program.

The fire service is a key stakeholder group for DSPS. The department currently [regulates fire fighter health and safety](#) and manages the state fire prevention program. It also administers the 2% dues program, which distributes funds collected from insurers and matched by the state back to qualifying fire departments.

Secretary-designee Hereth says recruitment and retention are key issues for nearly all fire departments but particularly the all-volunteer stations in many rural

communities. This grant program, he says, can provide direct support to some departments and will generate ideas and best practices that other communities can model. It also helps draw attention to a critical community safety need.

“Fire departments are invaluable community safety partners,” Hereth said. “In addition to responding to calls, they provide invaluable fire prevention education to schools and community groups. They also collaborate extensively with organizations working to support living in place for older adults, and they provide critical demographic housing information and response support during weather emergencies and natural disasters like floods, tornados, and wildfires. There is no question: An investment in a fire department is a direct investment in community safety.”

The DSPS grant program has already awarded nearly \$50,000 in total to programs at Western Technical College, Oconto Fire and Rescue, and Winneconne High School. Soon after the department awarded its \$22,593 grant to WTC, the Wisconsin Technical College System followed up with an additional [\\$194,792 to expand the program](#) throughout the region.

“That is a perfect example of what we hoped our grant program would do,” Hereth said. “While we cannot fund every need at every department, our efforts to provide seed money and raise awareness about challenges facing the fire service can lead to support from other partners. This is a great outcome.”

Roger Stanford, WTC president, says the DSPS grant helped accelerate the program that quickly got traction in the community. “Attracting and maintaining those in public safety careers continues to be a growing challenge, particularly in rural areas,” Stanford said. “The DSPS grant allowed Western to identify a need in our district, develop a plan to get students involved in the program in high school, and put them on a path to a public safety career. Putting this all together requires additional funding, and we are so grateful for the financial support from DSPS.”

Applications and grant information about the [grant program](#) are available on the DSPS website. Anyone interested in attending the Q&A forum can register [HERE](#).

Programs funded during the first phase are ineligible for funding in the second phase.

About DSPS: The Department of Safety and Professional Services issues more than

240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, runs the state fire prevention program, and maintains the award-winning Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to stem excessive opioid prescribing. A fee-based agency, the Department of Safety and Professional Services is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With five offices and 250 employees throughout Wisconsin, DSPS collaborates with constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.