

Dept. of Workforce Development: Announces \$2 million in Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training grants

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MADISON – From solar power to shipbuilding to senior living, employers across Wisconsin will use nearly \$2 million in Wisconsin Fast Forward grants from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development to support worker training programs that will lead to higher wages.

The worker training grants will help support 10 employers and serve up to 759 trainees across four high-demand sectors. Many of the WFF-contracted grant projects are made possible through partnerships with community organizations, local employers, and industry associations.

“These collaborative training projects are working to meet Wisconsin’s workforce needs in a time when the number of people employed is at a record high and our state’s labor force continues to expand under Governor Evers’ leadership and vision,” DWD Secretary-designee Pechacek said. “Wisconsin’s unprecedented economic recovery has been accompanied by a nationwide labor market quantity challenge driven by demographic trends that have been building for decades. In response, investments like Wisconsin Fast Forward grants are proven strategies to grow the state’s talent pipeline and connect unemployed and other workers with in-demand skills that are needed for family-supporting jobs.”

The WFF standard grant program awards funds to Wisconsin businesses to reimburse costs associated with occupational training. The grants cover training costs for those who are unemployed or underemployed, as well as for incumbent workers. Participants who successfully complete the training program will gain opportunities for employment, higher-level employment, or increased wages.

As the number of people employed in Wisconsin reaches [a record-breaking high](#), employers are investing in training to recruit and retain skilled employees. In the 2022 fiscal year, DWD's Office of Skills Development awarded and administered more than \$4.8 million in WFF grants for an estimated 2,905 trainees.

WFF grants range from \$5,000 to \$400,000. Awards require a 50% cash or in-kind employer match. The grant program is open to all industry sectors. The training must provide transferrable skills. Individuals eligible for training are current employees, underemployed workers, and the unemployed.

To receive funding, employers must meet these minimum requirements:

- 85 percent of the participants must complete training.
- 65 percent must gain employment (the unemployed, hired; the employed, promoted).
- 75 percent of current worker trainees receive pay raises.

The nearly \$2 million in newly contracted WFF awards include:

Construction: \$18,134 to Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA) in Portage County. The MREA will form a consortium of Wisconsin solar companies to provide solar training to one unemployed trainee and 21 incumbent workers. The project will provide training in solar energy and storage skills, which are fast-growing areas of the solar industry. Trainees will receive wage increases between 72 cents and \$1 per hour after training.

Health care: \$146,824 to Ascension Living-Lakeshore at Siena in Racine County. The company is partnering with Herzing University to provide classroom training to 20 incumbent workers in the Medication Aide program. They also are partnering with the Wisconsin Health Care Association to assist with recruitment and grant management. The training has goals to retain and upskill Certified Nurse Aides (CNAs) within Wisconsin nursing homes. Trainees will receive 12 college credits from Herzing upon successful completion of training and will be eligible to sit for the Medication Aide Certification Exam. Following the training, current workers will receive pay increases of \$2 per hour.

Health care: \$172,940 to Bell Ambulance Inc. in Milwaukee County. The company is partnering with Lake County Fire and Rescue to provide Emergency Medical Technician training. The training consists of 180 hours of classroom instruction

provided to 100 unemployed individuals and 16 incumbent workers. Trainees will be eligible to sit for the National Emergency Medical Technician exam upon successful completion of training. Following the training, current workers will receive pay increases of \$3 per hour.

Manufacturing: \$289,610 to Arla Foods Dairy in Brown County. The company will partner with the Fox Valley Technical College, Alpma Portion Cutting Equipment, PFM-Wrapping Equipment, Beritech Solutions, and GROBA-Precutting Equipment to provide training to 27 unemployed trainees and 152 incumbent workers. Training will focus on recently upgraded equipment, production expansion, and the implementation of new equipment and operations. Following the training, current workers will receive pay increases ranging from \$1 to \$5.70 per hour.

Manufacturing: \$199,890 to PendaForm in Columbia County. The company is partnering with Madison Area Technical College (MATC) and Latino Academy to provide classroom and on-the-job training (OJT) to 20 incumbent workers. Twenty trainees will participate in MATC's "Train the Trainer" course. Sixteen trainees will continue with additional classroom and OJT to become machine operators. PendaForm and MATC will develop curriculum specifically for English as Second Language (ESL) workers and Latino Academy will provide instructional assistance during OJT. Following the training, current workers will receive pay increases of approximately \$3 per hour.

Manufacturing: \$267,695 to Fincantieri Marine Group LLC in Marinette County. The company is partnering with Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, Marine Chemist Service and Swagelok to train 170 unemployed trainees. Training will focus on shipbuilding welding, steel fitting and Swagelok installation training. Following the training, workers will receive wage increases up to \$2 per hour.

Manufacturing: \$314,770 to Sartori Company in Sheboygan County. The company will provide training to 100 unemployed trainees. Training will focus on the cheese manufacturing process, quality training and safety training. Following the training, workers will receive a pay increase of 50 cents per hour.

Manufacturing: \$65,387 to Colbert Flexographic Packaging in Kenosha County. The company will provide training to 15 unemployed trainees and 35 incumbent worker trainees. Training will focus on advanced Monet system training, color theory - statistical process control, die cutting operation, FIRST press operation and foil application. Training will place trainees in skilled positions for facility

manufacturing pharmaceutical packaging. Following the training, current workers will receive pay increases ranging from \$1 to \$5 per hour.

Manufacturing: \$115,679 to TriEnda in Columbia County. The company is partnering with Madison Area Technical College (MATC) and Latino Academy to provide classroom and on-the-job training (OJT) to 10 incumbent workers. Ten trainees will take MATC's "Train the Trainer" course. Eight trainees will continue with additional classroom and OJT to become machine operators. TriEnda and MATC will develop curriculum specifically for English as Second Language (ESL) workers and Latino Academy will provide instructional assistance during OJT. Following the training, current workers will receive pay increases of approximately \$3 per hour.

Transportation: \$393,505 to Veriha Trucking Inc. in Marinette County. The company will provide 320 hours of training to 72 unemployed trainees to work as truck drivers. Training is modified to meet new Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) requirements implemented as of February 7, 2022, and will include training on the range, driving simulator and local in-cab driving. Following the training, workers will receive wage increases of up to \$8 per hour.