

Dept. of Workforce Development: Announces \$700,000 in Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training grants

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MADISON – Department of Workforce Development Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek today announced nearly \$700,000 in Wisconsin Fast Forward grants to fund employer-led, customized worker training benefiting employers, workers and communities throughout the state.

“These awards will benefit seven employers as well as an estimated 383 individuals, either current job holders or job seekers who will receive training they need to succeed,” Pechacek said. “This is the latest in a series of strategic investments Governor Evers is making to sustain Wisconsin’s robust economic recovery and strengthen Wisconsin’s workforce for decades to come.”

The funding includes an information technology sector grant of \$398,840, awarded to the MKE Tech Hub Coalition. Formed in 2019 to inclusively double the region’s tech talent, the Milwaukee-based, nonprofit organization today works collaboratively with more than 120 organizations in that effort.

MKE Tech Hub will work with partner Max Technical Training to provide training to 50 unemployed trainees. Training courses will focus on cybersecurity and IT Service Desk training and 24 trainees will be placed with TekSystems.

“On behalf of our members, we are thankful for the generosity and support from the Department of Workforce Development,” said Laura Schmidt, the coalition’s chief talent development officer. “This grant directly supports employers across southeastern Wisconsin interested in expanding available pathways into tech careers. Subsidizing the cost of related instruction that can be customized and

delivered prior to apprentices starting on-the-job training is one of many strategies needed to effectively scale registered tech apprenticeship faster than otherwise possible.”

Earlier this year, DWD announced nearly \$2.2 million in awards through 19 contracted grants serving 43 businesses and nearly 1,500 individuals with customized training projects. The projects are all collective efforts involving the department’s regional and local partners in workforce development, such as technical colleges and community-based organizations.

In the months ahead, DWD will be awarding more grants. The Division of Employment and Training is currently reviewing grant applications recently submitted for \$3.1 million in funding available for more customized worker training projects.

Wisconsin Fast Forward 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.

The program sets the following thresholds to receive funding. At a minimum:

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

In addition to the MKE Tech Hub award, the nearly \$700,000 in contracted awards just announced are:

- **Manufacturing** – \$128,000 to MacDonald & Owen Lumber Co., in Luck, Polk County. The company will partner with corporate training firm ManageAssist to provide new skills to 148 current worker trainees. Training will focus on advanced and team-based problem solving, leadership skills, resources planning, succession planning, and teamwork for results. Following the training, the current workers will receive pay increases ranging from 63 cents to \$1.97 per hour.
- **Manufacturing** – \$54,000 to MetalTek International, Watertown location, Jefferson County, to partner with corporate training firm ManageAssist in

providing new skills to 74 current worker trainees. The training will include fundamentals of blueprint reading, workplace organization, supervision, identifying and eliminating waste, and implementing a continuous improvement program. Following the training, the current workers will receive pay increases of 75 cents per hour.

- **Manufacturing** - \$20,420 to Visions Upholstery & Canvas, LLC, Green Bay, Brown County, to train six individuals, two current worker trainees and four unemployed individuals, in using the latest equipment to produce a new product meeting quality standards. Following the training, the current workers will receive pay increases of \$1 per hour.
- **Healthcare** - \$40,370 to Luther Manor, A Life Plan Community, Wauwatosa, Milwaukee County. Luther Manor will partner with MRA in Waukesha to provide training to 76 current worker trainees, focusing on mentor success skills with workshops to promote job growth and stability. Following the training, the current workers will receive pay increases of \$1 per hour.
- **Healthcare** - \$31,730.00 to NEW Dermatology Group, Green Bay, Brown County, to partner with Harford Community College in training four individuals, including three current worker trainees and one unemployed trainee, with a goal of achieving histotechnology certification and advancing their careers. Following the training, the current workers will receive pay increases of \$5 per hour.
- **Construction** - \$25,575 grant to Stratford Homes, Stratford, Marathon County, to provide 20 unemployed trainees and five incumbent workers with production skills such as roofing, rough plumbing, electrical wiring, drywall hanging and cabinet installation. Following the training, the current workers will receive pay increases of \$2 per hour.