

Dept. of Workforce Development webinar: 'Forward Wisconsin: Women at Work'

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MADISON – Women play a vital role in Wisconsin's economy, participating in the labor force at a rate greater than the national average and making critical contributions across all industries and occupations.

On March 8, International Women's Day, secretaries from the Wisconsin Departments of Workforce Development, Administration, Children and Families, and Safety and Professional Services and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation will host a webinar to highlight women's progress and resources to advance all workers in a thriving Wisconsin economy.

The free webinar, Forward Wisconsin: Women at Work, will run from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. on March 8. Register for the [Forward Wisconsin: Women at Work](#) event.

"Wisconsin's strong economic recovery offers reason to celebrate," said DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek. "To continue our progress, it is essential that we connect existing and new workers with training and resources that allow them to achieve their full employment potential. We know from the U.S. Census Bureau Pulse Survey that during the last four weeks alone, more than 36,000 Wisconsin women cut their hours and more than 5,500 quit their jobs due to lack of childcare. Meanwhile, more than 16,000 men also reported trying to both work at home and care for children. As we move forward from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical to address these and other barriers to build and strengthen our workforce."

Beyond the job search, training, partnership investments and other workforce resources available from DWD, Tuesday's webinar will explore tools, financing and professional support from DOA, WEDC, DCF, and DSPS targeted to women- and minority-owned businesses as well all employers and job seekers. In recognition of March as Women's History Month, labor market data exploring progress in closing the wage gap and other statistics also will be shared.

“Whether running their own businesses, or supporting their communities, women are pivotal to the success of our workforce and economy,” said DOA Secretary-designee Kathy Blumenfeld. “I’m thrilled to join my colleagues to celebrate and showcase the power and potential of women in the Wisconsin workforce.”

Missy Hughes, secretary and CEO of WEDC, said state efforts to support small businesses and encourage entrepreneurship are bearing fruit, with more opportunities ahead.

“One of the lessons we’ve learned from the past two years is that our state must address the gaps in our economy so every Wisconsinite can achieve their full potential,” said Hughes. “To ensure that happens, our state has been investing in communities, supporting small businesses, and providing workers and employers with the resources they need to move forward. We’re already seeing results with more women starting businesses, but there’s still room to grow.”

DSPS Secretary Dawn Crim noted that women are successfully closing gaps in some fields, while progress remains uneven in other sectors.

“There are areas of the workforce where women are still vastly underrepresented, particularly construction and the trades,” Crim said. “The good news is that the pay gap in the construction industry is incredibly small. Women earn 99 percent of what men do. The challenge is that the gender and diversity gaps, are profound. Women account for only 10% of the construction workforce, and more than 88% of the construction workforce identifies as white. The construction industry includes many stable occupations with family-sustaining wages, and we clearly have work to do to bring more women and women of color to these career paths.”

Gov. Tony Evers’ Administration has prioritized efforts to advance Wisconsin’s workforce with a historic \$130 million commitment to the [Workforce Solutions Initiative](#). At the same time, the administration’s plan to leverage the state’s highest-ever general fund balance by [investing a portion of the surplus](#) in childcare, education, and caregiving would address a variety of workforce barriers. The plan includes a proposed expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Credit and additional support for after-school and summer programs.