

Gov. Evers: Announces \$19.5 million to support long-term solutions to state's workforce challenges in 22 counties through Workforce Innovation Grant program

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STEVENS POINT — Gov. Tony Evers today is announcing up to \$19.5 million in grants through the Workforce Innovation Grant Program will be awarded to Lakeshore Technical College, the Wisconsin Forestry Center at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and Northwood Technical College for projects that support long-term solutions to Wisconsin's workforce challenges and promote workforce development across 22 counties in Wisconsin's Northwestern, Northern, Northeastern, and Eastern regions. The projects are the first to be announced as a part of the second round of Workforce Innovation Grants.

"We're working to build the workforce of tomorrow and address our state's long-standing workforce challenges by investing in retaining and recruiting our talented workers, making sure our kids have skills and apprenticeship opportunities, and reducing barriers to Wisconsinites who want to join our workforce," said Gov. Evers. "Our Workforce Innovation Grant program was designed to do just that, helping folks tackle the regional challenges that affect their communities, connecting workers with available jobs, and making sure we have an innovative, high-skilled workforce that is able to support the future of Wisconsin's critical industries."

The first round of Workforce Innovation Grants were announced in [December 2021](#) when the governor announced 12 regional projects would receive up to \$59.5 million in grants. [Last summer](#), Gov. Evers announced a groundbreaking \$130 million investment in workforce solutions across the state. Today's announcement brings that total

investment to more than \$158.5 million, including:

- More than \$128 million for the Workforce Innovation Grant Program to encourage regions and communities to develop leading-edge, long-term solutions to the workforce challenges the state faces in the wake of COVID-19;
- \$20 million toward the [Worker Advancement Initiative](#), which offers subsidized employment and skills training opportunities with local employers to unemployed individuals; and
- \$10 million for a [Worker Connection Program](#), which provides workforce career coaches who will connect with individuals attempting to reengage in the workforce post-pandemic.

“The Workforce Innovation Grants we’re announcing today will provide additional training resources to Wisconsin’s manufacturing and forest product industries, both of which are so vital to a vibrant state economy,” said Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes. “By targeting both workers who need help getting back into the job market or developing their skills and young people just starting their careers, we’re building a workforce that will meet our immediate and long-term needs.”

While Wisconsin continues to see workforce shortages that existed long before the pandemic began, last week, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) [released](#) the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) preliminary employment data for the month of May, which not only showed Wisconsin’s unemployment rate continues to remain below the national average at 2.9 percent but also a historic high of 3,059,300 Wisconsinites employed.

“Wisconsin’s unprecedented economic recovery has brought us record-high employment and six months of growth in our labor force as new people enter the job market and more people return,” said DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek. “Today’s investments in workforce development support innovative solutions that will accelerate employers’ ability to connect with homegrown talent while helping job seekers make a quick transition into careers with family-supporting wages.”

Recipients of the second round of the Workforce Innovation Grant Program will be announced on a rolling basis and a full list of grant awardees will be released in the coming days. The three projects the governor announced today will receive a total of up to \$19.5 million in grants through the second round of the Workforce Innovation Grant Program, and include:

Lakeshore Technical College | up to ~1.7 Million

Serving Sheboygan, Ozaukee, Manitowoc, and Calumet counties, Lakeshore Technical College proposes using these funds to launch the Lakeshore Industry 4.0 Pathways and Upskilling Project, which will utilize a mobile career pathways model to provide upskilling training in the community to help meet underserved populations where they are and reduce barriers to employment.

The Wisconsin Forestry Center at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point | up to ~8 Million

Serving Langlade, Lincoln, Menominee, Oneida, Portage, Shawano, and Marathon counties, the Wisconsin Forestry Center at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point proposes using these funds for their Forest Industry Workforce Recruitment & Development Initiative. Modeled after a successful initiative in Montana, this project will help kids learn about careers in forestry through programs at both public K-12 schools and the Menominee Nation, bolster high school forestry education with certified skill development curriculum that promotes entry into the workforce, and provide post-high school training programs. The project also includes regional training hubs to connect participants with training and employment opportunities.

Northwood Technical College | up to ~9.8 Million

Serving Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Polk, Rusk, St. Croix, Sawyer, and Washburn counties, Northwood Technical College plans to use these funds for their Housing Opportunity and Mobile Education Solutions (HOMES) initiative. This initiative will provide advanced manufacturing equipment and non-campus and campus training locations for unemployed and underemployed adults, including underserved populations, to upskill workers and help increase average pay. Additionally, this will include increasing the availability of affordable workforce housing for families and bringing on-site job training opportunities to the community.