

Gov. Evers: Announces \$9.7 million in Workforce Innovation Grants to support long-term solutions to state's workforce challenges

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NEW LONDON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced up to \$9.7 million in grants through the [Workforce Innovation Grant Program](#) will be awarded to the Waupaca County Economic Development Association and Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin for programs that support access to local options for employees and employers to arrange transportation for work, as well as programs that use a trauma-informed approach to workforce education and services to engage individuals from unserved and underserved populations in the local workforce.

“As we continue our work supporting Wisconsin businesses, families, and communities, we recognize how critically important it is to invest in connecting the dots for folks either in or looking to join the workforce—whether that’s access to reliable transportation, affordable childcare, skills training, or any other number of unique needs,” said Gov. Evers. “These programs receiving funds today support these important goals as they work to meaningfully overcome barriers that otherwise keep people from joining our workforce and securing quality, family-supporting jobs.”

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. The second round of Workforce Innovation Grants brings that total investment to more than \$150 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.

While Wisconsin continues to see workforce shortages that existed long before the pandemic began, earlier this month, 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.

Last week, Gov. Evers announced the second round of the Workforce Innovation Grant Program and met with grant recipients throughout the state, including in [Stevens Point](#), [Fennimore](#), and [River Falls](#). Recipients have been announced on a rolling basis. The two projects the governor announced today will receive a total of up to \$9.7 million in grants through the second round of the Workforce Innovation Grant Program, and include:

Waupaca County Economic Development Association | ~\$3.2 million

Serving Waupaca and Outagamie counties, the Waupaca County Economic Development Association plans to use these funds to support a workforce transportation program that will provide around-the-clock services for employees and employers to arrange transportation for work. This program will coordinate local stakeholders to increase transportation options—including a new Micro-Transit Service consisting of five vehicles, one of which will be an accessible minivan, that will be available 24/7 or as defined by employer schedules, volunteer drivers, and local taxi companies—to provide up to 26,000 rides per year. Long-term goals of the program include expanding to meet other community needs, such as healthcare and food insecurity.

Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin | ~\$6.5 million

Serving Calumet, Outagamie, Waupaca, Waushara, and Winnebago counties, Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin plans to use these funds to support a collaborative

program with Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC) and Rawhide Youth Services to prepare over 200 trainers at FVTC to use a trauma-informed approach to workforce education and services. This program will connect with local men's and women's shelters and community organizations to engage up to 460 individuals from unserved and underserved populations in the area workforce. FVTC's career pathways program will provide a turnaround time of one year or less to a family-sustaining career path and Goodwill will provide educational and employment case management to support trainees. A cohort model was already formed by Rawhide Youth Services and Goodwill teaches employability and social skills through trauma informed curriculum.