

Gov. Evers, DWD: Announcing \$15 million grant to boost access to childcare, early childhood education for working families

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Gov. Tony Evers, together with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), today announced the state of Wisconsin has received a \$15 million competitive grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to go to DWD to help bolster the early childhood education workforce and boost access and improve the sustainability of quality, affordable childcare and early childhood education for working families.

“Increasing access to quality, affordable childcare and early childhood education is one of the best ways we can do what’s best for our kids, support Wisconsin’s working families, and reduce barriers for folks who want to join our state’s workforce—all at the same time,” said Gov. Evers. “Whether it’s helping folks find meaningful careers in the childcare and early childhood education industries, improving outcomes for our kids in our schools, supporting the professional development of Wisconsin’s childcare providers, or building stronger relationships between workers and employers, this grant funding will positively affect kids, families, and communities across our state.”

The grant recognizes the significant challenges Wisconsin residents face in securing accessible, affordable, and high-quality childcare to support their entry into, and retention in, the workforce. The grant, known as a [Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, and Training \(QUEST\) Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grant \(DWG\)](#), will leverage partnerships among the Department of Children and Families (DCF), [Wisconsin Community Action Program Association](#), Wisconsin’s 11

local [Workforce Development Boards](#), and other strategic partners to achieve these outcomes.

“Access to quality, affordable childcare is vital for workforce participation and community well-being,” said DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek. “This grant will go a long way toward strengthening our childcare system by providing training for individuals to become licensed and certified childcare professionals, ensuring more childcare professionals earn family-sustaining wages, and supporting a path to business ownership for more care providers. The grant also will encourage employers to adopt practices that support working parents.”

“The ever-present challenges parents face in finding affordable, quality care are complex but solvable,” said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. “Through cross-sector solutions that involve families, business leaders, childcare professionals, and policymakers, we can develop an early care and education system that meets the needs of all Wisconsin families. We appreciate the Department of Workforce Development and the many other partners who are coming to the table and helping us better support our communities and the economy.”

Though operational details are still being finalized, in general, QUEST DWG funding will support the following activities:

- Provide employment, training, and support services to 500 unemployed and underemployed individuals seeking employment in childcare/education occupations;
- Establish disaster-relief employment opportunities with existing childcare providers to immediately expand access to high-quality and affordable childcare for Wisconsin workers, including care during nontraditional hours of operation;
- Expand DCF’s [Partner Up!](#) program, which engages employers to purchase slots at existing regulated childcare providers;
- Employ and train additional staff to help existing and prospective childcare businesses navigate the state licensing, certification, and rating process. These staff will also help childcare centers maximize cost reimbursement subsidy programs, connect with grant participants to fill open positions, and navigate continuing education and professional development opportunities for staff;

- Provide entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise development services to individuals interested in becoming childcare business owners; and
- Develop and deliver education to businesses on developing inclusive workplace practices for working parents and other marginalized populations.