

Wisconsin Fast Forward Project Planning Guide

State of Wisconsin, Department of Workforce Development, Office of Skills Development

Eligible Applicants:

Applicants may be an Employment Placement Partner (employer), a private organization, or public agency. Every application must include at least one employer. An employer or group of employers may partner with the following entities to submit an application: economic development corporation, workforce development board, non-profit organization, local government, trade association, training provider, etc.

Applicants must be: registered as a legal entity; current on all federal and state tax obligations; and financially viable.

- I. **APPLICANT:** As the Applicant, I am able to answer yes to the following:
 - The project will train workers and the employer is committing to give a wage increase to successful incumbent worker trainees; and/or committing to hire new workers (newly hired after the GPA release date and employed at the time of the training); and/or unemployed and/or underemployed trainees to fill new or vacant positions.
 - The Project Partners and/or Applicant are able to match grant funds dollar for dollar or fifty-cents on the dollar with cash and/or in-kind contributions for the project as specified in the related Grant Program Announcement (GPA).
 - The fiscal agent listed on the application is an employee of the Applicant and will be responsible for managing the grant funds, keeping receipts and records, submitting reimbursements, preparing for financial audits, and submitting the final financial report.
- II. **EMPLOYER/EMPLOYER PLACEMENT PARTNER(S):** Each application must include an employer or group of employers that will:
 - a. Train incumbent workers and provide a wage increase to successful trainees; and/or
 - b. Commit to hiring new workers (newly hired after the Grant Program Announcement (GPA) release date and employed at the time of the training); and/or
 - c. Commit to hire unemployed and/or underemployed trainees to fill new or vacant positions.

The Employer Placement Partner(s) must also meet the following criteria:

- Has/will have a presence in Wisconsin.
- Will train employees who are/will be based out of the Wisconsin location.
- Will not train owners.
- Has a documented, unmet need for worker skills and is creating a new, customized training program to train workers to meet this need.
- The training will not replace existing, routine business training and will be short- to medium-term training lasting no more than 12 months. Contracts may be awarded for up to 2 years to cover multiple cohorts of trainees in short- to medium-term training.
- If applying under the Small Business GPA, the employer has 50 full-time employees or less.

Finding/Choosing Project Partners:

Employment Placement Partners (Employers):

All Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) grant applications must include at least one employer to be eligible. Employers should meet the criteria set forth in Section II. The employer may be the Applicant and may use an internal or external training provider.

If you are an employer interested in applying for a WFF grant, and want to connect with other employers, you may want to contact your local economic or workforce development organizations and/or trade association; or visit WisconsinFastForward.com to inquire about opportunities with other employers. Partnerships may be built with employers across the state of Wisconsin. You may also want to contact other suggested partner organizations who may have data available to help you locate employers facing similar skills gap needs. You may want to consult Department of Workforce Development (DWD) resources, such as Job Center of Wisconsin.

External Training Provider Partners:

The WFF grant program is based on demand-driven workforce training, therefore, the participating employers should determine the training needed and training provider. External Training Providers must be named in the application as Project Partners. They may also be the Applicant.

It is important to carefully consider the choice of a training provider. Recommended factors to consider in selecting an appropriate training provider include a demonstrated history of:

- Successful training through its placement, retention, and evaluation rates.
- Collaboration with the targeted industry in the development of the training program curriculum.
- Use of current industry standard as the basis for programs utilized to train students in the targeted industry.

Other Organization Partners:

In some circumstances alignment with other organizations in the local area, region, or state can be beneficial to the success of the training program. In those situations, the participation and support of economic development organizations, workforce development entities, local government, non-profit organizations, or trade and industry associations should be obtained. Such organizations may assist an Applicant in obtaining a fuller understanding of the skill deficit identified, provide assistance with curriculum design, assist in locating other employers that may be appropriate Project Partners, and assist in recruiting and assessing potential training participants. Any of these organizations may be the Applicant or a Project Partner.

Researching Employment Needs:

The most important part of defining demand-driven employer needs is clearly understanding and communicating the challenge facing the employer(s) in the application. Specific data, information, and/or examples from the employer(s) should be included to help explain the situation. A clear understanding of the skills need facing the employer(s) and how it is not currently being met is critical to the evaluation process.

In some cases, the project design may benefit from an analysis of labor market information and industry trends. The Office of Skills Development (OSD) encourages the use of specific data that supports the potential effectiveness of the proposal. When appropriate, consider including

supporting information that directly impacts or demonstrates the strength of your project. Such information may include:

- Labor force and unemployment data.
- Employment data by industry and occupation and projected employment in these categories.
- Population and related demographic data.
- Local economic trends and characteristics, including cost of living information.
- Occupational data by gender and race.
- Occupational wage rates and earnings data by industry and geographic area.

Information may also be available on the following DWD websites:

- <http://worknet.wisconsin.gov/worknet/>
- www.dwd.wisconsin.gov

Developing a Curriculum/Training Project – Capacity Building:

Consortium Information:

A training provider, educational institution, economic or workforce development organization, nonprofit, or an industry association may apply for a consortium training grant in partnership with an employer or multiple employers with the same training needs. The proposal for the common training should:

- Serve employers who require the same type of occupational training.
- The application should include all required information for each employer.
- If applying as a consortium of employers under the Small Business GPA, each employer must meet the Small Business definition in Section II.
- Include training descriptions and trainee outcomes that address the need from each employer impacted by the proposed common training.

Incumbent Training:

Most incumbent training will fall under grants to individual employers. However, an employer, training provider, economic or workforce development organization, non-profit, or industry association that wants to submit a consortium application to address a common need among several employers for incumbent training will also be considered. Incumbent workers are those who were hired prior to the GPA release date and are employed during training by the employer. Employers must commit to a wage increase for those incumbent worker trainees that successfully complete the training.

Unemployed/Underemployed Training:

Most unemployed/underemployed training projects will likely have a training provider or other organization as the Applicant, and will usually include two or more employers in a consortium model willing to provide jobs to the trainees after successfully completing the training. The Applicant organization will be responsible for creating training that is satisfactory to the employer needs, recruiting potential trainees, and assessing that those recruited meet pre-employment standards of the employers, training those that are employable, and assisting with their placement with the employer. Assistance with this process may be available through other resources listed below.

Other Training Resources:

There are training programs and workforce development assistance programs at the local and state level that may provide additional value and important resources in addition to WFF funding. Applicants are encouraged to consider and incorporate services from existing resources. The following is a list of examples of such resources at the state level:

- The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation within DWD can provide assistance to employers seeking to diversify their workforce by employing individuals with disabilities. Applicants are encouraged to consult with DWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation regarding potential resources and referrals of qualified job seekers with disabilities for hire and/or training.
- The Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards in DWD can provide assistance in establishing apprenticeship programs in a wide variety of skills.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs and the DWD Veterans Employment and Training programs can provide assistance in connecting veterans to training opportunities.
- The DWD Trade Adjustment Assistance Program can connect employers with displaced workers and can help provide those workers with equipment necessary for job training.

Training Program Considerations:

The WFF program offers great flexibility regarding the type(s) of training and the training provider(s). Based upon the needs of the employer and their overall workforce needs, the employer chooses its training and training provider. The training can be provided by Wisconsin's public or private educational institutions, a private training company or private instructor, an internal employee, or a combination of training providers.

The training may be at the company's facility, at the training provider's facility, or a combination of facilities.

The components of the training program will carry the most weight in the scoring of the WFF grant. OSD and the Evaluation Committee are looking for effective and efficient training programs that will benefit the employers and trainees who participate as well as make the most return on investment to the state economy. The ability to make the training program replicable around the state is another plus.

To this effect, reviewers will be looking for the following:

- Is the training project short- or medium- term?
- Does the training have a reasonable WFF grant cost per trainee and cost per trainee hour?
- Are the goals of training accomplishable in the time allotted? Will the training be sustained over the long-term to help meet the employers' workforce needs in the future?
- Will the worker gain transferable, career building/enhancing skills? Will the worker gain certification or credits? The program is specifically looking for durable, transferable skills that may improve the worker's overall career path. Will the worker obtain a job or an increase in wages after successfully completing the training program?
- How does the cost of the project compare to the timeframe planned, the skills gained, and other industry training? What is the cost per trainee hour?
- What is the cost of the project compared to the return on investment in higher wages, living wages, and people gaining employment?
- Does the training project address an unmet need that is not already being addressed elsewhere?

Additionally, OSD and the Evaluation Committee will examine the project's ability to build future training capacity:

- Does the training project result in a new curriculum/certification/credit program that can be replicated elsewhere?
- Does it build partnerships that can be sustained to create a stable trained workforce pipeline?
- Will the employer or training provider be able to reuse the curriculum/equipment/knowledge gained to provide or enhance future training?

Setting Goals and Objectives:

In creating the WFF program, the legislature enacted a specific set of measures of success and return on the taxpayer investment. These measures focus on getting jobs for unemployed, improving jobs for underemployed, new hires, and raising wages for incumbent workers. Your application will need to include the number and type of individuals you plan to train, as well as where you plan to place those individuals after the training.

- Unemployed individuals who will gain employment: Total numbers of individuals who are not employed at the time of training and find jobs as a result of the training.
- Underemployed individuals who will gain new and better employment: Total number of individuals who find a job at an employment placement partner as a result of the training and currently work below skill level or part-time but desire full time work at the time of training.
- Incumbent workers who will receive increased compensation: Total number of individuals who received increased compensation due to training who were employed by the employment placement partner on or before the GPA release date and will continue to work after training.
- New hires that retain employment at the employment placement partner after the training: Total number of individuals newly hired by an employment placement partner after the GPA release date and complete training and retain employment.
- The difference between pre-training and post-training wages for all trainees.

You should design your program to ensure that you will achieve goals and outcomes consistent with enhanced economic opportunities. The WFF program looks for a minimum 85% placement of unemployed/underemployed workers who successfully complete training. Additionally, 100% of existing incumbent workers who successfully complete training should receive a wage increase. You will be required to report on any failure to achieve these goals.

Evaluating Economic Impact – Economic Opportunity Enhancements:

In designing your project, you should also consider how it will impact the employers involved, benefit the community/region/state economy, and the provide opportunity to those who participate in the training. You should share any extenuating circumstances that increase the positive effect of your training project on those involved and the surrounding community. It is important to understand how this project serves the economic interests of the employers involved beyond the training dollars, as well as how the investment of those state funds will create a wider economic impact.

Definitions Per Administrative Code 801:

“Administrative costs” means costs associated with implementing grant objectives and activities, such as the provision of office space, telephone service and employees.

“Applicant” means a public or private organization that applies for a grant from the department for the development or implementation of a workforce training program.

“Capital equipment” means equipment having a value greater than \$5000 and a useful life of more than one year.

“Department” means the department of workforce development.

“Evaluation committee” means a committee of department members, and other persons invited by the department, that reviews and evaluates applications.

“Governmental body” means a state or local agency, department, committee, council or public body created by constitution, statute, ordinance or rule.

“Grant” means an agreement between the department and the grantee whereby the department provides funds from the Wisconsin Fast Forward appropriation for the purposes of a job training project.

“Grantee” means a public or private organization or agency receiving a grant either directly or indirectly from the department.

“Grant Program Announcement” or “GPA” means a document that describes a grant program, invites applications for the grant, specifies who may apply, and establishes application procedures, criteria for awarding grants, and conditions and restrictions that accompany grants.

“In-kind contributions” means the value of noncash contributions provided by the grantee or third parties which directly benefit and are specifically identifiable to the program.

“Incumbent employee” means an employee or worker who is currently employed by a qualified employer.

“Instructional materials, software and equipment” means instructional materials, software and equipment to be directly used or consumed by the trainees during instructional activities (May also be referred to as “Educational materials”).

“O*Net” means a United States government system of classifying occupations. O*Net occupation codes are unique numbers assigned to each occupation. O*Net is used for career exploration, job analysis, and statistical analysis.

Note: More information about O*Net can be found at the U.S. Department of Labor websites <http://www.onetonline.org/> and <http://www.onetcenter.org/>.

“Private organization” means a private for-profit or non-profit business or service provider.

“Public agency” means any governmental body, including but not limited to a county, city, village, town, school district, technical college district or district board, and an agency of the state government or a formally constituted subunit of any of these entities.

“Supplant” means the substitution of existing training funds with grant funds simply because training funds are awarded under this program.

“Underemployed worker” means an employee or worker who is currently employed but not in a capacity that reflects the skills and experience of the employee or worker and is reflected in less than desirable terms of compensation, hours or responsibility.

“Unemployed worker” means an individual who is currently out of work and is available for work, excluding an individual who is not working but anticipates being called back to his or her regular employment.