



January 2017

**WORKER TRAINING GRANTS
for
WISCONSIN Small Business Occupations**

Award Amount: \$5,000 to \$50,000

Applications must be submitted no later than:
March 31, 2017 @ 11:59 PM CDT

Grant Program Announcement
GPA #FF171BS1

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Wisconsin Small Business Occupations

Wisconsin Fast Forward Program:

Governor Scott Walker signed 2013 Act 9, also known as Wisconsin Fast Forward, into law in March 2013 with strong bipartisan support from both chambers of the Wisconsin Legislature. The Wisconsin Fast Forward program was allocated \$14.8 million in funding for the 2015-17 biennium to provide employer-focused worker training grants. The Office of Skills Development (OSD) at the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) administers the grant program.

The Office of Skills Development is the point of contact for employers who can demonstrate a critical need for skilled workers and are seeking Wisconsin Fast Forward training grants for a customized skills training program. The OSD administers and oversees the grant program through a transparent and accountable process. Additionally, OSD will work to encourage the development of innovative solutions at the local and regional level that bring together employers, educators, workforce development entities, and economic development organizations to meet area workforce demands.

The Wisconsin Fast Forward program will act as a catalyst, encouraging increased collaboration between Wisconsin's workforce trainers and employers to develop and execute business-led training programs. These training programs are designed to provide sustainable short- and medium-term training and placement of workers in positions that offer trainees long-term professional growth and economic opportunity. To maintain a strong environment for private-sector job creation, Wisconsin must train workers to fill the employment demands of growing and expanding employer(s).

The long-term goal of Wisconsin Fast Forward training programs is to encourage partnership between employer(s) and local or regional economic development organizations, workforce development boards, post-secondary institutions, and private training providers. It is anticipated that the relationships developed through Wisconsin Fast Forward funded training programs will continue to flourish after the Wisconsin Fast Forward grant has ended.

Legislative Authority: Awarding of Wisconsin Fast Forward funding under this GPA is subject to spending authority for the FY15-FY17 fiscal biennium as defined in sec. 106.27 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

Administrative Rules: The rules governing the Wisconsin Fast Forward program are included in [Chapter DWD 801](#).

Targeted Business Size: 50 full time employees or less

Grant Program Announcement Summary: Small Business Occupations

Small businesses are critical to sustaining Wisconsin communities and are a source of innovation and entrepreneurial activity. Over 54% of Wisconsin's workforce is employed by Stage 1 (2-9) and Stage 2 (10-99) companies and over 88% of the establishments fall within those two stages. 1) Given the proportion of small businesses in Wisconsin, it is critically important to create funds available for customized training to ensure that businesses with fewer than 50 employees can train workers for skilled job openings. Over the last decade, small businesses created nearly 65 percent of net new private sector jobs across the United

States. 2) The Society for Human Resource Management identifies the skills gap as a critical issue facing businesses, noting that more than half of businesses experienced difficulty in acquiring talent. 3) The Wisconsin Fast Forward training program will provide funding for small businesses to develop customized training programs and training capacity to help meet their workforce needs and enhance skill sets for individuals.

Wisconsin Fast Forward Grant Program Announcements (GPA) typically focus upon a different industry sector critical to the Wisconsin economy. However, this Wisconsin Fast Forward GPA #FF171BS1 focuses on small businesses in the State of Wisconsin regardless of the industry sector they serve.

Applications must include a customized training program that mitigates an employer's critical workforce problem, addresses a documented workforce demand, is supported by local, regional, or statewide labor data and results in training participants finding and retaining employment and/or incumbent workers earning higher wages as a result of completing the skill training program. The training program must demonstrate that it will provide the education and skills determined necessary by the employer(s) to enhance the stability and growth of the business and provide opportunities for income and career growth for trainees. It must also include at least one employer committing to the employment of these workers and/or an incumbent worker wage increase, unless its union contract precludes it from doing so until a new contract with wage increases is negotiated.

Grant applicants are encouraged to consider recruiting potential trainees from populations such as: Unemployed individuals, underemployed workers, ex-offenders, and first time graduates. The grant review committee may award additional points when scoring an application if the trainee cohort includes individuals from these populations. Trainee cohorts could also include incumbent workers, new hires, and seasonal trainees.

Employment categories and training cohorts to be identified in the application are defined as follows:

- Unemployed: Trainee not employed at the time of training,
- Underemployed: Trainee not with employer placement partner at the time of training.
- Ex-Offenders: Trainees who are ex-offenders reintegrating into communities when they are released after time served,
- First Time Graduates: Trainees who have received a high school diploma or equivalent or post-graduate degree within the last two years,
- New Hires: Trainee employed at employer placement partner after the GPA release date and
- Incumbent: Trainee employed at the employer placement partner before the GPA release date.

Successful grant applications will include customized training programs defined by employers and may include partnerships with local or regional economic development organizations, workforce development boards, public or private post-secondary institutions and/or private training providers to recruit trainees and deliver outcomes. *The OSD recommends that customized training programs focus on skills attainment and certifications.* Skills attainment develops skills that directly benefit the workers receiving the training by increasing their mastery of their occupation in their field of employment and/or provide new skills for new product lines or business expansion.

Application Forms, Instructions, Checklists, and Process: Applications must be submitted online. You can access the online application, along with the application instructions, informational webinars, related guidelines and checklists at: WisconsinFastForward.com.

Due Diligence: All applicants are required to complete a Due Diligence form prior to submission of the application.

Duration of Training Courses: Short- to medium-term training with each course or module lasting no longer than 12 months.

Training Project Period: The training project period, including curriculum development, training, and pre- and post-training activities, can be no longer than 2 years.

Grant Amount: From \$5,000 to \$50,000 per Grantee. Grant and match expenditures must be incurred during the training project period. All eligible grant expenditures will be reimbursed when grant and match expenses are documented by the Grantee and approved by OSD. If awarded, a percentage of the grant may be retained until Grantee is in compliance with all conditions of the grant as stipulated in the contract.

Match/Cost Sharing Requirement: Cash or in-kind match equal to the amount of the grant is required. Letters of commitment from the employers, partners and/or applicant documenting match will be required in the application. Match is \$.50 to the \$1.00.

Grant Evaluation Rubric and Scoring:

Wisconsin Fast Forward is a competitive grant program. All applications will be reviewed by internal and external reviewers and rated on a 100 point scale, based upon the following point values:

- Project Need (up to 20 points)
- Training Program Design, Cost and Implementation (up to 20 points)
- Training Objectives and Outcomes (up to 20 points)
- Economic Impact (up to 15 points)
- Capacity Building (up to 10 points)
- Economic Opportunity Enhancements (up to 15 points)

The detailed Grant Evaluation Rubric and Score Sheet is available on our website at WisconsinFastForward.com.

Important Dates:

- Online Grant Application available: January 13, 2017
- Grant Application Due Date: March 31, 2017
- Anticipated "Intent to Award" announcements: Within 60 days from Grant Application due date.

Eligibility: Each application must include at least one employer with a stated commitment to hire successful trainees or to increase wages for successful incumbent worker trainees and a complete description of the customized training program and anticipated outcomes for individuals in small business occupations. The employer must have at least one Wisconsin location and the trainees will be based out of that Wisconsin location. Applications may include one or more partner(s), including local or regional

economic development organizations, workforce development boards, and post-secondary educational institutions or private training providers. The applicant may be any one of the above listed organizations in this subsection and must designate a fiscal agent in the application.

Eligible Expenses: Wisconsin Fast Forward funds shall be used for training-related expenses, which may include instructor salaries and fringe benefits, consultant/contractual expenses, training materials and supplies. You can access the online application, along with the application instructions, informational webinars, related guidelines and checklists at WisconsinFastForward.com.

Ineligible Expenses: Wisconsin Fast Forward funds may not be used for the purchase of real estate or other capital assets/equipment, facility construction or remodeling, Kindergarten–12th grade education, tuition, or trainees' wages, stipends or fringe benefits. See the website for the application instructions, related guidelines, and rules in Chapter DWD 801 for details on ineligible expenses.

Supplement not Supplant: All funding identified as "match" or "in-kind" must be new funds and cannot replace existing federal, state or local government funding. Substituting existing funds with state grant funds will result in additional fiscal monitoring and may result in an audit. Violations of permissible expenses may result in suspension of current or future funds under this program, repayment of monies awarded under this grant and possible civil and/or criminal penalties.

Consortium applicants:

Employer Letters of Commitment to Hire: The objective of the Wisconsin Small Business Fast Forward GPA is to address an employer-defined workforce need in the small business sector. Letters of commitment to hire trainees from the proposed training program or to raise wages for incumbent workers will be required from the participating employers. The letter should clearly indicate the number of successful trainees to be hired and/or the incumbent worker wage increases. The employer's letter should also include a commitment to any match funding and/or participation in the planning and implementation of the training program.

Partner Letters of Commitment of Support: Partner letters of commitment should include an attestation regarding match resources that are available to contribute to the project. In addition, employers or partners who are not willing to commit to job placements, wage increases, or match funding, but support the training model, may submit a letter of support for the project.

Grant Reporting Requirement: The customized training project should produce quantifiable outcomes and impacts for the employer, training participants and the state of Wisconsin. The applicant should address projected outcomes for the proposed training program such as; training new hires, incumbent workers retaining employment, earning higher wages, increasing their skill attainment, and/or receiving industry-recognized credentials. Wisconsin taxpayers should recognize the economic impact from the Wisconsin Fast Forward sponsorship of customized training programs, such as; higher state revenues from increased individual income, sales tax receipts, increased corporate income, and property tax receipts.

The Grantee will be responsible for tracking and monitoring individual workers receiving training under the grant through the completion of pre- and post-training reports and a final report on the net jobs; including type of trainee served as defined in the *Type of Trainees* section of this GPA and their related wages and/or

wage increases. The anticipated result is a skilled workforce that is well-suited for employment and advancement opportunities in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Fast Forward applications that are funded under this announcement will be required to execute a binding contract with DWD. Grantees will also be required to submit regular project updates with reimbursement requests, documentation of match contributions, progress reports, pre- and post-training reports, and a final project report. Applicants and their partners may be subject to program and fiscal audits by the Department of Workforce Development as defined in the contract.