



**April 2018**

**WORKER TRAINING GRANTS  
for  
Small Business Occupations**

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

## Contact Information

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**Wisconsin Fast Forward Program:** The Wisconsin Fast Forward program is a state funded grant program to provide employer-focused worker training grants. The Office of Skills Development (OSD) at the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) administers the grant program. Additionally, OSD works 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.

This grant opportunity is 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. A skilled workforce is vital to economic development and community growth in Wisconsin. The need for skilled labor is typically driven by local and regional markets, requires specific expertise and/or skill credentials and must be readily available to meet work schedules and work plans.

The Wisconsin Fast Forward program encourages 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 the Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training grant program 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 grant has ended.

**Legislative Authority:** Find Wisconsin Fast Forward legislation on the [Reports & Resources](#) webpage.

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

**Grant Program Announcement Summary:** This Grant Program Announcement (GPA) is open for small businesses (no more than 50 full-time employees) in any industry sector. Applications must propose a *customized training program* that:

- Has not been previously offered by the applicant/consortium;
- Mitigates an employer's critical workforce problem;
- Addresses a documented workforce demand;
- Is supported by local, regional, or statewide labor data;
- Results in training participants finding and retaining employment and/or results in incumbent workers earning higher wages post-training completion;
- Provides trainees with the education and skills determined necessary by the employer(s) to enhance the stability and growth of the business;
- Provides opportunities for income and career growth for trainees; and
- Includes at least one employer committing to the employment of these workers and/or incumbent worker wage increases, unless precluded under an existing union contract.

Employment categories and trainee cohorts to be identified in the application include the following:

- Unemployed Individuals: Trainees who are not employed at the time of training.

- **Underemployed Workers:** Trainees who currently work below skill level or part-time, but desire full-time work at the time of training. Underemployed worker trainees will gain new and better employment because of the training.
- **New Hires:** Trainees who are employed at an employer placement partner after the application date and will be on the payroll of the employer placement partner at the time the training starts.
- **Incumbent Workers:** Trainees who are employed at an employer placement partner prior to, and at the time of, application.

Grant applicants are encouraged to consider recruiting potential trainees from at-risk, vulnerable or special populations, such as: chronically unemployed individuals, economically disadvantaged individuals, ex-offenders (trainees reintegrating into communities, or about to reintegrate into communities, when they are released after correctional time is served), first time graduates (trainees who have received a high school diploma or equivalent within the last two years), minorities, people with disabilities, veterans (trainees who have been discharged or released from active duty in the Armed Forces under honorable or general discharge conditions as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2101(2), "Armed Forces" is defined under 5 U.S.C. 2101(2) as the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard), and W-2 recipients. If the trainee cohort includes individuals from these populations and effectively identifies strategies for recruiting and retaining these trainees, the grant review committee may award additional points when scoring the application.

Successful grant applications will include customized training programs defined by employers and developed to meet special requirements of their business (or the consortium of employers participating in the grant program), it being recognized that training does not become "customized" simply by rearranging or reconfiguring training that is otherwise available through existing educational and training resources. 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: [http://wisconsinfastforward.com/wff\\_standard.htm](http://wisconsinfastforward.com/wff_standard.htm)

**Due Diligence:** All applicants are required to complete a Due Diligence form prior to gaining access to the application.

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

**Training Project Period:** All grant activities must be conducted during the Training Project Period. These activities include curriculum development, training, pre- and post-training activities, wage increases, and meeting match requirements. The Training Project Period may be no longer than 2 years. The Training Project Period begins no earlier than the date the contract is fully executed by all parties.

**Grant Amount:** Grant awards range from \$5,000 to \$50,000 per Grantee.

**Match/Cost Sharing Requirement:** Cash or in-kind match equal to 50 percent the amount of the grant award is required. Letters of Commitment from the employers, partners, and/or applicant documenting match are required in the application. 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 in accordance with the guidelines available at [http://wisconsinfastforward.com/pdf/guidance to file%20 reimbursement request.pdf](http://wisconsinfastforward.com/pdf/guidance%20to%20file%20reimbursement%20request.pdf); and
- Approved by OSD.

If awarded, 5% of each reimbursement will be retained until grant closure. Final disbursement of this retainage amount will be made when the Grantee complies with all conditions of the grant as stipulated in the contract and may be pro-rated or withheld based on the extent to which contract conditions are met.

**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)

Organizations are strongly encouraged to review the scoring rubric when writing their application, as it is the guide that the reviewers use to score the grant applications. The Grant Evaluation Rubric and Score Sheet is available online at: [http://wisconsinfastforward.com/pdf/wff\\_eval\\_rubric\\_score\\_sheet.pdf](http://wisconsinfastforward.com/pdf/wff_eval_rubric_score_sheet.pdf)

**Important Dates:** Grant applications remain open throughout the year with anticipated "Intent to Award" announcements occurring within 60 days of the end of each quarter as outlined below. Training should start no earlier than the Intent to Award date:

Submission Date	Intent to Award on or Before
January 1 – March 31	May 31
April 1 – June 30	August 30
July 1 – September 30	November 30
October 1 – December 31	February 28

When the application is submitted, it is locked as a final document and is unavailable for change or resubmission. Applicants may make a request for assistance and ask questions by sending an email to [WisconsinFastForward@dwd.wisconsin.gov](mailto:WisconsinFastForward@dwd.wisconsin.gov) prior to formally submitting the application. To assure that staff will have adequate time to respond to your request and that you will have time to revise your application before the application deadline, requests must be made prior to the email deadline date below:

Submission Date	Email Deadline Date
January 1 – March 31	March 10
April 1 – June 30	June 9
July 1 – September 30	September 9
October 1 – December 31	December 10

After the above email deadline date, staff are available to answer questions through 4:00pm on the final day of each quarter unless the quarter ends on a weekend or holiday, then staff are available through 4:00pm on the preceding weekday but may not be able to offer the same level of assistance.

**Eligibility:** For an application to be considered for funding, the following conditions must be met:

- The application must include at least one employer with a stated commitment to hire successful trainees or to increase wages for successful incumbent worker trainees.

- Post-training wages must be at least 200 percent of individual federal poverty level wages (\$11.67 per hour). If post-training wages are below this amount, please provide the reason they are lower.
- The application must include a complete description of the customized training program and anticipated outcomes for individuals.
- The employer must have at least one Wisconsin location and the trainees must be based out of that Wisconsin location.
- Occupations trained must be occupations that are in-demand in Wisconsin now or will be in-demand within the next ten years, as determined by labor market information.
- Applications may include one or more partner(s), including: local or regional economic development organizations, workforce development boards, post-secondary educational institutions, or private training providers. The applicant must designate a fiscal agent in the application.

**Cost per Trainee:** Below are average grant costs per trainee by sector since the inception of the standard Wisconsin Fast Forward program. These amounts are not firm limits to the cost per trainee, as specific occupations within these sectors can be more costly to train. Costs *significantly* higher than these averages should be explained:

Agriculture	\$858
Transportation, Logistics, Distribution	\$2,839
Healthcare	\$378
Information Technology	\$2,189
Financial Services	\$1,502
Customer Service	\$1,999
Construction	\$1,669
Manufacturing	\$1,144

**Eligible Expenses:** Wisconsin Fast Forward funds shall be used for training-related expenses, which may include instructor salaries and fringe benefits, consultant/contractual expenses, and training materials and supplies. For details on eligible expenses, see:

[http://wisconsinfastforward.com/pdf/guidance to file%20 reimbursement request.pdf](http://wisconsinfastforward.com/pdf/guidance%20to%20reimbursement%20request.pdf)

**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, traditional public or private Kindergarten–12th grade education, tuition, trainee wages, stipends, or fringe benefits. For details on ineligible expenses, see:

[http://wisconsinfastforward.com/pdf/guidance to file%20 reimbursement request.pdf](http://wisconsinfastforward.com/pdf/guidance%20to%20reimbursement%20request.pdf)

**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.

**Letters of Commitment:**

- **Employer Letters of Commitment to Hire:** Letters of Commitment to hire trainees from the proposed training program or to raise wages for incumbent workers will be required from the participating Employer Placement Partners. The positions of the trainees must be related to the training funded under this grant. The letter should clearly indicate the number of successful trainees to be hired and/or incumbent worker wage increases. The employer's letter should also

include commitment to any match funding and/or participation in the planning and implementation of the training program. The letter must also commit to sharing trainee placement data with the grantee and OSD.

- **Partner Letters of Commitment or Support:** Training and Other Partner Letters of Commitment should include an attestation regarding match resources that are available to contribute to the project. In addition, partners who are not willing to commit to job placements, wage increases, or match funding, but support the proposed training model, may submit a Letter of Support for the project.

**Contract:** The Wisconsin Fast Forward applications that are funded under this GPA will be required to execute a binding contract with DWD before any expenses are incurred for which reimbursement is expected.

**Grant Reporting Requirement:** Grantees will 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.

Additionally, applicants and their partners may be subject to program and fiscal audits by the Department of Workforce Development as defined in the contract. 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 skills attainment, and/or receiving industry-recognized credentials.

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 trainees served (see definitions under 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.

**Grant Application Tools:** Information on submitting a grant application and other grant-writing tools can be found on the Wisconsin Fast Forward website:

[http://wisconsinfastforward.com/wff\\_standard.htm#adminTools](http://wisconsinfastforward.com/wff_standard.htm#adminTools)