



October 12, 2023

Expanded Wisconsin Fast Forward Program

Technical Education Equipment Grant Program Announcement

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

**Applications are due by 3 p.m. CST on Tuesday, December 5, 2023.
Email Applications to WisconsinFastForward@dwd.wisconsin.gov**

The Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) program is a state-funded grant program that provides employer-led worker training grants. The Office of Skills Development (OSD) at the Department of Workforce Development (DWD or Department) administers the grant program. 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 needs and increase the economic capacity of its residents.

DWD is now accepting applications for WFF Technical Education Equipment grants. This opportunity is open to Wisconsin school districts that can demonstrate that the career and technical education program for which they will be purchasing and installing advanced manufacturing equipment:

- Meets the needs of employers in their region.
- Leverages partnerships and matching funds.
- Optimizes regional training capacity.
- Increases the supply of skilled workers in advanced manufacturing fields.
- Builds on proven programs.
- Includes mechanisms for sustainability.

Legislative Authority: Legislative authority for this grant is found at Wis. Stat. § 106.275.

Program Overview

Definitions: The following definitions are used throughout the Grant Program Announcement (GPA):

- **Advanced Manufacturing** refers to a family of manufacturing activities that (a) depend on the use and coordination of information, automation, computation, software, sensing, and networking, and/or (b) make use of cutting-edge materials and emerging production capabilities enabled by the physical and biological sciences (e.g., nanotechnology, chemistry, and biology). This involves both new ways of manufacturing existing products and manufacturing new products emerging from new advanced technologies.¹
- **Applicant** means a school district in Wisconsin that applies to DWD for a grant.
- **Contract** means a legal document that sets forth the grant terms and conditions.
- **Grantee** means a school district awarded a grant by the Department.
- **Grant** means an award from the Department to the grantee whereby the Department provides funds from the appropriation under Wis. Stat. § 20.445(1)(cg) for the purposes specified in Wis. Stat. § 106.275(1)(b).
- **School District** means a territorial unit for school administration. School districts are classified as common, union high, unified, and first class city school districts. A joint school district is one territory of which is not wholly in one municipality.
- **State** means state of Wisconsin.

Technical Education Equipment Grant Program Announcement Summary: The purpose of this grant opportunity is to train high school students in advanced manufacturing fields to help address Wisconsin's skilled worker shortage. This grant is also intended to accelerate the transition of students into the workforce by preparing them for stable careers and to provide students and their families the means to reduce higher education costs by providing dual enrollment credits, industry-endorsed certificates, and technical endorsements on high school diplomas.

¹President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology Report to the President on Ensuring American Leadership in Advanced Manufacturing. (2011). Retrieved from <https://www.manufacturing.gov/sites/default/files/2018-01/pcast-advanced-manufacturing-june2011.pdf>

For this grant opportunity, eligible advanced manufacturing fields include, but are not limited to:

Smart Manufacturing	Additive Manufacturing
Machining and Controls	Robotics
Digital Manufacturing and Design	Photonics
Electronics	Materials and Composites
Chemical and Thermal Processes	Healthcare and Medicine
Biotechnology	Bioenergy
Bioproducts	Biomanufacturing

Matching funds equal to 200% of the awarded grant amount are required per Wis. Stat. §106.275(1)(c). Match must be documented within the submitted application and may be in the form of money or the monetary value of equipment that is contributed from private sources, or the applicant, or from both private sources and the applicant.

School districts are required to:

- (1) Track outcomes related to the vocational and technical education programs for grant supported equipment purchases.
- (2) File an outcomes report with DWD by September 1 of each of the **three** fiscal years after receiving the grant. In each report, the grantee shall do the following:
 - a. Describe how the grant funds were expended.
 - b. Describe the outcomes achieved as a result of receiving the grant.
 - c. Share the best practices employed by the grantee regarding training of pupils in the use of the equipment acquired with the grant funds.
 - d. Include a plan for sustainability of the training described in par. (c).
 - e. Provide such other information as the Department may require in the GPA.

Recipients of previous awards from this program may apply but must demonstrate how the proposed project differs from the project funded by a prior award.

Grant Program Highlights

Total Grant Program	Approximately \$1 million is available for funding in this fiscal year.
Individual Awards	Minimum \$5,000 up to \$50,000
Eligible Applicants	Wisconsin school districts
Use of Grant funds	Reimbursement of costs for the acquisition of equipment that is used in advanced manufacturing fields in the workplace, together with any software necessary for the operation of that equipment, and any instructional material necessary to train pupils in the operation of that equipment.
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train high school students in advanced manufacturing fields to help address Wisconsin's skilled worker shortage. • Accelerate the transition of students into Wisconsin's workforce. • Provide students and their families with a way to reduce higher education costs by providing dual enrollment credits, industry-endorsed certificates, and technical endorsements on high school diplomas.

Terms of Award	Grants will be awarded as cost reimbursement contracts with an anticipated contract start date of February 5, 2024. All grant expenditures must be completed by March 31, 2026.
Match Funding	Applicants are required to provide funds equal to 200% of the awarded grant amount. Match may be in the form of money or the monetary value of donated equipment that is contributed from private sources, the school district, or both. Documentation of the type(s) and source(s) of match funds is required to be submitted with the application.

Important Dates: Applications are due by 3 p.m. CST on Tuesday, December 5, 2023.
Application packages must be emailed to WisconsinFastForward@dwd.wisconsin.gov.

GPA Released	October 12, 2023
Application Submission	December 5, 2023 Email application package (application, required forms, and supporting documents) to WisconsinFastForward@dwd.wisconsin.gov by 3 p.m.
Anticipated Projected Grant Awards Announcement	January 22, 2024
Anticipated Contract Start Date	February 5, 2024
Funding Disbursement	Reimbursement basis (upon verification and approval of submitted documentation of purchases, purchase orders, invoices, related project expenses and proof payment for all expenses).
Contract End Date	March 31, 2026

GPA and Application Process Questions and Answers:

Any questions or clarifications related to this Grant Program Announcement may be submitted in writing via email to WisconsinFastForward@dwd.wisconsin.gov. We will respond to your inquiry promptly.

Responses will also be posted at http://www.wisconsinfastforward.com/wff_standard.htm.

If it becomes necessary to provide additional clarifying data or information, it will be posted at http://www.wisconsinfastforward.com/wff_standard.htm.

Additional Information

Application Form and Instructions:

Access the application, evaluation rubric, and reporting template at:

http://wisconsinfastforward.com/wff_standard.htm

Applicants must describe the following in their grant applications:

- (a) The purpose and need for the grant.
- (b) The projected outcomes that the applicant is seeking to achieve as a result of receiving the grant.
- (c) The amount, form, and source of the matching funds required under this GPA.
- (d) Any other information required in the GPA.

Letters of Commitment:

Partner Letters of Commitment or Support must:

- Be on letterhead.
- Include attestation regarding partnership expectations, the need for employees trained in advanced manufacturing, and any other elements that inform the program.
- Include a description of any match funds, clearly indicating the amount, the date of receipt within the grant project period, the source of the funding, and a description of how it supplements the project.

Project Period: The project period for this GPA is from the contract execution date through June March 31, 2026.

Grant Amount: Not less than \$5,000, nor more than \$50,000 is available per grantee. Grant expenditures must be incurred during the project period. All eligible grant expenses will be reimbursed, per individual contract specifications, when expenses are:

- Included in the award application.
- Supported by a 200% match.
- Paid and documented by the grantee.
- Approved by DWD's Office of Skills Development.

Disbursement of grant funding will be made on a rolling basis when the grantee complies with all conditions of the grant as stipulated in the contract. Reimbursements may be pro-rated or withheld based on the extent to which contract conditions are met.

Match Contribution: Matching funds equal to 200% of the awarded grant amount are required. Match may be in the form of money or the monetary value of donated equipment that is contributed to the Career and Technical Education Program (CTE) from private sources, the school district, or both during the grant project period. Documentation of the type(s) and source(s) of match funds must be submitted with the application.

- Referendum funds used to fulfill match must be available in the school budget during the project period and directly tied to the CTE program. Additional detail may be requested.

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

- Applicant is a Wisconsin school district.
- Applicants may apply for no more than one grant for this round of grant funding.
- Applicants must include a plan to secure match from employers or other resources equal to 200% of the grant amount awarded.

- Match must be in the form of money or the monetary value of equipment that is contributed from the school district, private sources, or both.

Due Diligence: All applicants are required to complete the Risk Assessment Form and Due Diligence checklist. If any of the statements below apply to an applicant, that applicant may be disqualified and will not be scored:

- Applicant has been in operation less than 24 months.
- Within the last 24 months, the Applicant has been required to provide a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notice under 29 U.S.C. § 2101 et seq., or a notice under Wisconsin's Business Closing and Mass Layoff Law, Wis. Stat. § 109.07 (Layoff Notices found here: <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dislocatedworker/warn/>).
- Within the last 24 months, Applicant has been found to have violated the Unemployment Compensation laws, Wis. Stat. Ch. 108.
- Within the last 24 months, Applicant has been found to have violated the Worker's Compensation Act, Ch. 102.
- Applicant is on the Wisconsin Department of Administration's list of vendors who are not in compliance with Wis. Stat. § 77.66. The list is available at this website link: <http://vendornet.state.wi.us/vendornet/wocc/CertList.pdf>.
 - Please note that an Applicant may demonstrate that they have come into compliance since the last posting date of the list.
- Applicant's status is not registered as a Wisconsin business or otherwise not in good standing with Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions.
- Within the last 24 months, Applicant has been found to have violated the Wisconsin Fair Employment Act, Wis. Stat. § 111.31 et seq., or employment regulations under Wis. Stat. Ch. 103.
- Applicant is listed as ineligible on the Department of Administration's Office of Contract Compliance Vendor Directory, found here: <https://vendornet.wi.gov/Procurement.aspx>.
- Applicant is listed as a delinquent taxpayer with the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, at this website link: <https://www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/DelqList/DelqSearch.aspx>.

Organizations are strongly encouraged to verify that there are no unresolved issues in these areas prior to submitting the application or should provide a detailed explanation with the application.

Eligible Expenses: Funds awarded under this GPA shall be used to reimburse expenses related to the acquisition of equipment that is used in advanced manufacturing fields in the workplace, together with any software necessary for the operation of that equipment, and any instructional material necessary to train pupils in the operation of that equipment. One-time installation costs may be included in the requested WFF funds. Minor facilities renovations necessary for the successful installation and use of the equipment can be included as match, limited to a maximum of 20% of the WFF requested funds.

Ineligible Expenses: WFF funds may not be used for the purchase of real estate, facility construction or substantial remodeling, traditional public or private kindergarten-12th grade education, trainee wages, or fringe benefits.

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.

Grant Evaluation Rubric and Scoring: Wisconsin Fast Forward is a competitive grant program. The evaluation committee will evaluate grant applications for compliance with the grant eligibility requirements and specifications cited in this document. Grant proposals will be rated on a 100-point scale, based upon the following point values:

Selection Criteria	Points
Demand-driven, based on labor market data and employer partnerships	20
Leverages partnerships with employers and non-state matching funds	20
Optimizes regional training capacity and the number of skilled workers, as validated by relevant employers	20
Builds on proven programs	20
Demonstrates sustainability	20

Grants will be ranked by high score and awarded based upon ranking and availability of budgeted funds. Grants that score below 50 points will not be eligible for funding. It is strongly recommended that applicants consult the Grant Evaluation Rubric and Scoresheet to address all scoring criteria when writing proposals. The Grant Evaluation Rubric and Scoresheet is available for download at www.wisconsinfastforward.com/wff_standard.htm.

Contract: The WFF Technical Education Equipment Grant applications that are funded under this GPA are required to execute a binding contract with DWD **before any expenses are incurred** for which reimbursement is expected.

Reimbursement

- Awards are structured as cost-reimbursement grants, meaning that recipients are expected to incur expenses before receiving any WFF funds. WFF will provide access to an online invoicing system and reimbursement instructions.
- Upon submission of complete invoices with proper documentation and proof of payment, payments will be disbursed via Automated Clearing House (ACH) transactions.
- In compliance with the Office of the State Comptroller rules and regulations, no grant recipient shall expend grant funds until a contract has been fully executed with WFF. Upon contract execution, recipients will be allowed to incur costs. Costs must be incurred between contract execution and up to (and including) Mar. 31, 2026. No expenses incurred after Mar. 31, 2026, will be reimbursed by this program.
- Grantees will forfeit any remaining award unused after the contract expires.
- As a condition of funding, WFF will require that the grantee provide outcome reporting as determined by the individual grant contract, consisting of two annual reports and a final report in the third year.

Grant Reporting Requirement: Grant recipients must meet the program reporting requirements, including submission of project updates to document reimbursement requests, and annual reports.

The grantee is responsible for tracking and monitoring enrollment counts, number of students trained, number of courses offered, partnering counts, awarded credentials counts, budget, and any other required information related to the advanced manufacturing vocational and technical education programs for which the grant supported the purchase of equipment.

School districts are required to file a report with DWD by Sept. 1 of each of the **three fiscal years** after receipt of the grant that: (1) describes how the grant money was used and the outcomes achieved as a result of receiving the grant; (2) shares the best practices employed by the school district regarding the training of pupils in the use of the equipment acquired (including a plan for the sustainability of the training); and (3) other information as required.

Additionally, school districts may be subject to program and fiscal audits by DWD as defined in the contract. Reports should justify quantifiable outcomes and impacts for the school district, training participants, employers, and the state of Wisconsin, including progress towards addressing two of the three grant program goals below:

- (1) Increase the count of students able to participate in an existing program.
- (2) Create a new program to meet a demonstrated employer demand, as supported by labor market data and partnerships with employers.
- (3) If no increase in the number of participating students is projected, the applicant must demonstrate a significant improvement in the skills of the students who are able to participate in the program because existing equipment will be replaced or updated, as validated by support from relevant employers.

Reservation Clauses:

The program reserves the right to:

- Make no award.
- Postpone or cancel this GPA upon notification to all applicants.
- Amend the GPA after its release with appropriate notice to all applicants.
- Request applicants to present supplemental information clarifying their application in writing for transparency. Applicants failing to respond to these requests during the time allotted may be eliminated from funding consideration.
- Give applicants the opportunity to resolve minor or clerical errors.
- Negotiate with select applicant(s) prior to contract awards.