



**Fast**  **Forward** 

ANNUAL REPORT  
2021





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# Inside

- 2 Wisconsin Fast Forward Overview
- 3 Wisconsin Fast Forward Activities
- 5 Trainee Outcomes SFY 2021

December 31, 2021

The Honorable Tony Evers  
Office of the Governor  
115 East, State Capitol Building  
Madison, WI 53702

Senator Howard Marklein  
Co-Chair, Joint Finance Committee  
Room 316 East, State Capitol Building  
Madison, WI 53707

Representative Mark Born  
Co-Chair, Joint Finance Committee  
Room 308 East, State Capitol Building  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Governor Evers, Senator Marklein, and Representative Born:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), I am pleased to submit the 2021 Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) Annual Report.

The WFF program offers grant opportunities to assist Wisconsin employers with implementing customized training programs that provide their workers with the practical and customized job skills needed to succeed in a modern workforce. Funding made available through the WFF grant program helps hundreds of organizations across Wisconsin upskill thousands of workers to fill job openings, advance in the workplace, and earn higher wages.

In the attached 2021 WFF Annual Report, DWD provides details on program activities that occurred during the 2021 state fiscal year (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021). During this period, despite the unprecedented workforce impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic, DWD collaborated with employers, training providers, and educational stakeholders to identify and award training grants totaling \$6.25 million.

Thank you for your consideration of this report.

Sincerely,



Secretary-designee, Amy Pechacek  
Department of Workforce Development

# Wisconsin Fast Forward Overview

The Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) program is an innovative talent development solution driven by Wisconsin businesses to train and retain highly skilled workers. Since 2013, the Department of Workforce Development's (DWD) Office of Skills Development (OSD) has helped hundreds of organizations across Wisconsin upskill thousands of workers to fill job openings, advance in the workplace, and earn higher wages through the WFF grant program.

In state fiscal year (SFY) 2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021), 33<sup>1</sup> grants totaling \$6,250,000 were allocated. The Activities sections provide detailed information about the grants.

Training grants and administration of these and other statutorily authorized programs are supported by funds appropriated under Wis. Stats. s. 20.445(1)(b) and s. 20.445(1)(bm), respectively. Below is a table showing SFY 2021 amounts allocated and expended by appropriation.

| Budget Reference | Statutory Reference and Description                         | Count of Awards | Amount Allocated SFY21 | Amount Expended SFY21* |
|------------------|---|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 20.445(1)(b)     | 106.27(1) Workforce Training                                | 26              | \$2,905,092            | \$1,135,422.77         |
| 20.445(1)(b)     | 106.27(1j) Re-entry Initiatives Grants                      | 5               | \$1,594,907            | \$1,274,633.60         |
| 20.445(1)(b)     | 106.27(1u) Shipbuilders                                     | 1               | \$1,000,000            | \$674,400.02           |
| 20.445(1)(b)     | 106.27(1r) UW System Internship Grant                       | 1               | \$500,000              | -                      |
| 20.445(1)(b)     | 47.07 Project SEARCH  | -               | \$250,000              | \$19,500.00            |
| 20.445(1)(b)     | 106.27(1)(a) Industry-recognized Certifications             | -               | -                      | \$142,321.23           |
| 20.445(1)(b)     | 106.27(1)(b) Training Teachers for Dual Enrollment          | -               | -                      | \$574,103.76           |
| 20.445(1)(b)     | 106.27(1g)(c) Blueprint for Prosperity – Commute to Careers | -               | -                      | \$76,187.16            |
|                  | <b>Total</b>  | <b>33</b>       | <b>\$6,250,000</b>     | <b>\$3,896,568.54</b>  |
| 20.445(1)(bm)    | 106.27(1) Workforce Training Programs Administration        | -               | -                      | \$1,257,739.97         |
| 20.445(1)(bm)    | 106.27(1r) Wisconsin's Internship Initiative                | -               | -                      | \$155,349.03           |
| 20.445(1)(bm)    | 106 Apprenticeship Administration                           | -               | -                      | \$2,161,727.00         |
| 20.445(1)(bm)    | Subchapter I  | -               | -                      | -                      |
| 20.445(1)(bm)    | 106.27(1m) LMIS Administration                              | -               | -                      | \$693,963.00           |
|                  | <b>Total</b>  | <b>-</b>        | <b>-</b>               | <b>\$4,268,779.00</b>  |

\*Includes expenditures in SFY 2021 from both SFY 2021 awards and prior fiscal year awards. Does not include \$1,941,644.35 in non-106.27 program expenditures from (1)(b). Total expenditures for 20.445(1)(b) were \$5,838,212.89 in SFY 2021, additionally Project SEARCH had a natural lapse of \$206,500.00.

<sup>1</sup>Includes 26 WFF standard grants, five re-entry grants (where four grants cover state facilities and one grant covers county jails), one shipbuilders grant, and one UW System Internship grant.

# Wisconsin Fast Forward Activities

## Workforce Training

s.106.27(1)

Standard training grants provide employers resources to attract and retain workers who need specialized skills to succeed in the workplace. Grantees may offer a single training or a series of trainings to meet their business objectives and employee training needs. Organizations are awarded two-year grants to train their existing employees or to train unemployed and underemployed workers. In most cases, organizations share in the training costs through a 50% match of grant dollars. In SFY 2021, 26 organizations received a total of \$2,905,092 in WFF standard grants to provide training to 1,420 individuals. The success of worker trainees is measured in three categories: (1) unemployed workers obtaining a job; (2) underemployed workers improving their employment status; and (3) incumbent workers building their skills and increasing their salaries. DWD measures success by a completed trainee's employment status and income at the end of training.

## Industry-Recognized Certifications

s.106.27(1)(a)

Grants to technical colleges across the state provide sophomores, juniors, and seniors enrolled in Wisconsin high schools with workplace readiness and technical skills, leading to industry-recognized certifications in high-demand fields. In SFY 2021, 441 students were enrolled to obtain industry-recognized credentials. Funding was provided in a prior fiscal year.

## Training Teachers to Teach Dual Enrollment

s.106.27(1)(b)

Grants to technical colleges across the state provide training to high school teachers in 209 school districts to meet the accreditation standards needed to teach dual enrollment courses. In SFY 2021, 97 teacher-students received training with funding from a prior year award.

## University of Wisconsin System Internships Grant

s.106.27(1)(d)

DWD awarded \$500,000 on June 30, 2021 to the University of Wisconsin System to promote and coordinate internships in high-demand fields. The initiative will source, prepare, and place 100 diverse student participants in paid internships within Milwaukee-area corporations during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) is partnering with Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce's Region of Choice (ROC), an organization committed to addressing racial disparities by focusing on expanding opportunities for racially diverse talent, to find placements with local employers who have signed the ROC pledge. Through a collaborative effort among the Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership, and Research (in UWM's Division of Student Affairs), the Panthers Foundation for Success Program (in UWM's Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), and the UWM Office of Strategic Partnerships, along with industry organizations and corporations, will work to enhance the professional development and the early career opportunities of 100 students over the two years.

## Blueprint for Prosperity - Commute to Careers

s.106.27(1g)(c)

Grants provide employment services to individuals with disabilities. During the SFY 2021 reporting period, 12,942 rides were provided to 659 riders with disabilities, enabling these workers to maintain their employment. Funding was awarded in a prior fiscal year.

## Re-Entry Initiatives

s.106.27(1j)

DWD awarded \$74,745 to Bay Area Workforce Development Board in SFY 2021 to assist 20 incarcerated individuals in Manitowoc and Sheboygan county jails. The project, led by a consortium composed of Lakeshore Technical College and Great Lakes Training and Development Corporation, will provide job training for welding occupations, transitional support, job placement assistance, and post-release employment case management.

Grants were awarded to the Department of Corrections (DOC) in SFY 2021 to meet the critical and growing need for workforce training and career preparation for the populations in DOC care, particularly individuals preparing for re-entry. In SFY 2021, \$1,520,162 was granted to DOC to support Mobile Training Lab instructional expenses and maintenance costs, job labs within correctional facilities, and additional IT solutions.

## Wisconsin's Internship Initiative

**s.106.27(1r)**

Due to pandemic-related restrictions during SFY 2021 surrounding public events, job and internship fairs, and outreach activities, DWD staff activities shifted to focus on policy issues related to 'Returnships', an innovative programming opportunity at UW-Milwaukee in which disadvantaged students have access to stipends that facilitate participation in internships. In addition, DWD staff remained active in the Wisconsin Career Development Association and the Center for College-Workforce Transitions. Activities included:

- 38 outreach efforts to academic program chairs, deans, chancellors, and presidents;
- WisConnect usage by 3,757 Wisconsin businesses;
- 11,554 Wisconsin-based internships posted on WisConnect; and
- 1,191 direct student contacts at job and internship fairs.

Due to program design and implementation processes, DWD is unable to report the number of students placed in internships.<sup>2</sup>

## Shipbuilder Training

**s.106.27(1u)**

In SFY 2021, DWD awarded a \$1 million grant to Fincantieri Marine Group to train 214 new and incumbent employees in the areas of leadership development, marine welding, ship fitting, internal auditing, enterprise resource planning, and other critical areas. Fincantieri Marine Group is implementing the training program in partnership with the Bay Area Workforce Development Board to create a more diversified and productive talent pipeline amid an expanding local marine industry. In SFY 2021, \$674,000 in training expenses were incurred for training activities that were funded by Fincantieri's SFY 2020 award.

## Project SEARCH

**s.47.07**

Administered by DWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Project SEARCH is a business-led collaboration that enables young adults with disabilities to gain and maintain employment through training and career exploration. Each Project SEARCH site involves a partnership between DVR, a local business, a school, a vocational services agency, and a disability services agency (e.g., managed care organizations). While no new sites were established in SFY 2021, services provided to existing sites totaled \$12,000 in technical assistance and \$7,500 in training, benefiting 160 interns during the reporting period. These services helped to keep 20 of the 30 sites in operation during a global pandemic and kept the other 10 sites engaged and planning for re-opening during the 2020-21 school year.

## Workforce Training Programs Administration

**s.20.445(1)(bm)**

In addition to the workforce training programs listed above, these funds supported the administration of Youth and Registered Apprenticeship programs, Youth Summer Jobs Program, Wisconsin Employment Transit Assistance (WETAP) Program, Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, Advanced Manufacturing Technical Education Equipment Grants, and the Wisconsin Internship Initiative (WIIN) during SFY 2021.

## Other Programs

There are no outcomes to report for the following programs that were inactive in SFY 2021:

- Internship grants under s. 106.27(1)(d).
- Middle/high school nursing grants under s. 106.27(1)(e).
- Building modifications under s. 106.27(1)(f).
- Industry recognized certification authorized in s. 106.27(1)(a).
- Waiting list reduction under s. 106.27(1g)(a). All designated funding has been expended. Grants are closed.
- Industry certification under s. 106.27(1g)(b). All designated funding has been expended. Grants are closed. Note, industry recognized certifications are also authorized in s. 106.27(1)(a).

<sup>2</sup>Because many employers direct students to apply for internships directly on the employers' websites when posting their internship opportunities, there is no way to determine the origination of the application process. As such, no data on the number of internship connections made on WisConnect is available."

# Trainee Outcomes SFY 2021

## ALL ACTIVE TRAINEES SFY 2021 s. 106.27(1) and (1j)

Employment and wage results below are for trainees from the subset of programs within this statutory category that completed training in SFY 2021 (July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021), for which metrics in the required reporting elements are available:

|                                  |                |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Trainees who completed training  | 307            |
| Unemployed to Gainful Employment | 27             |
| Average Wages Before             | Not Applicable |
| Average Wages After              | \$14.90        |
| Underemployed to New Employment  | 41             |
| Average Wages Before             | \$12.33        |
| Average Wages After              | \$16.04        |
| Incumbent Increased Wages        | 134            |
| Average Wages Before             | \$20.35        |
| Average Wages After              | \$21.72        |

Wage data shows impressive gains since the program's inception. Trained employees' incomes are increasing. The average wage of a successful WFF trainee is \$19.65 per hour. Wages for incumbent workers have also risen an average of \$1.37 per hour as worker skills and productivity have increased. Formerly unemployed workers are averaging \$14.90 per hour, while incumbent workers who completed training are earning an average of \$21.72 per hour.

**STATE OF WISCONSIN**



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