



**April 13, 2018**

**Expanded Wisconsin Fast Forward Program**

**Employee Resource Network Pilot  
Grant Program Announcement**

**Award Amount: up to \$250,000**

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## Employee Resource Network Pilot Grant Program Announcement

**Wisconsin Fast Forward program:** The Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) 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. Under Governor Walker's leadership, Wisconsin has invested over \$200 million over the past four years and over \$140 million in the current biennial budget to support workforce development, including additional support to expand the WFF program.

The budget allows OSD to provide for a one-time workforce retention grant opportunity to develop and pilot an Employee Resource Network (ERN). Grants will be awarded to one or more consortia or partnerships consisting of Wisconsin employers, local public and/or private economic development agencies, Wisconsin Technical Colleges and business support organizations to leverage resources and develop a targeted pilot program to improve access to job retention services, employment assistance and training opportunities. The primary focus of the program is job retention and advancement, with a strong secondary focus on building the skills and capacities of the existing workforce. While designed to assist entry-level, disadvantaged or employees most at risk for job turnover, the pilot ERN should serve all interested employees. Offered services may include, but are not limited to: Ongoing case management by a case manager or success coach; vocational, basic and soft skills training; and improved access and/or referrals to work and financial supports, such as transportation, earned income tax credits and public benefits, including as food assistance, child care and Medicaid.

ERNs are public/private partnerships with the main goal of uniting businesses and community partners to improve job retention and advancement for entry-level, low-wage and low-skilled workers. A distinguishing feature of an ERN is that participating businesses pay a share of network costs in exchange for membership. These funds are used to fund a case manager or success coach, from the public human services system to locate on-site at each business or in a central location. Participating employers expect to experience lower turnover rates and subsequent hiring and training costs, as well as reduced costs related to the loss of productivity associated with worker tardiness and absenteeism. These benefits are expected as workers, facilitated in many cases by the success coach, are better able to focus on their work activity and stay on the job longer.

**Legislative Authority:** Find WFF legislation in state statutes at:

[https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lfb/budget/2017\\_19\\_biennial\\_budget/045\\_comparative\\_summary\\_of\\_budget\\_recommendations\\_governor\\_and\\_joint\\_committee\\_on\\_finance\\_by\\_agency/workforce\\_development.pdf](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lfb/budget/2017_19_biennial_budget/045_comparative_summary_of_budget_recommendations_governor_and_joint_committee_on_finance_by_agency/workforce_development.pdf).

**Grant Program Announcement Summary:** This Grant Program Announcement (GPA) is only available to **consortia or partnerships** consisting of Wisconsin employers; local public and/or private economic development agencies; Wisconsin Technical Colleges and business support organizations. WFF will award one or more grants totaling \$250,000 to consortia or partnerships to leverage resources and develop a targeted program of job retention services, work supports and training opportunities. WFF is providing the money necessary to implement pilot ERNs in Wisconsin

to determine if employee resource networks are an effective employee retention tool for Wisconsin employers and to identify best practices. While designed to assist entry-level, disadvantaged or employees most at risk for job turnover, the pilot ERN should serve all interested employees. Offered services may include, but are not limited to, ongoing case management by a success coach; vocational, basic and soft skills training and improved access and/or referrals to work and financial supports, such as transportation, earned income tax credits and public benefits (such as food assistance, child care and Medicaid).

This WFF grant program provides funding needed to implement employee resource network pilots to identify best practices and to determine if the strategy is an effective employee retention tool for Wisconsin employers. The WFF award is not intended to fund long-term ERN operation or maintenance. The successful proposal will include plans for obtaining alternative funding, resources leveraging strategies and non-state project funds to demonstrate sustainability.

The award recipients are required to file progress reports with DWD every other month during the fiscal year in which the grant was received that describes how the grant moneys were spent, the outcomes achieved and the best practices employed; updates the progress of the sustainability plan and provides other information as required.

**Application Forms, Instructions, Checklists, and Process:**

Access the 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)

Email complete applications and attachments to: [wisconsinfastforward@dwd.wisconsin.gov](mailto:wisconsinfastforward@dwd.wisconsin.gov)

**Project Period:** The project period for this GPA is June 30, 2018 through June 30, 2019. If needed to expand the ERN consortium or partnership to an appropriate scale, the 12-month project period may be extended an additional, unfunded, calendar quarter (to 15 months) with OSD approval.

**Grant Amount:** Total grant funds of \$250,000 are available. Grant expenditures must be incurred during the Project Period. Upon contract execution, recipients will be allowed to incur costs. Costs, including match, must be incurred between contract execution and end dates. All eligible grant expenses will be reimbursed as per individual contract specifications when expenses are:

- Documented by the grantee, per their contract requirements, and
- Approved by OSD

Final disbursement of grant funding will be made when the grantee complies with all conditions of the grant as stipulated in the contract. Funding may be pro-rated or withheld based on the extent to which contract conditions are met.

**Cost-Sharing:** Applicants should show that they have, or can leverage, matching dollars (\$1 applicant match to \$1 WFF award) from employers or resources other than state funding to enhance the impact of program efforts. Applicants should explain how the proposed funding will complement or leverage other funding. Additionally, applicants must demonstrate in-kind or cash match to support programs leveraged by the grant request.

Grant proposals that leverage existing partnerships with employers and/or non-state matching funds are eligible to receive bonus points in the grant evaluation rubric. Documentation of the leveraged funds is required in the application.

**Grant Evaluation Rubric and Scoring:** WFF is a competitive grant program. All applications are reviewed by internal and external reviewers and rated on a 100-point scale, based upon the following categories and related point values:

- Statement of Need, up to 10 points
- Demand-Driven, based on labor market data and the needs of member employers, up to 20 points
- Participant Recruitment Strategies for employers and employees, up to 10 points; with up to 5 additional points if proposal includes letters of commitment from employers
- Partnerships with member employers & leveraging non-state matching funds, up to 20 points; with up to 5 additional points for existing partnerships and financial commitments
- Optimizes Resource and Service Delivery, as validated by member employers, up to 20 points
- Startup/Development and Implementation/Performance Plans, up to 10 points
- Demonstrates Sustainability, up to 10 points

Grant Program Guidelines and the Grant Evaluation Rubric and Scoresheet is available online at: [http://wisconsinfastforward.com/wff\\_standard.htm](http://wisconsinfastforward.com/wff_standard.htm)

**Application Deadline: Grants are due by Tuesday, May 8, 2018 at 3 p.m.** Email complete applications and all attachments to: [wisconsinfastforward@dwd.wisconsin.gov](mailto:wisconsinfastforward@dwd.wisconsin.gov)

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

- Applicants must be part of a consortium or partnership consisting of Wisconsin employers; local, public and/or private economic development agencies; Wisconsin Technical Colleges or other organizations providing workforce support
- Applicant organizations may not apply independently, but must apply as the lead organization of a consortium of several local employers and private, public and nonprofit organization
- Applicants may apply for no more than one grant
- Applicants must include a plan to secure cash and/or in-kind match from employers or other resources equal to 100 percent of the grant amount awarded (\$1 applicant match to \$1 WFF award)

**Eligible Expenses:** In the proposal, applicants should detail their ability to leverage financial support for the ERN from participating employers as a demonstration of commitment. Match may be in-kind and/or cash match equal to 100 percent of the grant amount awarded (\$1 applicant match to \$1 WFF award). For example, match may be in the form of employer cost share (financial commitment to the ERN) to support the ERN; employer cost share (financial commitment) toward the salary of the Success Coach; the equivalent monetary value of office space, computer and software for the Success Coach at employer location; the equivalent monetary value of leveraged vocational, job or

soft skills training; or the equivalent monetary value of any marketing materials targeted to employees.

**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, employee wages, or fringe benefits.

**Supplement not Supplant:** All funding identified as "leveraged" 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:** Partner Letters of Commitment or Support must include attestation regarding the need for the ERN; employer needs, partnership role and/or expectations; commitment of financial support and any other elements that inform the program. Any source of leveraged funds must also clearly indicate the source of the funding and describe how it supplements the project.

**Contract:** The 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:** The grantee is responsible for tracking and monitoring employee recruitment, participation and referral counts; case management status updates; partnering recruitment and participation counts; employee retention and turnover statistics; budget and any other required information related to the project.

The award recipient is required to file progress reports with DWD every other month during the fiscal year in which the grant was received that describes how the grant moneys were expended and the outcomes achieved as a result of receiving the grant and shares the best practices employed; a plan for the sustainability of the training and other information as required.

Additionally, project participants may be subject to program and fiscal audits by DWD as defined in the contract.