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**Tony Evers**, Governor  
**Amy Pechacek**, Secretary-designee

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December 29, 2022

The Honorable Tony Evers  
Office of the Governor  
Room 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 2022 Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) Annual Report.

The WFF program offers grant opportunities to assist Wisconsin employers as they implement customized training programs. These programs provide workers with the practical and customized job skills needed to succeed in today's modern workforce. Funding made available through the WFF grant program helps hundreds of organizations across Wisconsin connect thousands of workers to job openings, advance in the workplace, and earn higher wages.

In the attached 2022 WFF Annual Report, DWD provides details on program activities that occurred during the 2022 state fiscal year (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022). 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Pechacek".

Amy Pechacek  
Secretary-designee  
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 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) 2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022), 37<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 2022 amounts allocated and expended by appropriation.

Budget Reference	Statutory Reference and Description	Count of Awards	Amount Allocated SFY22	Amount Expended SFY22*
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1) Workforce Training	36	\$4,866,179	\$2,630,702.50
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1j) Re-entry Initiatives Grants	-	-	\$838,392.44
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1u) Shipbuilders	-	-	\$494,978.66
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1r) UW System Internship Grant	1	\$1,133,821	-
20.445(1)(b)	47.07 Project SEARCH	-	\$250,000	\$32,000
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1)(a) Industry-recognized Certifications	-	-	\$13,088.94
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1)(b) Training Teachers for Dual Enrollment	-	-	\$452,278.01
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1g)(c) Commute to Careers	-	-	\$208,859.68
	<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>\$6,250,000</b>	<b>\$4,670,300.23</b>
20.445(1)(bm)	106.27(1) Workforce Training Programs Administration	-	-	\$1,285,931.85
20.445(1)(bm)	106.27(1r) Wisconsin's Internship Initiative	-	-	\$149,512.40
20.445(1)(bm)	106 Apprenticeship Administration	-	-	\$91,735.96
	Subchapter I			
20.445(1)(bm)	106.27(1m) LMIS Administration	-	-	\$832,969.60
	<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$2,360,149.81</b>

\*Includes expenditures in SFY 2022 from both SFY 2022 awards and prior fiscal year awards. Does not include \$304,520.51 in non-106.27 program expenditures from (1)(b). Total expenditures for 20.445(1)(b) were \$4,974,820.74.

<sup>1</sup> Count includes 36 WFF standard grants 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 or a series of trainings to meet their business objectives and employee training needs. Organizations are awarded two-year grants to train 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 2022, 36 organizations received a total of \$4,866,179 in WFF standard grants to provide training to 2,638 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 tracking a trainee's employment status and hourly wage after training.

## Industry-Recognized Certifications

**s.106.27(1)(a)**

Grants to technical colleges 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. Over the life of the program, nine technical colleges partnered with 199 high schools to enroll 1,176 high school students, resulting in 873 students receiving industry-recognized credentials. DWD provided funding 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 from 209 school districts to meet the accreditation standards required to teach dual enrollment courses. In SFY 2022, 133 teacher-students received training with funding from a prior year award.

## University of Wisconsin System - Increasing Internship Opportunities

**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. As part of this project, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) will source, prepare, and place 100 diverse student participants in paid internships within Milwaukee-area corporations through Dec. 31, 2023. 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 develop internship placements with local employers who have signed the ROC pledge. The collaboration involves 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); the UWM Office of Strategic Partnerships; and Milwaukee organizations and corporations. The collaboration will create internship opportunities that prepare students for early career experiences, thus retaining student talent in Wisconsin.

In SFY 2022, DWD awarded \$1,133,821 to the UW-System to increase opportunities for and access to internships in high demands fields for students. UW-System will use WFF funds to promote student internship opportunities and to incent private sector businesses in high demand fields to provide paid internships to Wisconsin students.

## Blueprint for Prosperity - Commute to Careers

**s.106.27(1g)(c)**

Grants provide employment services to individuals with disabilities. During the SFY 2022 reporting period, the grant provided 6,657 rides to 130 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 up to 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, provided job training for 10 individuals in welding occupations, transitional support, job placement assistance, and post-release employment case management in SFY 2022. The efforts will continue in SFY 2023.

In response to the critical and growing need for workforce training and career preparation for the populations in DOC care, particularly individuals preparing for re-entry, training continued with support of mobile training lab instructional expenses, instructional staff from UW System schools, job centers within correctional facilities, and DOC workforce training IT solutions in SFY 2022. Funding was awarded in prior years.

## **Wisconsin's Internship Initiative**

**s.106.27(1r)**

Due to pandemic-related restrictions during SFY 2022 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 access stipends to facilitate their participation in internships.

The Returnship is an innovative approach to support two traditionally underserved higher education populations: students who may not have had the opportunity to develop the social capital needed to successfully enter the workforce, and adult learners who are returning to active work after a period of absence or upon earning a degree or credential. The need for developing social capital was first identified in research undertaken by the Center for College-Workforce Transitions; the Wisconsin Internship Initiative collaborated on a panel presentation that introduced the concept to academia and career services personnel in 2018. Adult learners in general are not aware of WisConnect (a website developed by DWD devoted to helping students find internships and employers find interns) and its related resources. DWD engaged in outreach to establish a connection with an institution of higher education focused on adult learners in Wisconsin who want or need to complete internships.

Finally, DWD staff remained active in SFY 2022 in the Wisconsin Career Development Association and the Center for College-Workforce Transitions. Because many employers post their internship opportunities on their websites and instruct students to apply directly in response to those postings, there is no way to determine the origin of the application process. As such, no data on the number of internship connections made on WisConnect is available.

Activities included:

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

## **Shipbuilder Training**

**s.106.27(1u)**

Working in partnership with the Bay Area Workforce Development Board, Fincantieri Marine Group is implementing workforce training programs to create a more diversified and productive talent pipeline amid an expanding local marine industry. Funded by a \$1 million grant awarded in SFY 2020 and a \$1 million grant awarded in SFY 2021, Fincantieri continued upskilling incumbent employees in SFY 2022, training workers in leadership development, marine welding, ship fitting, internal auditing, enterprise resource planning, and other critical areas. Approximately \$400,622 in training expenses were incurred.

## **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 2022, services provided to existing sites totaled \$15,000 in technical assistance and \$35,575 in training, benefiting 176 interns during the reporting period. These services helped keep 25 of the 30 sites in operation, and kept the remaining five sites engaged and planning for re-opening during the 2022-23 school year.

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 2022.

## Trainee Outcomes SFY 2022

ALL ACTIVE TRAINEES SFY 2022 s. 106.27(1) and (1j)	
Employment and wage results below are for trainees from the subset of programs within this statutory category who completed training in SFY 2022 (July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022), for which metrics in the required reporting elements are available:	
Trainees who completed training	978
Unemployed to gainful employment	210
Average wages before	Not Applicable
Average wages after	\$16.25
Underemployed to new employment	22
Average wages before	\$13.30
Average wages after	\$19.83
Incumbent increased wages	309
Average wages before	\$26.68
Average wages after	\$29.54

Of the 978 trainees who completed training, 14 are placed in seasonal positions, 17 in temporary positions and 45 in part-time positions.

Wage data shows impressive gains since the program's inception. Trained employees' incomes are increasing. The average wage of a successful WFF trainee is \$24.68 per hour. Wages for underemployed workers increased an average of \$6.53 per hour, while incumbent workers' wages have risen an average of \$2.86 per hour as worker skills and productivity have increased. Formerly unemployed workers are averaging \$16.25 per hour, while incumbent workers who completed training are earning an average of \$29.54 per hour.