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## Wisconsin Fast Forward Submitting a Successful Proposal

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# Today's Agenda

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- Wisconsin Fast Forward Standard Grants
  - Overview
  - Program Requirements
  - Criteria for a successful application
  - Common mistakes, assumptions, and omissions
  - Help
  - Questions



## Overview

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- The Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) program was signed into law in March 2013 with the near-unanimous support of the State Legislature, creating the DWD Office of Skills Development (OSD)
  - Chapter DWD 801 (DWD 801.05)
  - CHAPTER 106 of APPRENTICE, EMPLOYMENT AND EQUAL RIGHTS PROGRAMS (106.27)
- Addresses Wisconsin's workforce 'skills gap' through customized skills training grants for employers to fill current job openings and ongoing skill requirements
- Supports business-driven, customized, occupational training that helps workers attain a more robust role in Wisconsin's workforce
- Expanded and Standard



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WFF was signed into law in March 2013, with bipartisan support.

The program was designed to support creating a more robust workforce for Wisconsin, through the provision of occupational skills training for workers.

The program supports employers by helping them obtain and maintain a supply of skilled workers.

The program supports workers by providing necessary, transferable skills that are in demand by occupation, as well as helping workers progress career ladders to more robust work situations. The focus is on improving their employment potential and their skills, while training them to meet the specific needs the employer has, in order to help the employer be more competitive.

## Expanded Grant Program

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- Reimbursement grants
- Short-term training
- Specialized Grant Program Announcements
- Rules differ from Standard Grants
  - Occupational training for teachers
  - Advanced Manufacturing Technical Education Equipment for CTE instruction by school districts
  - Shipbuilding
  - Technical Colleges
  - Corrections



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The program was created to help address the need for workers to have the skills necessary to perform the jobs that employers have open that they are finding hard to fill.

WFF provides reimbursement for specialized, customized training that prepares workers to do the specific jobs employers have available and/or puts them on a career ladder to success. The employer, or consortium of employers, is usually the one designing and leading the training.

There must be a commitment from one or more employers to hire or retain the trainees at the end of the successful completion of training.

To date, more than 20,000 trainees have been trained through Wisconsin Fast Forward

## Standard Grant Program

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- Reimbursement grants
- Should respond to business or market needs
- Customized “hard skills” occupational training
- Training for new or existing workers
- Short- to medium-term training (less than 2 years)
- Does not replace existing, routine business training or on-going training
- Provides transferrable skills and/or leads to industry-recognized credentials



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WFF provides reimbursement for expenses incurred to design and to implement specialized, customized training that prepares workers to do the specific jobs employers have available, may be hard to fill, or may be ramping up for.

The proposed training should be in response to employer - individual, group, or regional sector/industry - needs.

Most of the training should be for occupational skills, hard skills.

All workers – existing, new, or previously unemployed, are eligible for training.

Training must be short or medium-term; that is completed within the grant period.

Job training that would normally occur, such as onboarding, general skills, etc. are not reimbursed.

We like to see proposed training programs that will provide workers with credentials, or skills they can use in an occupation, or climb a career ladder – skill that will benefit them in the long term.

## Standard Wisconsin Fast Forward

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\$5,000 to  
\$400,000

\$0.50:\$1  
match

Any size  
company



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The basic facts about Fast Forward Grants

## Standard Grant Achievements

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- \$31,960,411 (315 grants) awarded
- \$1,230 average cost per trainee
- 20,000+ employees have gained additional or enhanced skills
- More than 60% of training is customized to specific employer needs
- Top three training curriculum areas are Production, Construction, and Healthcare occupations
- Of those completing training, approximately 91% are employed after training, and of those, 58% get a wage increase
- \$1.08 average hourly wage increase after training



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To-date, the grant program has experienced nice results and what I would call success, building Wisconsin's workforce.



# Grant Application

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- Eligible applicants include:
  - A public agency
  - A private organization
  - A coalition or partnership of entities under the auspices of a public agency or a private organization
  - The tribal governing body of a federally recognized tribe or band of Indians, or an organization appointed by the tribal governing body
- All applications MUST include Employer(s)



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Grant applications are submitted by applicants online, using our WFF application portal, available at our website.

Eligible applicants, other than a tribal governing body, must be current on all federal and state tax obligations, and be registered as a Wisconsin business at the Department of Financial Institutions. Organizations requesting funds must be financially viable, as determined by the Due Diligence portion of the application.

All proposals must involve an Employer, alone or as part of an applicant consortium. If the consortium includes multiple employers, it is recommended that applicants represent a consortium to include partners with similar talent development needs.

In addition to at least one employer, members of an applicant consortium may include any or all of the following:

- An industry sector partner;
- A non-profit;
- A public training provider;

- A private training provider;
- A Wisconsin Workforce Development Board;
- A Wisconsin Technical College

## Types of Trainees

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- Incumbent Worker: current employees on payroll prior to grant submission
- Underemployed Trainees: part-time or seasonal prior to training, or a worker employed but not in a capacity that reflects their skills and experience in terms of hours, compensation, or responsibility
- Unemployed Trainees: do not have a job at time of training, but are intended to be employed with project partner after completing training



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When completing an application, we ask applicants to tell us about the types of employees that will undergo training. We are required by administrative rules to use these definitions for the different types of workers, and these different types of workers shape our performance requirements of grants – so keep these in mind. We also collect data pertinent to the types of workers, that we require entities offering training to provide to us.

## Eligible Expenses

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- Training-related expenses
  - Curriculum development
    - Curriculum becomes property of DWD and may be shared with the public
  - Instructor salaries
  - Consultant/contractual expenses
  - Training materials and supplies
  - Tuition
    - More cost-effective than alternatives and part of a larger training program with multiple courses



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The grant program funds specific worker training expenses by reimbursing the costs of those paid expenses, up to the award amount. These are some of the categories of expenses that are eligible for reimbursement.

Can now fund tuition if it is part of a larger training program and more economical than other options such as on-site training.

Note that any curriculum developed for which WFF funds are used, must be shared with DWD and is subject to public scrutiny and use.

# Grant Evaluation Guidelines

- Rubric is posted
- Criteria AND point values
  - Project Need
  - Capacity Building
  - Equity and Economic Opportunity
  - Economic Impact
  - Training Objectives and Outcomes
  - Training Program, Design, Cost, and Implementation



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**Applications are evaluated by a committee, using the Evaluation Rubric that is posted to the website.**

Scoring is from one to 100, and proposal must score at least 50 to be considered for funding.

### **Opportunity to Trainee**

- Opportunities for under-represented populations
- Durability of skills
- Wage level - **Up to 5 bonus points will be awarded** - if post trainee wages fall within the wages outlined for each county where employment placement will occur (See Appendix A)
- Number of trainees served
- Defined career/educational pathway

### **Cost per participant**

Appropriate relationship to business need and trainee opportunity  
Comparative position to similar training

### **Accessibility for Under-represented/Displaced/Economically Disadvantaged Workers**

Recruitment process  
Readiness level of skill training

Availability of support/services coordination with community-based organization

**Adequacy of Fiscal and Program Management**

Entity capability to administer a reimbursement program

Entity capability to maintain fiscal responsibility

## Program Requirements

- All WFF grant applications must include at least one employer
- Employers should have a documented, unmet, workforce training need
- The employer may be the Applicant and may use an internal and/or external training provider
- Participating employer(s) should determine the training needed and select the training provider(s)
- External Training Providers
  - Must be named in the application as Project Partners
  - May be the Applicant in an applicant consortium of many employers



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### **Employer need-driven program requires participation of employers!**

#### **Skill Shortage**

- Assessment of need
- Availability of other training in area

#### **Practicality/Potential for Employment**

- Level of business commitment to program
- Appropriateness of program design to meet business needs

## Program Requirements

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- Project **must positively impact Wisconsin workforce**
  - Must support **employer-led** worker training
    - May include other workforce stakeholders, e.g., training providers
  - Must include employers that have a **skill demand** for new/existing workers
  - Must result in improved or new **job placements** for those completing training
  - Match



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Grant program has required elements.

Again, the program is not training for the sake of training. While bettering oneself with training is admirable, Wisconsin Fast Forward requires results that positively impact Wisconsin's workforce. Therefore, employers are critical to grants.

Training must be driven by employer needs.

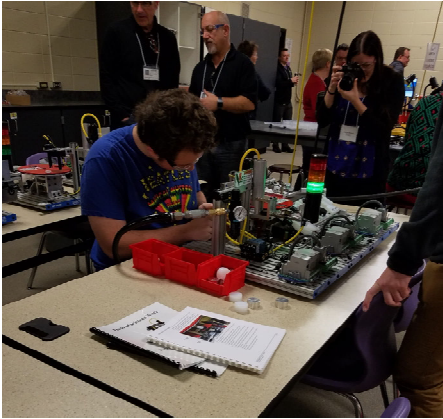
Skills must be in demand in Wisconsin.

Trainees must see improved job situations as a result of obtaining training.

Match is required – 50 cents on the dollar.



## Grant Outcomes



### Deliverables:

- Completion of Training - 85%
- Received Industry Recognized Credential(s) - 75%
- Placed Into Employment - 65%
- Increased Wages - 75%
- Retainage
  - 2% of award withheld if deliverables not met or exceeded



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- 85% of trainees will complete training
- 75% will receive industry recognized credentials if applicable
- 65% of unemployed trainees will be employed, 65% underemployed will improve their employment status.
- 75% incumbent workers will grow their salaries

If deliverables are not met, we have the ability to pursue return of reimbursed funds.

Poor performance may also impact future proposals that are submitted.

## Program Requirements

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- What is a Job Placement?
  - Existing employees
    - Wage increase
  - Underemployed workers
    - More robust employment
      - Part-time to full-time or seasonal to permanent
  - Unemployed trainees
    - Full-time employment
- **MUST BE DOCUMENTED**



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The program, per administrative rules, requires that

For those completing training:

- Incumbent workers are required to get a raise
- Underemployed workers are required to advance to more robust employment situation
- Unemployed Trainees are required to receive employment.

These things must be documented in the proposal, which we'll discuss in upcoming slides.

## Program Requirements

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- What is Match?
  - Skin in the game
  - Cash and/or in-kind
  - 50 cents per award dollar of match
- An expense
- **MUST BE DOCUMENTED**



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Match is also required of proposals. We want folks to have a "stake in the result," to be willing to incur a risk by being involved in achieving a goal.

Match can be cash or in-kind services or supplies, in an amount of 50% of the award amount.

Match is considered an expense, and like an expense, must be incurred/offered during the grant period. NOT BEFORE! If Match is obtained BEFORE the grant period, it will likely be rejected.

If other grants are used as Match, the granting source must allow their funds to be used as Match.

Again, Match must be documented, accounted for, and reconciled to expenses for which reimbursement is requested.

How is Match documented? Via components of your proposal that are critical to receiving an award. Let's review this documentation.

## Letters of commitment vs support

- Commitment carries more weight than support
- **For every trainee to be placed in a job or to receive a wage increase, a corresponding commitment from the employer(s) on letterhead is required**
  - Document training need
  - Specify counts of placements
  - Specify wages/increase \$ amounts
  - Specify credentials/skills attained from training
- Match should also be detailed in a letter of Commitment
- **SEE EXAMPLE ON PAGE 17 OF DIRECTIONS**



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Grant proposal may contain Letters of Commitment and Letters of Support.

There are key differences between the two that impact the strength of the proposal.

Letters of Commitment are stronger than letters of support. This letter documents specifically what the partner commits to provide to support the program and its results.

The writer of the letter is COMMITTING to provide employment, skills training, match, etc. to this project. This is a firm commitment.

## Mistakes, assumptions, and omissions

- Evaluators may not be familiar with jargon, industry, occupations, training needs
  - Tell the story
  - Be specific and provide enough detail
  - Document claims with statistics or citations
- Customized, specialized training
  - Document business need
  - Not available elsewhere
  - Explain why selected training providers are the best option to achieve stated results



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Some common mistakes, assumptions, and omissions that are made with proposals include:

Not providing enough detail – No assumptions should be made about the knowledge of the evaluators regarding the organization, business, skill needs, etc. Imagine that you are explaining the situation to someone at a cocktail party or in an elevator.

Be sure to provide enough detail so evaluators can understand why the training is needed, why it is important, and how your program design will meet or exceed your stated goals.

Why should DWD fund this training? Why can't someone go to one of the tech schools or take a class online? What is important about this training and the benefits that it will bring to trainees that makes it worth the money that is requested?

How and why is this proposed program the answer to the problem?

## Mistakes, assumptions, and omissions

- Soft skills only – program focus is on “hard” skills, occupational training
- Expenses, including match, must be incurred during the grant period
  - Grant period begins with full execution of contract
  - Prior expenses, including match, not eligible
- Grant funds are not provided for on-boarding, routine business operation, operating expenses, taxes, debt service, trainee wages



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WFF recognizes that some soft skills are important. However, this program focuses on occupational training. A minimal amount of soft skills training may be included. However, funding is competitive, and other proposals may focus more on hard skills training.

A common error is a misunderstanding of match and the timing of expenses. Match, as an expense, must also occur during the timespan of the award – not before. The timing of donations and commitments is critical. They must occur after the grant contract is fully executed.

Grant funds are not intended to be used for routine, often-offered training that is part of doing normal business. Anything that you would normally offer to a new employee, is company policy, or a normal expenditure that occurs in the conduct of daily business, is not an eligible expense for reimbursement. See the Grant Program Announcement for eligible and ineligible expenses.

Ask yourself, would I, as a Wisconsin taxpayer, be happy to pay for this expense? Also, since the program is funded from dollars collected from

Wisconsin taxpayers, we wish to see that projects benefit or bring returns from the training investment to Wisconsin. Consider using in-state training providers!

## Mistakes, assumptions, and omissions

- Training for the sake of training (no placements)
- Proposals must include documentation of committed employer placements
  - Must be confirmed job placements, wage increases, promotions, job scope increases, career ladder
  - Not a range of hires (i.e., “5-7 employees”), not subject to market conditions, not dependent on business needs, not “hope to hire”
- Proposed trainee count must match count of committed employer placements



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Placements, i.e. wage increases, employment, more robust employment, are critical to defining the success of the grant. Training for the sake of training is not a focus of this grant program. We are required to report program RESULTS to the legislature annually.

Evaluators read the proposal – they are not to infer, assume, or read between the lines to understand your intent. It has to be spelled out in black in white:

After completion of training,

- How many Trainees will receive a wage increase? What is the increase?
- How many will be employed?
- How many will be promoted?
- How many will receive transferable skills?
- How many will be employed better?

Check your math! Make certain that the number of Trainees equals the number of placements! Make certain that the numbers/counts are consistent throughout the proposal.



## Mistakes, assumptions, and omissions

- Project start date must be no earlier than contract execution date – up to 90 days after the application due date
- Project end date must be within 2 years of the project start date
- All training, reimbursements, pre- and post-training data entry, and final report must be completed by project end date
- Program does not fund repeat implementations



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Make certain that your program and activity dates align, and can fit within the grant period. All activities must be completed during the grant period, including the final report.

Reimbursement of training expenses for a four-year degree or apprenticeship is not appropriate for this grant program.

If you have offered the training previously, it is not eligible for funding again. If it has already been offered, it should become a standard and best practice of the business or organization to conduct the training, after the grant expires.

## Criteria for success

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- Proposal offers
  - Identified, documented, workforce need
  - Trainee recruitment addressed
  - Itemized budget expenses
  - Industry- or occupation-recognized/required credentials, certificates, licenses obtained as a result of training
  - Confirmed placements for all proposed Trainees
  - Count of trainees and cost-per-trainee are reasonable
  - Achievable timeline with milestones for evaluating progress
  - Clear definition of success



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In summary, these are the criteria for successful proposals. Most funded proposals have at least these elements.

Budget expenses should be itemized (how many hours times \$/per hour times the count of participants, etc.) so evaluators can see how you arrived at your budget amount.

Occupationally important or required credentials, certificates, or licenses should be obtained as a result of completing training. This represents industry-valued skills that stay with the individual that they can use throughout their career.

A placement consists of a company name, named occupations, a count of trainees that will be hired, their wage, and a description of benefits.

Make certain that the count of Trainees is reasonable, and training costs are reasonable. Don't puff up the count of trainees to lower training cost. We are smart people. We can identify that.

Identify the metrics that you will use to determine program success and make your program achievable! Under-promise and over-deliver!

## Criteria for success

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- Document training need with statistics and cite references
- Describe how trainees/workforce will be impacted – wages, education, credentials, transferable skills
- Define specific training performance goals
- Clear, concise project timeline leading to defined outcomes
- Recruit committed Employment Partner(s)
  - Identify training capacity and document success
  - Letters of Commitment
- **WRITE TO THE RUBRIC**



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Why is the grant needed (what is the skill gap, training needs, etc.)?

WHO will benefit from your project? In addition to the Trainees and the employers?

How many people will be trained? Hired? Retained with an increased wage due to increased skills and production capacity?

HOW will you do this? Is the project timeline realistic?

Is the path to permanent fulltime employment realistic? Are employment commitments in place? Does the budget and plan facilitate this goal?

You have access to the evaluation rubric. **WRITE TO THE RUBRIC!** Address the criteria. If you cannot address a criteria, say why.

## Grant Application Help

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- Prior to release of Grant Program Announcement:
  - Determine Wisconsin Fast Forward Program fit
  - Business need driven program
  - Training must benefit Wisconsin's workforce
- As applications are entered:
  - Help is limited to technical assistance only
  - Issues with use of online application portal
  - Clarifications of Grant Program Announcement
- No application changes allowed after submission



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Grant applications are submitted by applicants online, using our WFF website.

When an applicant is entering their application, staff can see it and provide assistance if you contact us before submitting the proposal.

As soon as an application is submitted, we perform business solvency and background checks (criminal background, financial status, etc.), and will ask for any clarifications needed to aid proposal evaluation.

We are fair to everyone. We can offer what could be perceived as favoritism. We cannot review proposals – that would be unfair to those that did not ask us to review proposals. The instructions are on the website, in the Grant Program Announcement; requirements in the Evaluation Rubric.

You should check back to the website to read FAQs that are posted. READ the Application Directions. Everything has been provided – you have the tools for success.

## Grant Application Help

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- **SAVE OFTEN AND AFTER EVERY CHANGE TO APPLICATION**
- **ALLOW ENOUGH TIME – PLAN AHEAD**
- **COMPOSE TEXT OFFLINE**
- **WRITE TO THE RUBRIC AND TO THE GPA**
- **READ DIRECTIONS, FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS, USE TOOLS POSTED ON WEBSITE**



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Some technical hints

If you are prevented from submitting, review the proposal. You either did not answer a required question or did not save the proposal.

Don't wait until the last minute to get supporting documentation, letters of placement or match commitment, or letters of support.

We recommend that you compose the text in a word processing program, and paste it into the online application. Write your application while looking at the GPA and the Rubric!

We provide comprehensive amount of tools, guides, and hints on the website. USE THEM!

# Questions?

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