

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Fast Forward





Fast  **Forward** 

Inside

- 2 [Wisconsin Fast Forward Overview](#)
- 3 [Wisconsin Fast Forward Activities](#)
- 5 [Trainee Outcomes SFY 2023](#)

December 29, 2023

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 2023 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 2023 WFF Annual Report, DWD provides details on program activities that occurred during the 2023 state fiscal year (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023). During this period, 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,



Amy Pechacek, Secretary
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) 2023 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023), 38¹ grants totaling \$6,250,000 were allocated. In SFY 2023, 36 organizations received a total of \$5,158,796 in WFF standard grants to provide training to 2,139 individuals. Wage data for trainees who completed training in SFY 2023 demonstrates impressive wage gains. Wages for underemployed workers increased by an average of 98 cents per hour, while incumbent workers' wages rose by an average of \$2.26 per hour as worker skills and productivity increased. Formerly unemployed workers are averaging \$14.25 per hour, while incumbent workers who completed training are earning an average of \$24.36 per hour.

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 2023 amounts allocated and expended by appropriation.

Budget Reference	Statutory Reference and Description	Count of Awards	Amount Allocated SFY23	Amount Expended SFY23*
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1) Workforce Training	36	\$5,158,796	\$4,990,585.22
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1j) Re-entry Initiatives Grants	1	\$50,000	-
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1u) Shipbuilders	-	-	\$294,762.18
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1r) UW System Internships Grant	-	-	-
20.445(1)(b)	47.07 Project SEARCH	-	\$250,000	\$54,743.14
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1)(a) Industry-recognized Certifications	-	-	-
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1)(b) Training Teachers for Dual Enrollment	-	-	\$191,620.71
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1g)(c) Commute to Careers	-	-	-
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1g) Wisconsin Technical College System	1	\$791,204	-
	Total	38	\$6,250,000	\$5,531,711.25
20.445(1)(bm)	106.27(1) Workforce Training Programs Administration	-	-	\$1,532,714.36
20.445(1)(bm)	106.27(1r) Wisconsin's Internship Initiative	-	-	\$449,981.05
20.445(1)(bm)	106 Apprenticeship Administration	-	-	\$1,427,311.99
	Subchapter I	-	-	-
20.445(1)(bm)	106.27(1m) LMIS Administration	-	-	\$1,528,092.16
	Total	-	-	\$4,938,099.56

*Includes expenditures in SFY 2023 from both SFY 2023 awards and prior fiscal year awards.

¹Count includes 36 WFF standard grants, one Wisconsin Technical College System Board, and one Re-entry Initiatives Grant.

Wisconsin Fast Forward Activities

Workforce Training

s.106.27(1)

Standard training grants provide employers with resources to attract and retain workers who need specialized skills to succeed in the workplace. Grantees may offer a single training or 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 2023, 36 organizations received a total of \$5,158,796 in WFF standard grants to provide training to 2,139 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 hourly wage after training.

Industry-Recognized Certifications

s.106.27(1)(a)

Grants to technical colleges across the state provided sophomores, juniors, and seniors enrolled in Wisconsin high schools with workplace readiness and technical skills for industry-recognized certifications in high-demand fields. The grants closed in SFY 2022. 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 2023, 27 teacher-students received training with funding from a prior year award.

University of Wisconsin System Internships Grant

s.106.27(1r)

DWD awarded \$500,000 on June 30, 2021, to the Universities of Wisconsin to promote and coordinate internships in high-demand fields. As part of this project, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) is sourcing, preparing and placing 100 diverse student participants in paid internships within Milwaukee-area corporations through Dec. 31, 2023. UWM is partnering with the 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 and placing interns 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 is intended to 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 administration to increase opportunities and access to internships for students in high-demand fields. The UW administration is using WFF funds to promote student internship opportunities and to incent private sector businesses in high demand fields to provide paid internships to Wisconsin students. The projects continue until June 30, 2024.

UW-Milwaukee received \$382,000 to promote and coordinate paid internships in Wisconsin's green energy and clean water industries. The university has partnered with businesses in these industries to enroll 42 interns in three-month paid internships. Internship enrollment has been ongoing and will be completed in 2024.

UW-Milwaukee also received \$208,624 to develop paid internship opportunities for 20 students in the areas of humanities, social sciences, and other majors where students are often offered unpaid internships. However, applications to the program will be available to any students interested in the internship positions. 24 students are currently engaging in paid internships for three, six, or nine months, depending on the needs of the partner employer and the student's academic schedule.

UW-River Falls received \$244,426. In collaboration with industry partners, leaders will create innovative experiences in agriculture for students. Through this effort, 20 students will be placed in 14-week summer internships or 28-week academic year internships and be provided a career development seminar focused on resume-building workshops

and strategies for career advancement. Currently, 12 interns have been placed into the 14-week summer internship program. Recruiting and placement for the 28-week academic year internships is ongoing.

UW-Stout received \$298,771 to establish a comprehensive cybersecurity internship program and place 40 students in paid internships with industry partners. Interns will work 15 to 20 hours per week for a minimum of three months. Student recruitment is ongoing, and students will be placed in paid internships in spring of 2024.

Reentry Initiatives

s.106.27(1j)

DWD awarded \$74,745 to the Bay Area Workforce Development Board in SFY 2021 to assist 20 incarcerated individuals in Manitowoc County and Sheboygan County jails. The project, led by a consortium composed of Lakeshore Technical College and the Great Lakes Training and Development Corporation, provided job training for 19 individuals in welding occupations, transitional support, job placement assistance, and post-release employment case management in SFY 2023. The efforts will continue in SFY 2024.

In response to the critical and growing need for workforce training and career preparation for the populations in the Department of Corrections (DOC) care, particularly individuals preparing for reentry, training continued with support of mobile training lab instructional expenses, instructional staff from UW campuses, 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)

Outreach efforts continue on college campuses as they have since the Wisconsin Internship Initiative began in 2016. DWD staff efforts include discussions of the concept of returnships. Returnships are a structured effort for adults who have not participated in the workforce to learn new skills, gain experience and reduce barriers workers face after being out of the labor market for a period of time. Large employers such as JP Morgan, Goldman Sachs, and Amazon have formalized returnship programs. Internship Initiative staff offered to serve as a presenter for internships for returning workers at the fall in-person National Symposium on College Internships and is awaiting a decision.

DWD staff remained active in SFY 2023 in the Wisconsin Career Development Association and the Center for College-Workforce Transitions. Activities included:

- 49 outreach efforts to academic program chairs, deans, chancellors, and presidents.
- 3,851 Wisconsin businesses using WisConnect.
- 11,304 Wisconsin-based internships posted on WisConnect.
- 9,059 direct student contacts at job and internship fairs.

It should be noted that many employers post their internship opportunities on their websites and instruct students to apply directly in response to those postings. This makes it impossible to determine the origin of the application process and, therefore, information on the number of internship connections made through WisConnect is not available.

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 in response to 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 its upskilling of incumbent employees in SFY 2023, training workers in leadership development, marine welding, ship fitting, internal auditing, enterprise resource planning, and other critical areas. Approximately \$294,762 in training expenses were incurred during SFY 2023.

Project SEARCH

s.47.07

Project SEARCH, established under s.47.07 and administered by DWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, 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 among DVR, a local business, a school, a vocational services agency, and a disability services agency (for example, managed care organizations). While no new sites were established in SFY 2023, services provided to existing sites totaled \$10,962 in technical assistance and \$74,685 in training, benefiting 185 interns during the reporting period. These services helped keep 28 of the 30 sites operating and kept the remaining two sites engaged to prepare for the 2023-2024 program 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 Program (WETAP), Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, Advanced Manufacturing Technical Education Equipment Grants, and the Wisconsin Internship Initiative (WIIN) during SFY 2023.

Wisconsin Technical College System Board Project

s.106.27(1G)

DWD executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Wisconsin Technical College System Board to provide \$791,204 in SFY 2023 funds to reduce the waiting lists for enrollment in programs and courses in high-demand fields such as health care, advanced manufacturing, and other occupations within science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. The services and high-demand employment fields that will be the focus of this MOU will be determined by DWD and the technical college system.

Trainee Outcomes SFY 2023

ALL ACTIVE TRAINEES SFY 2023 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 2023 (July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023), for which metrics in the required reporting elements are available:

Trainees who completed training	1,362
Unemployed to Gainful Employment	242
Average Wages Before	Not Applicable
Average Wages After	\$14.25
Underemployed to New Employment	43
Average Wages Before	\$14.62
Average Wages After	\$15.60
Incumbent Increased Wages	629
Average Wages Before	\$22.10
Average Wages After	\$24.36

Of the 1,362 trainees who completed training, 24 were placed in seasonal positions, 29 in temporary positions, and 192 in part-time positions.

STATE OF WISCONSIN



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