

FastForward

ANNUAL REPORT 2024





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December 23, 2024

The Honorable Tony Evers
Governor of the State of Wisconsin
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 2024 Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) Annual Report.

The WFF program helps Wisconsin employers offer workforce training to build the tailored job skills needed to succeed in a modern economy. WFF funding helps hundreds of organizations across Wisconsin. These organizations train thousands of workers to perform in-demand jobs, advance in the workplace, and earn higher wages.

In the attached 2024 WFF Annual Report, DWD provides details on program activities that occurred during state fiscal year (SFY) 2024 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024). During this period, DWD collaborated with employers, training providers, and educational stakeholders to award training grants totaling \$5.25 million.

Thank you for your consideration of this report.

Sincerely,



Amy Pechacek, Secretary
Department of Workforce Development

WISCONSIN FAST FORWARD OVERVIEW

The WFF program is an innovative talent development solution driven by Wisconsin businesses to train and retain highly skilled workers. Since 2013, DWD's Office of Skills Development (OSD) has partnered with organizations statewide to advance the skills of thousands of workers so that they can perform in-demand jobs, earn higher wages, and advance a thriving Wisconsin economy.

Training grants and administration of WFF, as well as other statutorily authorized programs including Reentry Initiatives and Project SEARCH, are supported by funds appropriated under s. 20.445(1)(b) and s. 20.445(1)(bm), Wis. Stat., respectively. Below is a table showing SFY 2024 amounts allocated and expended by appropriation.

In SFY 2024 (July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024), 22 organizations received a total of \$3,974,200 in WFF standard grants to provide training to 2,133 individuals. Wage data for trainees who completed training in SFY 2024 demonstrates impressive wage gains. Wages for underemployed workers increased by an average of \$3.66 per hour, while incumbent workers' wages rose by an average of \$2.84 per hour as worker skills and productivity increased. After training, formerly unemployed workers earned an average hourly wage of \$20.24, while incumbent workers saw earnings rise to \$28.43 per hour.

Reentry Initiatives Grants, designed to support instruction costs for mobile classrooms and upkeep and maintenance for the mobile classrooms, totaled \$1,025,800, while Project SEARCH, which provides students with disabilities immersive workforce experience, received an allocation of \$250,000 during SFY 2024. The Department of Corrections (DOC) provided instruction through mobile labs in welding, CNC machining, and mechatronics to 106 justice involved participants in SFY24.

Budget Reference		Statutory Reference and Description	Count of Awards	Amount Allocated SFY24	Amount Expended SFY24*
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1)	Workforce Training	22	\$3,974,200	\$3,884,203.49
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1j)	Re-entry Initiatives Grants	2	\$1,025,800	\$376,984.39
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1u)	Shipbuilders	-	-	\$535,859.14
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1r)	UW System Internships Grant	-	-	-
20.445(1)(b)	47.07	Project SEARCH	-	\$250,000	\$295,894.90
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1)(a)	Industry-recognized Certifications	-	-	\$212,073.11
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1)(b)	Training Teachers for Dual Enrollment	-	-	\$79,120.67
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1g)(c)	Commute to Careers	-	-	-
20.445(1)(b)	106.27(1g)	Wisconsin Technical College System	-	-	\$1,432.84
Total			24	\$5,250,000	\$5,385,568.54
20.445(1)(bm)	106.27(1)	Workforce Training Programs Administration	-	-	\$1,623,172.64
20.445(1)(bm)	106.27(1r)	Wisconsin's Internship Initiative	-	-	\$153,802.95
20.445(1)(bm)	106	Apprenticeship Administration	-	-	\$265,651.78
	Subchapter I		-	-	
20.445(1)(bm)	106.27(1m)	LMIS Administration	-	-	\$930,916.27
Total			-	-	\$2,973,543.64

*Includes expenditures in SFY 2024 from both SFY 2024 awards and prior fiscal year awards.

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 2024, 22 organizations received a total of \$3,974,200 in WFF standard grants to provide training to 2,133 individuals. Worker trainee success is measured in three categories: unemployed workers obtaining a job, underemployed workers advancing their careers, and incumbent worker increasing their skills and salaries. DWD measures success by a completed trainee's employment status and hourly wage after training.

Success Story - Nemak USA Inc.

As part of WFF's targeted grants, Nemak USA enhanced its workforce by training general production staff to advance into die caster positions in Sheboygan, Wis. The company received a \$369,275 WFF Industry Sectors Worker Training Grant to execute the training program, supported by Semoto. In addition to the die caster training, Nemak trained supervisors to support workers in the die casting role. The grant supported training for 15 unemployed workers and 59 existing employees, surpassing the original goal by 34 workers, strengthening Nemak's workforce capacity.



Success Story - Bell Ambulance Inc.

To create a talent pipeline for its growing fleet of ambulances in greater Milwaukee, Bell Ambulance turned to in-house training through the WFF Industry Sectors Worker Training Grant. Its Cadet to Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program was fueled by a \$172,940 WFF grant that trained newcomers to work in the field. In partnership with Lake County Fire and Rescue, the program trained cadets to pass the National EMT exam. Bell trained 132 cadets, exceeding its target by 16, and achieved a 99% hire rate for unemployed trainees and 100% for current employees.



Training Teachers to Teach Dual Enrollment

s.106.27(1)(b)

Grants to technical colleges provided training to high school teachers in school districts throughout the state. The training aimed to meet the accreditation standards needed to teach dual enrollment courses. In SFY 2024, 14 teacher-students were trained with funding from a prior year award.

University of Wisconsin System Internships Grant: 20.445(1)(b) s.106.27(1r)

DWD awarded \$500,000 on June 30, 2021, to the Universities of Wisconsin (UW) to promote and coordinate internships in high-demand fields. As part of this project, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) sourced, prepared, and placed 97 student participants in paid internships within Milwaukee-area corporations through Dec. 31, 2023. UWM partnered with the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce's Region of Choice, 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 Region of Choice pledge. The collaboration involved 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 created internship opportunities that prepared students for early career experiences, 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 the WFF funds to promote student internship opportunities and to incent private sector businesses in high demand fields to provide paid internships to Wisconsin students across multiple campuses. The projects continue through June 30, 2025.

UW-River Falls received \$244,426 to create innovative experiences in agriculture for students. Through this effort, 20 students will be placed in summer internships or academic year internships. Recruitment and placement of interns is ongoing, and 40 internships have been completed to date, surpassing the initial goal of 20 placements.

To address cybersecurity talent shortages, UW-Stout used a \$298,771 grant to establish an internship program, placing 25 students in paid roles with industry partners. Interns work 20 to 40 hours per week for a minimum of three months. Student recruitment is ongoing, and nine internships are completed.

UW-Milwaukee received \$382,000 to expand paid internships in Wisconsin's renewable energy and clean water industries. Partnering with local businesses, the university aims to place 42 interns in three-month paid positions. As of June 2024, 44 interns having successfully completed their internships, with enrollment and placements ongoing.

UW-Milwaukee received \$208,624 to create paid internship opportunities for students in humanities, social sciences, and other fields where unpaid positions are common. The program accepts applications from all interested students and offers internships lasting three, six, or nine months, based on employer needs and academic schedules. To date, 31 students have completed paid internships, surpassing the initial goal of 20 placements.

Reentry Initiatives

s.106.27(1j)

DWD awarded \$74,745 to the Bay Area Workforce Development Board in SFY 2021 to assist 20 justice-involved 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, equipped justice-involved individuals with welding skills, transitional support, and career services, empowering them to reintegrate successfully into the workforce. The project was completed in SFY 2024 with 20 justice-involved individuals participating.

In response to the critical and growing need for workforce training and career preparation for the populations in the Department of Corrections care, particularly individuals preparing for reentry into the community, support of instructional costs (\$975,800) and maintenance expenses for mobile classrooms (\$50,000) continued in SFY 2024.



Wisconsin's Internship Initiative: 20.445(1)(bm)

s.106.27(1r)

Outreach efforts continued on college campuses thanks to the Wisconsin Internship Initiative that began in 2016. DWD staff efforts include discussing the concept of returnships, promoting Universities of Wisconsin Internship Grants, and recommending Limited Term Employment positions as potential internship placements. 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.

DWD staff remained active in SFY 2024 in the Wisconsin Career Development Association and the Center for College-Workforce Transitions. Activities included:

- 51 outreach efforts to academic program chairs, deans, chancellors, and presidents.
- 4,696 Wisconsin businesses using WisConnect.
- 24,411 Wisconsin-based internships posted on WisConnect.
- 8,311 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 robust 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 training of incumbent employees in SFY 2024, training workers in leadership development, marine welding, ship fitting, internal auditing, enterprise resource planning, and other critical areas. The grant was closed out in SFY 2024 with 513 incumbent workers trained and \$535,859.14 in training expenses incurred during the fiscal year.

Workforce Training Programs Administration

s.20.445(1)(bm)

In addition to the workforce training programs listed above, WFF funds supported the administration of the Youth and Registered Apprenticeship programs, Youth Summer Jobs Program, Wisconsin Employment Transit Assistance Program, Career and Technical Education program, Advanced Manufacturing Technical Education Equipment Grants, and the Wisconsin Internship Initiative during SFY 2024.

Wisconsin Technical College System Board Project

s.106.27(1G)

DWD executed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Board to allocate \$791,204 in SFY 2023 funds aimed at reducing waiting lists for enrollment in high-demand programs and courses, including healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics-related occupations. The services and employment fields addressed under this MOU are determined collaboratively by DWD and WTCS, focusing on areas with the greatest workforce need.

In 2024, the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) conducted an evaluation of waitlist admission processes across all 16 technical colleges. The evaluation revealed significant inconsistencies in how colleges managed their waitlists. To address these findings, WTCS shared the evaluation results with all colleges to identify barriers affecting students' access to programs. In June 2024, representatives from all colleges convened to review WTCS guidance on TCS 10.07(5) of the Wisconsin Administrative Code.

TCS 10.07(5) requires technical college districts to maintain waitlists for program admissions and stipulates that district and non-district residents denied admission due to capacity limitations must be offered the option to join a waitlist. Applicants on these waitlists must be prioritized for admission based on the order of their original application. The June meeting ensured that all colleges understood these requirements and aligned their policies with the administrative code.

To promote equity and consistency statewide, WTCS issued guidance eliminating competitive petition processes, which had created barriers to access. This change aims to reduce waitlist times and enable full enrollment in program cohorts at all colleges. To support these efforts, 15 colleges received grant funding totaling \$693,000 to begin addressing the identified barriers and implementing streamlined waitlist procedures.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

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. It helps young adults with disabilities to gain and maintain employment through training and career exploration. During SFY 2024, a combination of carryover contract funding and SFY 2024 GPR supported 28 sites and 197 interns.

TRAINEE OUTCOMES SFY 2024

The following unemployment and wage results are for trainees who completed training in SFY 2024 (July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024):

Trainees who completed training	2,446
Unemployed to Gainful Employment	644
Average Wages Before	Not Applicable
Average Wages After	\$20.24
Underemployed to New Employment	160
Average Wages Before	\$15.90
Average Wages After	\$19.56
Incumbent Increased Wages	1,018
Average Wages Before	\$25.59
Average Wages After	\$28.43



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Among the 2,446 trainees who completed training, 42 secured seasonal positions, 39 obtained temporary roles, and 145 found part-time employment.





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