

Jim Doyle
Governor

Roberta Gassman
Secretary



State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
201 East Washington Avenue
P.O. Box 7946
Madison, WI 53707-7946
Telephone: (608) 266-3131
Fax: (608) 266-1784
<http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/>
e-mail: dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us

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CONTACT: Dick Jones, Agency Liaison, 608-267-4780

Secretary Gassman, Tech President Clancy Announce Competition for \$240,000 in Grants as First Step in Developing Skills Jump Start Program

Part of Governor's Grow plan, Skills Jump Start to serve low-wage workers, including those lacking high school diploma; tech schools to develop programs combining basic ed, job skills training

MADISON – As part of Governor Doyle's *Grow Wisconsin – The Next Steps* plan, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman and Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) President Dan Clancy today announced competition for \$240,000 in grants as a first step in developing an innovative training program to avert skilled labor shortages by serving low wage working adults, including those who don't have high school diplomas.

"This funding will help develop programs to boost the skills and job prospects of low wage working adults," Secretary Gassman said. "By allowing these workers to simultaneously access adult basic education and short-term occupational training through the technical colleges, we can prepare them for high-demand occupations in manufacturing, health care and other areas facing shortages."

In his *Grow Wisconsin – The Next Steps* plan, Governor Doyle directed DWD and WTCS to make \$240,000 in Joyce Foundation funds available to technical colleges for developing curriculum to help these low wage workers overcome barriers to better jobs and provide employers the skilled workers they need. Currently, these individuals may not even consider post-secondary technical education because of their basic education needs. The Governor's Skills Jump Start initiative would let them complete their basic education, while getting technical training for good paying jobs in great demand.

In his next budget, Governor Doyle will seek funding to pilot the Skills Jump Start initiative. As a first step in that process, Secretary Gassman and President Clancy today opened competition among the technical colleges and their partners in training for \$240,000 in grants to develop the curricula for the pilot programs that the Governor will fund in his next budget.

Skills Jump Start is part of the Regional Industry Skills Education (RISE) initiative, a joint DWD, WTCS effort to develop new career pathways for low income adults.

"The RISE initiative is intended to make the postsecondary skills education that most people need to launch family-supporting careers more readily available to low income adults," said WTCS President Dan Clancy. "This is a first step toward connecting more adult learners with the good paying jobs that our employers need to fill."

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Technical Colleges, working with workforce development and industry partners, are eligible to apply for the grants to help develop new career pathway and bridge programs that can be replicated in other parts of the state. Partnerships among tech colleges, employers and workforce development boards are vital to the project to ensure that the programs are designed to deliver skills that are valuable to employers and result in career advancement.

Special emphasis will be placed on projects seeking to increase access to higher-wage, higher-skilled jobs targeting industries critical to regional economic stability. Grant applications should be submitted to WTCS no later than Wednesday, May 7, 2008 and grant awards will be announced in June, 2008. The grant guidelines can be found at www.risepartnership.org.