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Monday, December 20, 2010

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Secretary Gassman Announces \$550,000 in Opportunity Grants Now Available for Low-wage Workers through Community Action Agencies

Governor Doyle's initiative funds training, opens career paths to jobs in demand sectors

MADISON – Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced \$550,000 in Opportunity Grants are now available through the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) for low-wage workers to pursue training that will open career paths to higher paying jobs.

Since last year, Governor Doyle has provided \$2 million in funding for Opportunity Grants, a career path initiative for low-wage workers who have no education or training beyond high school. Successful applicants can begin training for jobs in demand sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, information technology and clean energy.

"Two out of three jobs today require more than a high school diploma, but we have more than 723,000 working-age adults with no education or training beyond high school," Secretary Gassman said. "By investing in their future and creating career paths, we can help ensure a skilled workforce and economic growth for the 21st century."

WISCAP, which consists of 19 anti-poverty agencies across Wisconsin that serve low-income households, is joining 11 regional workforce development boards in making Opportunity Grants available to eligible residents. The boards have awarded more than 550 grants since they received \$1.5 million for the program last year.

Applicants must be at least 18 years of age and employed, but with earnings below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, and otherwise ineligible for financial aid. The annual household income limit in 2010 is \$29,140 for a family of two, \$36,620 for a family of three, and \$44,100 for a family of four. Applicants must have a high school diploma or the equivalent.

Up to \$1,000 is available per applicant for tuition, fees, books and supplies. Eligible areas of study focus on high demand occupations, such as health care, advanced manufacturing, biotechnology and energy.

Grants cover short-term training, enabling individuals to earn certificates or degrees. The program also supports those in registered apprenticeships in high-demand occupations. In addition to the grants, individuals can receive up to \$250 to cover the cost of tools and uniforms, exam fees, transportation and child care.

Individuals can apply for grants through the following organizations:

- WISCAP, http://www.wiscap.org/aca_wisconsin_community_action_agencies.htm;
- Local Job Centers, JobCenterOfWisconsin.com, or call, 888-258-9966; and,
- Regional workforce boards: http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwdwia/PDF/wda_list.pdf.