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## **DWD Secretary Reggie Newson Announces \$7.5 Million for Second Round of Innovative, Employer-Driven Worker Training Program**

*Funds will be awarded through Wisconsin Fast Forward program to businesses seeking trained workers*

MADISON – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson today announced the second round of grant program announcements for the Wisconsin Fast Forward grant program, which will provide \$7.5 million in funding to train workers based on employer demand.

"Governor Walker's commitment to developing Wisconsin's workforce creates additional opportunities for Wisconsin workers through the Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training program and enables employers seeking a skilled workforce to connect with workers seeking a good-paying job," said Secretary Newson. "This investment in our state's workforce will continue to propel Wisconsin's economy forward, creating family-supporting opportunities and career pathways for workers in Wisconsin."

Labor economists from DWD and the Department of Revenue, along with representatives from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and the Wisconsin Technical College system, analyzed inquiries received from companies identifying an immediate need for skilled workers as well as labor market data projections demonstrating a need for additional skilled workers. Based on the analysis, the Office of Skills Development is making training grant funds available in the following sectors:

- Health Care and Related Occupations, \$2 million;
- Information Technology Occupations, \$1.5 million;
- Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution Occupations, \$1 million;
- Financial Services Occupations, \$1 million;
- Manufacturing Occupations, \$1 million;
- Construction Trades and Related Occupations, \$500,000; and
- \$500,000 available to small businesses with 50 or fewer full-time employees.

The program was proposed and signed into law by Governor Walker in March 2013 with overwhelming bipartisan support. Wisconsin Fast Forward encourages partnerships between employers, workforce and economic development organizations, and training providers to prepare workers for available job opportunities for employers seeking a skilled workforce.

DWD's Office of Skills Development (OSD) will monitor grants to track the number of unemployed and underemployed workers who receive jobs and the number of incumbent workers who receive a pay increase as a result of the training they receive.

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In Governor Walker's State of the State speech in January, Governor Walker proposed a "Blueprint for Prosperity," which includes an additional \$35 million for the Wisconsin Fast Forward program to be targeted in three areas:

- Wait list reduction for in-demand programs at Wisconsin technical colleges including areas like manufacturing, agriculture, and information technology;
- Support for partnerships between school districts, technical colleges, and businesses for innovative programs to prepare high school students for in-demand occupations; and
- The creation of programs that prepare individuals with disabilities for the workplace, including funds to expand Project SEARCH, an innovative on-the-job training program, from 7 to 27 sites in Wisconsin.

To learn how to apply for grants or for more information, visit [www.WisconsinFastForward.com](http://www.WisconsinFastForward.com).