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What They're Saying: Business Leaders Praise Wisconsin Fast Forward

MADISON – Employers from across the state are voicing praise for the Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training grant program, noting the application process is simple and recognizes innovation, collaboration and successful outcomes.

Governor Scott Walker proposed and signed the Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training program into law with overwhelming bipartisan majorities in early 2013. The Department of Workforce Development (DWD)'s Office of Skills Development (OSD) oversees the program and is administering the first round of grant awards totaling \$2.6 million. Applications are now being accepted for the second round, which makes up to \$7.5 million available. For more information on available grants, visit <http://WisconsinFastForward.com>.

In the meantime, several employers who were awarded Wisconsin Fast Forward grants are saying great things about the program.

St. Croix County Manufacturing Consortium

iMark Molding, Nolato Contour, and Vital Plastics formed a consortium of plastics manufacturers in St. Croix County. The consortium was awarded \$170,264 in grant funds to coordinate a plastic injection molding training program for 52 workers, in partnership with Workforce Resource, Inc., which is headquartered in Menomonie.

Linda Sturtevant, Vice President of Finance, iMark Molding, Woodville:

"iMARK Molding is proud to work with the state on applying for and executing these grants. By looking to the future and educating our employees, we are preparing for growth and success for everyone involved. No one can succeed, unless we all work to succeed together and we look forward to helping make that happen. The team at St. Croix Valley Workforce Resource truly made a huge effort to help us as employers prepare the grant, and we could not have done it without them.

As a group of competitors in the plastic molding world, we recognized that we were only stealing from each other's workforce to staff our operations, when in reality we need to develop and nurture a workforce from the ground up so we can all have a pool of labor to pull from, which in turns helps the communities, tax base and west central Wisconsin by keeping our economy healthy and growing - and continue to make this a great place to live and raise a family."

Julie Foss, Vice President of Finance and Accounting, Nolato Contour, Baldwin:

"Nolato Contour is very pleased to be part of the St. Croix county consortium that received one of the grants. This grant money will help elevate the technical skills of our workforce which will improve our overall performance. The opportunity for our workforce to gain additional skills should enable them to grow and move ahead within the company. These factors will give Nolato Contour an improved competitive edge regionally and globally."

(more)

KAPCO

KAPCO, an Osceola-based manufacturer, partnered with Workforce Resource, Inc., on a successful grant application and received \$76,411 to create a welding academy to train 65 workers, including 11 new hires.

Amy Bastar, Special Projects Coordinator, KAPCO, Osceola:

"Kapco applied for the Wisconsin Fast Forward grant because we have many skilled positions that we regularly have difficulty filling. Our hope is that this grant will allow us to strengthen our internal workforce, providing them advancement opportunities, as well as, increase our reach for skilled and newly trained employees through workforce development referrals."

The Kapco team found working with Workforce Resource to be a great experience. All of their representatives worked hard to understand our needs and how this training would help improve our overall workforce. They have also been very creative in helping us develop the training program and helping us to find the resources that would best ensure the program's success."

We hope this program will elevate the skill level of our incumbent workforce and widen the recruiting pool available to our Osceola plant. If successful, opportunities will be opened for taking on more work, entering into new endeavors and will extend advancement opportunities for our overall workforce."

Exact Sciences, Madison

Exact Sciences was approved for two grants, one totaling \$201,583 to train 116 call center workers and another totaling \$123,523 to train 110 workers in specimen processing.

Maneesh Arora, Chief Operating Officer, Exact Sciences:

"We are grateful for the state's support of Exact Sciences through its Wisconsin Fast Forward program. The grants were easy to apply for and were awarded at an important time in our growth. These grants will be used to train workers for our lab and customer service center."

The Wasmer Company, New Holstein

The Wasmer Company received \$187,826 in grant funds to develop custom curriculum to train 57 workers, including 38 new hires, to implement energy-efficient building control systems.

Tim Wasmer, CEO and Owner, The Wasmer Company:

"The Wasmer Company is an energy efficiency consulting and solutions implementation firm. We applied for the WFF grant as it is critical for the success of our team members to be at the top of their game in regard to cutting edge training opportunities. The Wasmer Company is also growing quickly and our new employees require substantial "onboarding" education to bring them up to speed and help them compete as quickly as possible. Our WFF grant will support both of these critical areas of need."

The WFF application process was straight-forward and actually helped define elements of our company's growth strategy."

The outcome of this investment in our team members will be an improved ability to educate our clients and provide solutions to the myriad problems they face."

For more information, visit <http://WisconsinFastForward.com>.