

Department of Workforce Development  
Secretary's Office  
201 East Washington Avenue  
P.O. Box 7946  
Madison, WI 53707-7946  
Telephone: (608) 266-3131  
Fax: (608) 266-1784  
Email: sec@dwd.wisconsin.gov



---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, April 28, 2014

CONTACT: DWD Communications, 608-266-2722

On the Web: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwd/news.htm>

On Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/WIWorkforce>

On Twitter: @WIWorkforce

## **Secretary Newson: *Wisconsin Fast Forward* Initiative Meeting Employer Needs, Providing Customized Training to Workers for Family-Supporting Jobs**

*Secretary highlights Governor Walker's workforce investments in visits to Eau Claire area manufacturers; began day with Congressman Duffy at Rice Lake job fair*

EAU CLAIRE – In visits to area manufacturers today, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson met workers entering customized, employer-driven training funded by Governor Walker's Wisconsin Fast Forward initiative, chief among \$135 million in workforce investments to help fuel economic growth.

"With Wisconsin Fast Forward and other strategic investments, Governor Walker is building a skilled workforce that will sustain Wisconsin's economic growth for years to come," Secretary Newson said. "At two stops today, we saw great promise in the Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training grants. These state-funded, matching grants offer incumbent workers, as well as the unemployed, opportunities to gain skills for high-demand, family supporting jobs through customized, employer-driven training."

Early last year, Governor Scott Walker proposed the Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training program, which the Legislature was quick to approve with overwhelming bipartisan majorities. In February, DWD awarded \$2.6 million in the first round and is now reviewing applications for up to \$7.5 million. In all, \$15 million was initially authorized, and at Governor Walker's urging, the Legislature approved an additional \$35 million for the Wisconsin Fast Forward-Blueprint for Prosperity initiative, bringing current workforce investments to \$135 million overall.

Secretary Newson visited W.S. Darley & Co., a Chippewa Falls-based global manufacturer of pumps for fire trucks and industrial applications, as well as other products, including water purification systems. In the first round of grants, Darley received \$87,149 to train 102 incumbent workers in LEAN manufacturing. Wisconsin Fast Forward is designed to ensure results, and workers who successfully complete training at W.S. Darley will receive a pay increase.

In Eau Claire, Secretary Newson visited another global manufacturer, Plank Enterprises, which manufacturers work platforms, industrial lifts, lighting systems and other production items used in manufacturing. Plank Enterprises is involved in a collaborative training project, the Manufacturing Academy led by Workforce Resource Inc. (WRI). Affiliated with the West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, WRI received a first round grant of \$90,485 to train 25 individuals, including 13 who are unemployed, as welders over 12 weeks. Upon successful completion of the training, the unemployed participants will become employed, and incumbent workers, will receive a pay raise.

Earlier in the day, Secretary Newson joined Congressman Sean Duffy at a job fair at Indianhead Technical College, and then addressed the Barron County Economic Development Corporation. During his remarks to Rice Lake area employers, Secretary Newson urged them to watch for a third round of Wisconsin Fast Forward training grants and consider applying.

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

###