
Governor Walker Addressing Skills Gap, Making Strategic Workforce Investments to Help Workers Join Ranks of Nation's Most Prosperous

Partners in reform, lawmakers quickly pass Wisconsin Fast Forward, immediate first step

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During his recent Budget Address before the Legislature, Governor Walker outlined a bold reform agenda for workforce development. Recession-weary residents, including some wearing hard hats, stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the Governor as he urged lawmakers to join him in helping them get back to work – and back on a path toward prosperity and true independence.

The Legislature moved with dispatch, overwhelmingly approving *Wisconsin Fast Forward* legislation as an important, first step in addressing the skills gap.

Briefly, *Wisconsin Fast Forward* includes the following components:

- Provides \$15 million in state funded grants to provide training to new and incumbent workers.
- Authorizes a DWD Office of Skills Development to administer the grants, which may require matching funds from businesses requesting the training.
- Creates a new Labor Market Information System (LMIS) to track job vacancies and link unemployed workers to openings they are qualified to fill or to training to help them become qualified. Furthermore, it will provide high school students and guidance counselors the latest labor market data to help them make informed decisions about career opportunities and the training they would need for in-demand jobs.

Governor Walker plans to sign *Wisconsin Fast Forward* at his earliest opportunity, as the Legislature now turns its attention to the comprehensive and far reaching workforce system reforms in Governor Walker's biennial budget proposal. Collectively, the Governor's \$100 million workforce agenda addresses the current skills gap and helps to ensure a skilled workforce for years to come.

The Governor's biennial budget calls for flexible workforce solutions, from connecting able bodied people on Food Stamps with employment training to making smart and targeted investments in our UW-System, the Wisconsin Technical College System, and traditional K-12 education. The budget also invests in areas of immediate need, such as training for healthcare-related jobs in rural and high poverty areas.

Simply put, his workforce development package provides a hand up to those who are able to work—not simply a hand out.

As Governor Walker's Cabinet member responsible for workforce development, I applaud our partners in the Legislature for their prompt, responsible action to approve *Wisconsin Fast Forward*, and I look forward to working with them as they review and act on the Governor's biennial budget package.

By working together, we will make sure the investments we make in our priorities put in place necessary reforms to bring about a strong return through performance and prosperity for our people.