

FORWARD TOGETHER:
An update on Wisconsin's workforce

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development | 06/29/2026

TRIBAL ACTION PLAN

Focus areas:

- Assisting Tribal Nations with Addressing Workforce Challenges
- Apprenticeships
- Access to Resources
- Investing in Tribal Youth
- Workforce Data
- Connections to Vocational Rehabilitation
- Improving Cultural Competency
- Resources for Justice-Involved Individuals.

Scan the QR code or visit

dwd.wisconsin.gov/tribalaffairs

Agenda

- Workforce Solutions Initiative outcomes and impacts
- Update on DWD's Vocational Rehabilitation program
  - Tribal participation
  - Summer youth employment program
- Q&A and Resources

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS INITIATIVE
OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Secretary Amy Pechacek

Workforce Entered 2025 at Historic Strength

3M+

Record high employment and total jobs
(Dec. 2024)

2.9%

Historically low unemployment
(Aug. 2024)

65.9%

High labor force participation
(Jan. 2025)



Workforce **Challenges**

Innovative **Solutions**

Key Workforce Challenges

- Childcare
- Housing
- Transportation
- Training & Upskilling
- Access
- Other barriers to workforce entry







Gov. Evers Funds Groundbreaking Investment in Workforce Solutions to Build Skills and Employment Connections

Gov. Tony … recovery efforts. Th… competit… allenges and work… VID-19 pandemic.

Workforce Solutions Initiative

Read the Governor's Press Release

Worker Advancement Initiative

The Worker Advancement Initiative offers subsidized employment and skills training opportunities with local employers.

MORE ABOUT THIS INITIATIVE

Workforce Innovation Grants

The Workforce Innovation Grant Program will fund leading-edge, long-term solutions to the workforce challenges the state faces in the wake of COVID-19.

MORE ABOUT THESE GRANTS

Worker Connection Program

The Worker Connections Program provides support for individuals attempting to reengage in the workforce and expand their opportunities in the post-pandemic economy.

MORE ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

Worker Advancement Initiative (WAI)

Grants awarded to local workforce development boards and community organizations to provide:

- Short-term training
- Paid work experience
- Flexible stipends
- Focus on underserved population

More than 5,500 individuals, including 332 Tribal citizens, served through two rounds of funding.

Worker Connection Program

Began as pilot in the Bay Area and Milwaukee to provide personalized career support

- **$10 million** from ARPA
- 10 Career Navigators
- In-person outreach
- Customized supports
- Expanded statewide in 2025



Worker Connection Program Outcomes

Key takeaway: strong partnerships with local organizations helped Worker Connection succeed

- 71% referrals from partners
- 75% enrollment from referrals

Enrollment Demographics	
Ethnic or racial minority	64%
Single Parent	27%
Self-identified as having a disability	10%
Homeless at entry	17%
Had an arrest or conviction record at entry	15%
Not employed for 27 weeks or more	33%

Worker Connection Collaboration

- Worker Connection collaborated with the Bay Area Workforce Development board to initiate a partnership with Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and the College of the Menominee Nation.
- This partnership led to the development of a Certified Nursing Assistant cohort training program for the Wolf River Community Based Residential Facility.
    - Seven individuals completed training and passed their final exam.



Workforce Innovation Grant Program (WIG)

Regional approach to tackling local workforce challenges

- $128 million investment
- 26 organizations in every region
- Up to $10M per project
- Focus Areas:
  - Child care
  - Housing
  - Transportation
  - Training
  - Barriers to entry



WIG Outcomes

- 118,000+ individuals served
- 76 total facilities built/remodeled
  - 23 training facilities
- 195 child care slots created
- 165 housing units constructed
- 2,550+ businesses served
- 185,000 rides provided





Tribal Involvement in WIG

- Lac Courte Oreilles received funding for water and sewer infrastructure connected to a 40-unit workforce housing complex.
  - The project also bostered current and future development, including the LCO Community Health Center.
- Chippewa Valley Technical College and Northwoods Technical College collaborated to operate a mobile welding lab, extending training and employment opportunities to St. Croix Tribal citizens.
- UW Stevens Point received funding for forestry education and training programs. Students of Menominee Nation Schools were included in the project.

WSI Fueled Innovation

The Workforce Solutions Initiative changed how we think about what is possible.

- Innovative models can be replicated statewide
- Partnerships accelerate results
- Investments in people and systems pay off
- Wisconsin is better positioned to take on future workforce challenges



VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FOR NATIVE AMERICANS

DWD Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Anna Eggebrecht

Overview

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) helps people with disabilities find a job, keep a job, or get a better job.

Topics of special interest:

- Summer youth program
- Update on DVR waitlist
- Vocational Rehabilitation for Native Americans (VRNA)

Summer Youth Program

- Summer work-based learning opportunities for Tribal youth.
- Partnership with Tribal Nations, Northwest CEP, and the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council.
- 58 students will participate this summer.
  - Bad River: 25 students.
  - St. Croix: 22 students.
  - Red Cliff: 11 students.
- Students have worked at a dental clinic, legal department, library, community center, and more.



Zoey Rossow, St. Croix, participated in the 2025 program.

Waitlist for DVR Services

- A state funding shortfall forced DVR to implement a waitlist in late 2025.
- DVR began removing people from the waitlist in June, after the Department's request for additional funding was approved.
- At its highest point, there were 7,600 individuals on the waitlist.
- DVR has activated more than 1,000 individuals and aims to eliminate the waitlist by June 30, 2027.
- Currently, there are **315 individuals self identifying as "American Indian" on the waitlist**. Of these, 21 individuals note a Tribal Affiliation.

VRNA Services

- DVR has an assigned tribal liaison for each Tribal Nation.
- DVR liaisons work jointly with Tribal American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation programs.
  - Cases are jointly enrolled and served.
  - DVR and AIVR staff support each other and work together to advance employment outcomes for Native Americans.

NEXT STEPS



WIG: HEART Program



Tribal Consultation



Tribal Action Plan

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LEARN MORE:

Visit DWD's Tribal Affairs website to view DWD's tribal action plan and explore resources and programs.

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