
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, January 2, 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

Conference to Explore Wisconsin Apprenticeship's Role as Solution to Skills Gap

Biennial forum scheduled for January 26-28 expected to draw hundreds of workforce partners

MADISON – Governor Scott Walker today urged employers in search of skilled workers as well as other workforce partners to attend the 26th Biennial Apprenticeship Conference January 26-28 in Wisconsin Dells.

"Wisconsin's tried-and-true apprenticeship program is a key solution in meeting the skills gap, and this is one reason why my comprehensive agenda to develop Wisconsin's workforce strengthens apprenticeship," Governor Walker said. "The theme of this year's conference is *The Apprenticeship Solution: Meeting the Workforce Challenge*. This theme clearly expresses the conference's goal to provide Wisconsin's workforce system with tools to address the skills gap through apprenticeship training."

The three-day conference will feature national speakers, over two dozen workshops, and an Apprenticeship Expo with interactive displays that are geared to teens and young adults. Students from school districts based in communities across Wisconsin are signed up to visit the expo during the conference and learn more about career opportunities that Wisconsin Apprenticeship can provide. The biennial conference is co-sponsored by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and the Wisconsin Apprenticeship Advisory Council.

"For more than a century, Wisconsin apprenticeship has equipped workers with skills that employers need to fill job openings," DWD Secretary Reggie Newson said. "It is at forums like the Biennial Conference that workforce partners share best practices, learn about new program innovations and discuss ways to keep Apprenticeship at the forefront of addressing the skills gap now and in the years to come."

Secretary Newson said DWD in 2013 successfully reversed what had been many years of declining participation. Wisconsin had 3,067 new apprentices through November 1, up 34% from last year and 22% from five years ago.

Governor Walker has made Wisconsin Apprenticeship a key part of his agenda to develop Wisconsin's workforce. The 2013-15 budget he signed invests permanent state funding to support the program. More recently, the Governor signed legislation to allow reimbursement for apprenticeship related instruction, 25 percent of the cost up to \$1,000.

Secretary Newson said apprenticeship complements other workforce development investments Governor Walker is making to move Wisconsin's economy forward. Highlights include:

- \$15 million in worker training grants as part of the his Wisconsin Fast Forward initiative;
- New, cutting-edge Labor Market Information System providing real-time data, focused on skills to better match job seekers to jobs;
- \$12.1 million over the biennium for the ACT, WorkKeys and the precursor Explore and Plan tests to help parents and teachers advise youth in choosing career pathways, and
- \$5 million in increased state aid to Wisconsin technical colleges, DWD training partners.

For conference details and registration, visit: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/conference/default.htm>