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Secretary Newson: Worker Training Plays Key Role in Keeping State's Manufacturing Sector Strong

In Manufacturing Matters! keynote, highlights 'Wisconsin Fast Forward' worker training program

MILWAUKEE – In a keynote address today to manufacturers from around the state, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson said Governor Walker's administration is committed to equipping Wisconsin's workers with the skills that are in demand by manufacturers both today and in the years to come.

"With programs like Wisconsin Fast Forward, we are developing Wisconsin's workforce through flexible, customized workforce solutions that are demand-driven and cover industries such as manufacturing," Secretary Newson said. "Manufacturing offers great opportunities, including family-supporting jobs that pay on average more than \$10,000 the average annual pay of other jobs. We need to do everything we can to keep this vital sector of our economy strong and moving forward, and worker training plays a central role."

Secretary Newson cited the first round of worker training grants being awarded under Governor Walker's Wisconsin Fast Forward initiative. More than \$2.6 million in grants were announced recently to fund 32 innovative, employer-driven training projects, including \$1.4 million to training manufacturers. DWD is now accepting applications for a second round of grants, \$7.5 million for training in seven sectors, including \$1 million for manufacturing.

"Early in this administration, employers told us they couldn't find workers with the right skills," Secretary Newson said. "The Wisconsin Fast Forward training grants are part of our comprehensive strategies to build a skilled workforce. The current state budget includes investments of \$100 million in workforce development. At the same time, our tried-and-true apprenticeship program is growing in numbers, as more employers see it as means to train workers for the skilled positions they need to fill."

Addressing manufacturers from around the state, Secretary Newson said DWD and its partners are not only focused on incumbent workers, but a new generation of workers. He cited a series of Career and Technical Education Month events highlighting school-to-career programs across the state, from the Milwaukee Bradley High School "Tech Terns" program to a Wausau West High School job-shop tapping the ingenuity of students who built a robotic snowblower drawing national attention.

In collaboration with high schools across the state, DWD has provided \$1.86 million in Youth Apprenticeship grants. Governor Walker recently signed legislation to provide an additional \$500,000 more a year so that more high school juniors and seniors can benefit from YA school-to-work experience in manufacturing and other workplace settings.

Secretary Newson said that actual job data for the calendar years 2011-12 show Wisconsin added 63,672 private sector jobs in 2011-12 following the loss of about 134,000 private sector jobs during the previous four years. Wisconsin created more manufacturing jobs in the last two years than in either of the last two Governor's terms.