



August 24, 2021

**Workforce Equity Grants
Grant Program Announcement**

Award Amount: \$5,000 to \$400,000

Applications are due by 3 p.m. CST on October 4, 2021

Workforce Equity Grants

The Office of Skills Development (OSD) at the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) works to encourage the development of innovative solutions at the local and regional level that bring together employers, educators, workforce development entities, and economic development organizations to meet area workforce demands.

Southeastern Wisconsin makes up more than 35% of the State's total population. This seven-county region is a key economic driver for the state, and its residents have relatively high per capita income when compared to the state as a whole. Prosperity, however, has proven to be uneven, with major disparities in unemployment and poverty occurring along racial lines.

Wisconsin Unemployment and Poverty by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin

	Percentage Below Poverty Level	Unemployment Rate
Population 16 years and over	11.0%	3.2%
White alone	9.4%	2.8%
Black or African American alone	32.9%	7.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	25.9%	5.5%
Asian alone	17.6%	3.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	21.5%	N/A
Some other race alone	25.7%	5.2%
Two or more races	21.9%	7.4%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	22.8%	4.9%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	8.9%	2.7%

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2014-2018, Table [S1701](#) and [S2301](#)

The COVID-19 crisis places additional weight on existing economic disparities. While it is too early to identify quantitative impacts of the pandemic-induced recession, the pandemic has disproportionately affected already under-served populations. Diverse populations in southeastern Wisconsin will face increasing hardships due to unemployment and lower levels of education.

The IKEA US Community Foundation has donated \$577,350 to the Wisconsin DWD for this grant opportunity. The donation is equivalent to the amount of Wisconsin Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits paid to IKEA employees at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. These funds will be used to provide skills training to underserved populations in southeastern Wisconsin and to place these trainees in an occupational training or work experience.

It is the intent of the Workforce Equity Grant program to provide education, skills training, and placement in high-demand occupations to underserved populations in southeastern Wisconsin to reduce racial disparities and to narrow the education gap in the State's workforce, as well as to place trained individuals in well-paying, family-supporting jobs.

This grant opportunity focuses on training underserved workers in two southeastern Wisconsin Workforce Development Areas (WDA): WDA 1-Southeast (Kenosha, Racine, and Walworth County) and WDA 2-Milwaukee (Milwaukee County). Employers in WDA 1 or WDA 2 are eligible to apply. For the purposes of this grant, underserved populations are defined as Black, Indigenous, and people of color, women, and those who reside in WDA 1 or WDA 2.

Program Overview

Definitions: The following definitions are used throughout the Grant Guidelines:

- **Applicant** means an employer or organization of a consortium of employer partners located in Kenosha, Racine, Walworth, and Milwaukee counties, either individually or as the leader of a consortium of applicant partners that submits a proposal in response to this Grant Program Announcement
- **Contextualized teaching and learning (CTL) strategies** means the teaching and learning of foundational skills by linking content to meaningful occupational situations and by using concrete examples that are relevant to a specific work that helps learners prepare to take on real-world challenges that they will face in the workplace
- **Contract** (grant) means a legal document that defines the expectations and obligations of the parties to the contract
- **Customized training** means the teaching and learning of skills that are unique to a specific employer or occupation, or the modification of an existing training curriculum such that it becomes unique to a specific employer or occupation
- **Grantee** means the recipient of a grant award
- **Grant Recipient** means proposer awarded the contract
- **Hard skills** mean job skills that are specific talents and expertise an individual possesses that helps him or her perform a certain task or job, such as critical thinking, applied math, or knowing how to use specific tools or equipment
- **Soft skills** mean traits necessary for getting and keeping a job, such as punctuality, attendance, listening, following directions, teamwork, and conflict resolution
- **Stipend** means a fixed amount paid to trainees that is intended to offset the costs of incidental training expenses
- **State** means State of Wisconsin
- **Underserved populations** are defined as Black, Indigenous, people of color, women, and those who reside in WDA 1 or WDA 2
- **Workforce Development Area (WDA)** means a regional area of Wisconsin's workforce development system; Wisconsin is divided into 11 regional Workforce Development Areas
- **Workforce Development Board (WDB)** means the strategic board that builds and aligns relationships between business representatives, local government, economic development, education, and workforce partners to engage in and implement employment solutions tailored to meet the needs of businesses and job seekers in the Workforce Development Area

Grant Program Announcement Summary: Up to \$577,350 is available in the 2022 state fiscal year to train new and current employees and to place successful trainees in an occupational training. The purpose of this grant is to fund southeastern Wisconsin employers or consortiums comprised of employers and eligible workforce solutions providers for the expenses to design and implement training programs and post-training support to underserved populations. Training programs should provide education, skills training, post-employment support, and placement in occupational training or work experiences in high-demand occupations. Post-training positions must have a clear career path, identified advancement requirements, and should have minimum post-training wages of \$15/hour.

Successful proposals should:

- Offer strategies and tactics to engage trainees from underserved populations for work occupational training for positions at employers located in Kenosha, Racine, Walworth, and Milwaukee counties
- Provide occupational readiness for specific, in-demand occupations and community needs, as documented by Labor Market Information data, available at wisconsinjobcenter.org/labormarketinfo/how2mylmi.htm or jobcenterofwisconsin.com/wisconomy/
- Provide trainees with pay or stipends during training

- Offer attainment of or progress toward the acquisition of education credits or degrees, accreditations, and/or industry-recognized credentials
- Place successful trainees in occupational training, like paid internships, registered apprenticeships, youth apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, or employment

Training program features may:

- Offer contextualized teaching and learning (CTL) strategies in courses such as remedial English, reading, and math that incorporate terminology and/or problems specific to the occupational field(s) addressed in the proposal
- Offer customized:
 - Soft skills and/or remedial education training
 - Courses to improve problem-solving ability
 - Instruction to remedy written and verbal communication skills deficits
 - Professional, occupation-specific, or hard skills training
- Employ trainees in positions with a clear career path, identified advancement requirements, and minimum post-training wages of \$15/hour
- Provide strategies and tactics to trainees that mitigate barriers to job training or employment participation, such as post-training case management, mentoring, job coaching, assistance with childcare or transportation, or referral to support services

Grant Program Highlights

Total Grant Program	Total grant program of \$577,350 for grants in the 2022 fiscal year
Individual Award	Funding requests may range from \$5,000 up to \$400,000 for individual applicants. Requests by Applicants who lead a consortium of applicant partners for greater funding amounts may be considered at the discretion of OSD.
Eligible Applicants	<p>Applicants are limited to Wisconsin employers or an organization that is a part of a consortium of employers located in Kenosha, Racine, Walworth, and Milwaukee counties. Employers may apply as the leader of a consortium of applicant partners. Eligible partners are limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers • Technical Colleges or Universities • Tribes • Unions/Trade Associations • Correctional Facilities/Agencies • Veterans Organizations • Workforce Development Boards • Economic Development Agencies • Chambers of Commerce • Industry Sector Partners • Public training providers • Private training providers • Governmental Agencies
Use of Grant funds	It is the intent of this grant to provide education, skills training, and work experiences in high-demand fields to underserved populations in southeastern Wisconsin

Terms of Award	Grants will be awarded as cost reimbursement contracts with an anticipated contract start date of November 23, 2021
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Important Dates: Applications are due by 3 p.m. CST on October 4, 2021. Submit applications by emailing it and all supporting required documents to **WorkforceEquityGrant@dwd.wisconsin.gov**

Application Submission	Email application package (application, required forms, and supporting documents) to WorkforceEquityGrants@dwd.wisconsin.gov by 3 p.m. CST October 4, 2021
Projected Grant Awards Announcement	November 12, 2021
Anticipated Contract Start Date	November 23, 2021

Any questions or clarifications related to this grant program announcement should be submitted in writing via email to WorkforceEquityGrants@dwd.wisconsin.gov. Responses will be posted at dwd.wisconsin.gov/det/

In the event that it becomes necessary to provide additional clarifying data or information, it will be posted at dwd.wisconsin.gov/det/

Additional Information

Application Forms: You can download the application at dwd.wisconsin.gov/det/ To submit, email the application package to WorkforceEquityGrants@dwd.wisconsin.gov

Letters of Commitment:

- **Employers' Letters of Commitment to Hire:** Letters of Commitment to hire trainees from the proposed training program will be required from the participating Employer Placement Partners. The letter should clearly indicate the number of successful trainees to be hired or retained. The employer's letter should also include commitment to participation in the planning and implementation of the training program. The letter must also commit to sharing trainee placement data with the grantee and OSD. Letters of commitment must be on company letterhead and must be signed.
- **Partner letters of commitment or support:** Applicant must include attestation on organization letterhead regarding applicant partnership expectations and any other elements that inform the application.

Grant Amount: The total amount available for grants is \$577,350 in the 2022 fiscal year. Funding requests may range from \$5,000 up to \$400,000 for individual applicants.

Retainage: The Department shall retain a percentage of the grant funds to be paid upon completion of the grant activities. For this grant, the Department will withhold 2% of the total amount awarded, which will only be disbursed to the Grantee upon completion of the deliverables set in the grant contract. If the deliverables set in the grant contract are not met by Grantee, the 2% will be forfeited.

Eligibility: To be considered for an award, an Applicant must meet the following conditions:

- Applicants are limited to Wisconsin employer(s) or an organization that is a member of a consortium of employers located in Kenosha, Racine, Walworth, or Milwaukee counties.

- Employers may apply as the leader of a consortium of applicants. Eligible consortium partners are:
 - Employers
 - Technical Colleges or Universities
 - Tribes
 - Unions/Trade Associations
 - Corrections Agencies
 - Veterans Organizations
 - Workforce Development Boards
 - Economic Development Agencies
 - Chambers of Commerce
 - Industry sector partners
 - Public training providers
 - Private training providers
 - Governmental Agencies

Due Diligence: All Applicants are required to complete the Due Diligence form found in the grant application. If any statements below apply to an Applicant, that Applicant may be automatically disqualified and will not be scored:

- Applicant has not been in operation for more than 24 months.
- Within the last 24 months, the Applicant has been required to provide a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notice under 29 U.S.C. § 2101 et seq., or a notice under Wisconsin's Business Closing and Mass Layoff Law, Wis. Stat. § 109.07 (Layoff notices can be found here: dwd.wisconsin.gov/dislocatedworker/warn/)
- Within the last 24 months, Applicant has been found to have violated the Unemployment Compensation laws, Wis. Stat. Ch. 108.
- Within the last 24 months, Applicant has been found to have violated the Worker's Compensation Act, Wis. Stat. ch. 102.
- Applicant is on the Wisconsin Department of Administration's list of vendors who are not in compliance with Wis. Stat. § 77.66, found here: vendornet.state.wi.us/vendornet/wocc/CertList.pdf
 - Please note that Applicants may demonstrate that they have come into compliance since the last posting date of the list.
- Applicant's status is not registered as a Wisconsin business or is otherwise not in good standing with the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions.
- Within the last 24 months, Applicant has been found to have violated the Wisconsin Fair Employment Act, Wis. Stat. § 111.31 et seq., or employment laws under Wis. Stat. ch. 103.
- Applicant is listed as ineligible on the Department of Administration's Office of Contract Compliance Vendor Directory, found here: vendornet.wi.gov/Procurement.aspx
- Applicant is listed as a delinquent taxpayer with the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, at www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/DelqList/DelqSearch.aspx

Organizations are strongly encouraged to verify that there are no unresolved issues in these areas prior to submitting the application or should provide a detailed explanation with the application.

Risk Assessment: If the Department deems the Applicant as eligible after the review of the Pre-Award Risk Assessment, the application will be scored by an evaluation committee. If the Department deems the applicant is still eligible but has concerns from the Pre-Award Risk Assessment, these will be addressed through specific conditions in the grant contract.

Eligible Expenses: Workforce Equity Grant funds shall be used for direct project expenses.

These include:

- Program design and program implementation
- Curriculum development
- Instructor salaries
- Consultant/contractual expenses
- Training materials and supplies
- Trainee stipends
- Testing for education credits or degrees, accreditations, and/or industry-recognized credentials
- Post-training case management, mentoring, job coaching, or referral to support services
- Administrative expenses limited to 5% of the total award

All eligible grant expenses will be reimbursed as per individual contract specifications when expenses are:

- Documented by grantee, per the contract
- Approved by DWD

Ineligible Expenses: Workforce Equity Grant funds may not be used for the purchase of real estate, facility construction or remodeling, trainee wages, or fringe benefits.

Supplement not Supplant: All funds cannot replace existing federal, state, or local government funding. Substituting existing funds with state grant funds will result in additional fiscal monitoring and may result in an audit.

Grant Evaluation: The evaluation committee will evaluate grant applications for compliance with GPA specifications.

Scoring: Applications will be ranked by high score and awarded based upon ranking and availability of budgeted funds. Funds will be awarded in order of highest to lowest score until budgeted funds are exhausted. Applications must score at least 50 out of the total of 100 points to merit funding consideration.

- Need Statement (10 points)
- Workforce Participation Building (20 points)
- Design, Implementation & Cost (20 points)
- Equity and Economic Opportunity (30 points)
- Objectives and Outcomes (20 points)
 1. Grants will be awarded in order of highest to lowest score until budgeted funds are exhausted.
 2. Applications must score at least 50 out of the total of 100 points to merit funding consideration.
 3. Applicant must pass a review confirming business condition, viability, and compliance with other state agencies' regulations.

It is strongly recommended that applicants consult the Grant Evaluation Rubric and Scoresheet to address all criteria when writing proposals. The Grant Evaluation Rubric and Scoresheet is available for download at dwd.wisconsin.gov/det/.

Deliverables: The deliverables proposed in the application will be incorporated as terms of the grant contract. Training outcomes should include:

- Minimum post-training wages of \$15 per hour
- 75% training completion rate
- 65% placement rate into employment of related training field
- 75% of trainees receive industry-recognized credentials
- 75% of incumbent trainees receive an increase in wages

Training outcomes may also include the percentage of participants placed in registered apprenticeship.

Contract: Expenses may not be incurred for which reimbursement is expected until after a contract with DWD is executed.

Reimbursement

- Awards are structured as cost-reimbursement grants, meaning that recipients are expected to incur expenses before being reimbursed with grant funds. OSD will provide access to an online invoicing system and reimbursement instructions.
- Upon submission of complete invoices with proper documentation, payments will be disbursed via Automated Clearing House (ACH) transactions.
- In compliance with the State Controller's Office rules and regulations, no grant recipient shall expend grant funds until a contract has been fully executed with DWD. Upon contract execution, recipients will be allowed to incur costs.
- As a condition of funding, DWD will require the grantee to provide outcome reporting as determined by the individual grant contract, including quarterly and final reports. A reporting template will be provided to grant recipients.

Grant Reporting Requirement: Grant recipients must meet DWD Office of Skills Development program reporting requirements, including submission of project updates to document reimbursement requests, new and current employees' training outcomes data (including pre- and post-training wage information and completion of training), quarterly reports, and a final project report. The anticipated result of this grant program as laid out in the proposal is to provide education and skills training in high-demand fields to underserved populations to narrow the training gap and place individuals in well-paying, family-supporting jobs.

Applicants and their partners may be subject to program and fiscal audits by DWD as defined in the contract. The funded project should produce quantifiable outcomes and impacts for new and current employees.