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Secretaries Gassman, Raemisch, Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board President Sykes Announce Job Training Agencies for \$400,000 Milwaukee Pilot Project, Part of Governor's *Grow Plan*

Innovative Plan to Serve Unemployed and Underemployed, Develop Training Model

MADISON – Secretaries of two state agencies and the leader of the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board today announced the selection of job training agencies for a new \$400,000 employment and training pilot project to prepare unemployed and under-employed individuals for demand-driven jobs in the Milwaukee area, such as in advanced manufacturing and health care.

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman, Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary Rick Raemisch and Donald Sykes, President of the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (MAWIB), announced Wisconsin Community Services and the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership / Big Step have been selected to implement the innovative project.

The pilot is part of Governor Doyle's *Grow Wisconsin – The Next Steps* plan to take Wisconsin's economy to the next level, building on the success of economic and workforce development efforts over the last five years.

"This pilot and other *Grow Wisconsin* steps we are taking will help workers learn new skills and get good jobs, while meeting the need for skilled workers in the Milwaukee area," Governor Doyle said. "This will help strengthen Milwaukee's economy, and a thriving Milwaukee will drive strong, economic growth statewide."

The pilot will provide soft and occupational skills training, as well as support and retention services, to at least 100 individuals over the course of one year, with a goal of having all participants placed in jobs paying a minimum of \$12 per hour plus benefits, with the capacity to move up to higher-paying work. To fund the project, DWD and MAWIB will each contribute \$100,000, with DOC contributing \$200,000.

"This innovative partnership builds on the success of our employment and training programs, developing a comprehensive approach to help reduce unemployment, address labor shortages and connect employers with skilled workers," Secretary Gassman said. "This collaborative effort will help place unemployed and under-employed Milwaukee residents, including those on probation and parole, into demand-driven jobs with benefits, while meeting the hiring needs of area employers."

Secretary Gassman said the pilot will combine elements of the most successful employment and training programs with best practices to create a comprehensive model, one that can be replicated statewide.

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The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership / Big Step will receive \$195,000 to provide training for jobs in construction, manufacturing, welding, painting, electrical, sewer and water services, and customer services. The Wisconsin Community Services will receive \$194,990 to provide training for jobs in welding, auto mechanics and printing.

DOC Secretary Raemisch said: "We are pleased to be a partner in implementing this innovative pilot program in the Milwaukee community. When offenders are gainfully employed, productive members of the community, they are much less likely to reoffend. Lower recidivism means fewer new crimes, fewer new victims, fewer taxpayer resources spent on the criminal justice and corrections systems, and a safer Milwaukee in the long run."

Milwaukee Area WIB President Sykes added: "This pilot will provide our community with a first hand look at the challenges and needs we have in connecting unemployed individuals and re-entry populations with family supporting jobs."

In February, the partners announced the project and solicited competitive bids from eligible private and non-profit community organizations. MAWIB will administer and monitor the release of funds to the selected organizations, which will provide training, case management, support and retention services to help participants succeed in the project.