




STATE OF WISCONSIN | Legislative Audit Bureau

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Joe Chrisman
State Auditor

DATE: February 25, 2019

TO: Senator Robert Cowles and
Representative Samantha Kerkman, Co-chairpersons
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

FROM: Joe Chrisman
State Auditor 

SUBJECT: Proposed Audit of the Wisconsin Fast Forward Program—Background
Information

At your request, we have gathered some background information the Joint Legislative Audit Committee may find useful in considering an audit of the Wisconsin Fast Forward program and its related components. The Wisconsin Fast Forward program was created in March 2013 to award grants to public and private organizations for the development and implementation of workforce training programs. Statutes permit the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to require organizations to provide matching funds in order to receive program grants.

Under the Wisconsin Fast Forward program, DWD must also develop and maintain a labor market information system to collect and analyze information on current and projected employment opportunities in the state and make this information available for free on its website; fund the creation and operation of mobile classrooms to provide job-skills training to individuals in underserved areas, including inmates at correctional facilities; and provide coordination between nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education and employers to increase the number of students placed with employers for internships.

From inception through June 30, 2018, DWD reports the Wisconsin Fast Forward program has issued 274 grants totaling \$27.0 million. As of June 30, 2018, DWD reported 199 grants were closed, approximately 12,284 individuals completed training, and 10,006 individuals gained employment, retained employment, or increased their hourly wage rate.

In March 2014, the program was expanded with components to fund enrollment in skills training in high-demand fields for Wisconsin technical college students and high school pupils. Program expansion also funded grants to enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. From March 2014 through June 30, 2017, DWD reported contracting for nearly \$34.5 million and funding more than 190 grants. As of June 30, 2017, DWD reported a total of 9,504 trainees were enrolled in training.

Subsequent legislation added components under which DWD must:

- consult with the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) to allocate a total of \$20.0 million during

fiscal year (FY) 2019-20 and FY 2020-21 to provide funding to facilitate worker training and employment;

- provide grants to school districts, private schools, and certain charter management organizations to design and implement teacher development programs;
- annually confer with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and WTCS to identify industries and occupations that face workforce shortages, approve industry-recognized certification programs designed to mitigate shortages or prepare individuals for certain first-responder occupations, make grants to school districts, and make awards to students who successfully complete these programs; and
- award grants to nonprofit organizations that operate programs to recruit and prepare individuals to teach in public or private schools in low-income or urban school districts.

An audit of the Wisconsin Fast Forward program and its related components could:

- analyze how funds have been spent since inception of each component;
- assess the grant application and award process, determine the number of awards made and their intended purposes, and assess the process used to select award recipients;
- independently evaluate the outcomes and results achieved under each component and determine ways outcomes and results could be improved;
- evaluate DWD's coordination of program administration efforts with other agencies, including WTCS, WEDC, and DPI; and
- assess strategies to improve program administration.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have any additional questions regarding this proposed audit, please contact me.

JC/ck

cc:	Senator Chris Kapenga	Representative John Macco
	Senator Alberta Darling	Representative John Nygren
	Senator Janet Bewley	Representative Melissa Sargent
	Senator Tim Carpenter	Representative Katrina Shankland

Caleb Frostman, Secretary
Department of Workforce Development