



February 15, 2013

### **New Job Training Program and Grants Proposed**

- *Fast-track bill, AB 14, introduced at request of Governor Walker.*
- *“Wisconsin Fast Forward” would provide \$7.5 million annually for new training grants.*
- *Technical colleges, workforce boards, and other public and private entities will qualify for training grants in partnership with business and regional economic development groups.*

### **Technical College Student Leadership Showcase and Groups’ Legislative Day to Fill Capitol**

- *Annual Celebration of Student Engagement to showcase technical college students in the Capitol Rotunda on February 19<sup>th</sup>.*
- *Wisconsin Association of Career and Technical Education (WACTE) and Wisconsin Student Government (WSG) will also convene for Capitol visits on the 19<sup>th</sup>.*

### **Job Training Grants Bill Introduced**

At the request of Governor Walker, legislators yesterday introduced AB 14, creating “Wisconsin Fast Forward,” a new \$7.5 million annual grant fund for worker training. The bill is already scheduled for the first of several hearings on February 19, when it will be considered before the Assembly Workforce Development Committee. As an appropriations bill, it will go to the Joint Committee on Finance in addition to substantive committees in each house. Its introduction was accompanied by an “emergency bill” justification statement because state law otherwise prohibits new appropriations bills until after the state budget bill is completed.

The new grant fund will be administered by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), which will receive staff and funding to create the Office of Skills Development within DWD. The bill provides that this new office work with the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Board, and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) to design the grant program and in “reviewing applications” and “awarding grants.”

The bill's co-sponsorship memo states that the program will "... provide \$7.5 million in each year of the biennium for training grants to support businesses that expand or locate in Wisconsin, as well as bring current employees' more opportunity to meet today's high-demand skill set." The competitive grants would be available to public and private entities through a competitive process "...that would strongly encourage cooperation among consortiums made up of businesses, workforce development areas, economic development areas, and technical colleges."

The grants may be used to train new or incumbent workers. The Boards Association is working with the Governor's office and bill co-sponsors to ensure flexibility in broadly defining "new" employees who will be eligible for training in addition to incumbent workers.

If passed, the new grants will be available beginning in July, 2013 (following passage of the separate 2013-15 budget bill). The bill provides that DWD may require some matching requirement by grant recipients.

In consultation with the WTCS, WEDC, and the Council on Workforce Investment (the federal workforce board attached to DWD), DWD will largely shape the new program through administrative rulemaking after the bill becomes law. Rules created after bill passage would define everything from grant applications, grant purposes and criteria, partnerships, and reporting requirements.

Finally, the bill also allows DWD to pursue statewide job matching technology often referred to as a Labor Market Information System (LMIS). The funding to launch a LMIS is included in the bill's funding of the new Office of Skills Development at DWD. An LMIS is intended to provide real-time data to employers, job seekers, policy-makers and educators to help direct resources, assist with student career planning, and to match employers and job seekers.

This bill represents a very positive new investment in worker training and in labor market analysis. Technical colleges are likely to be very competitive in the grant process as the state's proven provider of highly focused and responsive training working in partnership with economic development groups and business and industry.

### **A "Celebration of Student Engagement" and WACTE and WSG Members' Legislative Visits to Fill Capitol Next Week**

On Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, students from all 16 technical colleges will showcase leadership projects in the Capitol Rotunda. The "Celebration of Student Engagement" showcase includes demonstrations of the incredible work technical college students do in and outside the classroom. The public, Legislators and their staff, and members of the executive and judicial branches of state government are all invited to interact with the students and to experience the showcase from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. around the first floor of the Capitol Rotunda.

February 19<sup>th</sup> also brings two key statewide advocacy groups to the Capitol. Both the Wisconsin Association of Career and Technical Education (WACTE) and the Wisconsin Student Government (WSG) will convene in Madison for their respective Legislative Seminars next week. Members of both groups will then make Capitol visits on the 19<sup>th</sup>. WACTE represents career and technical education professionals from across the spectrum including K-12 and all of higher education. WSG is comprised of the student government leaders representing the collective student body of each Wisconsin technical college.

Please consider joining us in Madison next week for the Celebration of Student Engagement. We are proud and sincerely appreciative to have our student and WACTE leaders representing us in the Capitol as well!

*This report was prepared by Paul Gabriel for the Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association. Any analysis or opinion in this report is exclusively the author's.*