

For Immediate Release

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EMPLOYMENT RECOVERY GRANT FUNDS TO ASSIST LAID OFF WORKERS

The Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (SWWDB) has received funding to further assist laid off workers as local economies work to bounce back from the COVID-19 public health emergency, which has caused a significant increase in worker layoffs across sectors and industries due to workforce reductions and business closures.

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD)-Division of Employment and Training (DET) requested \$15 million in funding to serve 3,000 planned participants across the state. The Department of Labor issued an award for \$4.995 million, which will be subdivided among the 11 Workforce Development Areas, one of which is the SWWDB.

The funding will allow the WDAs to expand their capacity to offer Dislocated Worker Program services to eligible individuals between September 15, 2020 and September 30, 2022. SWWDB received an initial award of \$275,000, which will be used to assist dislocated workers in the six-county area.

Since the start of the pandemic, Wisconsin has seen an enormous increase in worker layoffs. DWD received a total of 215 WARN (Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act) notices affecting 28,490 workers (March 1-August 21, 2020), which is significantly more than the 83 WARN notices affecting 8,572 workers DWD received during the entire year in 2019. In 2018, DWD received 65 WARN notices affecting 8,426 workers.

In the SWWDB District, the unadjusted unemployment rate jumped from 3.6 percent in March, 2020 to 13.9 percent the next month (April, 2020) and 12 percent in May. The weekly unemployment claim numbers for the six-county region (Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, Rock) jumped from 24,889 from March 29-August 8, 2019 to 220,776 for the same period in 2020, a 787 percent increase. Unfortunately, there are many signs that the negative impact on Wisconsin's economy will be ongoing.

"The resources provided through this Employment Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grant are incredibly timely and will help us build the talent needed by local businesses," stated SWWDB-CEO Rhonda Suda. One-hundred percent of the grant comes from federal sources through the U.S. Department of Labor, and will be used to assist individuals in securing new employment through job search and skills training. To find out more information about the dislocated worker program and the

available services under this grant, please contact Casey Dobson at c.dobson@jobcenter.org, (608) 741-3507.

The Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, a proud partner of the American Job Center Network, primarily utilizes grant funded resources to assist individuals in building skills and preparing for high-demand occupations in Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, and Rock counties. SWWDB is a 501 [c] 3 non-profit and local workforce development board, as defined under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. SWWDB operates several workforce development programs dedicated to moving people into secure employment that leads to full self-sufficiency. SWWDB invests in individuals as they gain the skills needed by local business.

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