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Secretary Gassman Announces \$250,000 U.S. Department of Labor Grant to Help Eight Western Wisconsin Counties Develop Workforce Strategies

Project will assist Seven Rivers tri-state region

MADISON — Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced a \$250,000 U.S. Department of Labor Regional Innovation Grant that will help eight western Wisconsin counties develop long-term workforce strategies in partnership with southeast Minnesota and northeast Iowa.

“This grant will help strengthen the workforce of western Wisconsin while creating a strong regional identity for the Seven Rivers tri-state region,” said Secretary Gassman. “By bringing together workforce development organizations, educational institutions, training providers and employers from across the region, we can build the area’s workforce potential and focus on developing talent to meet the needs of our future economy.”

The grant was awarded to Minnesota’s Workforce Development Inc., and DWD will collaborate in efforts to serve affected workers in the eight Wisconsin counties.

DWD will work with the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board to monitor the implementation of the grant to ensure that it is consistent with Governor Doyle's *Grow Wisconsin – The Next Steps* plan. The grant resources will assist in strengthening the regional identity, and developing an educational focus for improved workforce capacity and long-term sustainability of the strategies developed through the grant.

The project includes the western Wisconsin counties of Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, and Vernon and 11 counties in Minnesota and eight counties in Iowa.

Regional Innovation Grants are drawn from National Emergency Grant funds to assist state workforce agencies and local workforce investment boards, as well as their key partners, in the design and development of comprehensive and strategic regional plans focused on talent development that is aligned with the demands of the 21st century economy.

National Emergency Grants are part of the Secretary of Labor's discretionary fund and are awarded based on a state's ability to meet specific guidelines. For more information on National Emergency Grants, visit www.doleta.gov/NEG.