



WISCONSIN MANUFACTURERS & COMMERCE

February 29, 2016

RE: New Skills for Youth Grant

To whom it may concern:

As the state chamber of commerce and state manufacturers' association, Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce is excited to support the New Skills for Youth (NSFY) comprehensive grant program. Through our educational arm, the WMC Foundation, we have engaged our 3,700 members and more than 100 local chambers of commerce in workforce-related initiatives for years. However, we have never been as engaged as we are right now.

Our state faces a workforce shortage as severe as any state in the nation. Wisconsin expects to double the number of people over the age of 65 in the next two decades while at the same time coming up 285,000 bodies short of what we need to fill the jobs that will be created or need to be filled. IT is critical that we dramatically increase the number of students in the state who successfully complete career pathways that culminate in postsecondary degrees and/or industry credentials with labor market value.

The WMC Foundation has been an active participant in the state's Academic and Career Planning in Wisconsin, starting with 6th grade students and continuing through high school. Our members have been in classrooms, offered company tours, employed youth apprentices, offered internships, and served as mentors. They have worked with students, teachers, parents, counselors and workforce boards to help everyone understand the needs of the current workforce. Furthermore we are excited about the opportunity that the ACP business/education portal (Inspire) brings to our state. Through our commitment to DPI, we will actively engage with our members to support, fund and sustain these regional business and education partnerships.

In addition, we have launched the Future Wisconsin Project – a 20-year strategic economic vision for the state. Topping the list of success indicators is our ability to attract, develop and retain talent. When we survey the business community, no issue comes close to rivaling the need for talent. It is the number one factor holding back economic growth in Wisconsin. To that end, we have been engaged in the following:

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- ✓ Working with the Department of Public Instruction on Academic and Career Plans
- ✓ Working with the Department of Workforce Development on labor market data
- ✓ Establishing competitive benchmarks for Wisconsin
- ✓ Recognizing business and education partnerships
- ✓ Working with local schools and businesses through their local chamber of commerce
- ✓ Establishing awards programs
- ✓ Working with the private colleges, tech colleges and University of Wisconsin system to connect learning with earning
- ✓ Providing programs on business, financial literacy, and workforce for middle and high school students

The WMC Foundation is “all in” on working with our educational partners in ensuring today’s students are ready for tomorrow’s workplace. We are looking forward to working with all of the state partners in developing the most innovative and effective career pathways in the nation.

Sincerely,



James R. Morgan,
President