

Skilled Workers, Strong Economy:

Preparing for Jobs With a Future in South Central Wisconsin

January 2005

**Jobs With a Future
Center on Wisconsin Strategy**



Introduction

This report tells the story of Jobs With a Future (JWF), a strategic workforce development partnership operating in South Central Wisconsin. In it, we share information about how JWF started, describe its innovative efforts to strengthen our region's workforce development system, and consider some of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. By documenting JWF's past history and current contributions, we hope to inspire others who want to improve workforce development programming in their own regions. We believe *The JWF Story* will be a useful guide for creating and improving partnerships elsewhere.

What is JWF?

Created in 1996, JWF brings together leading stakeholders in South Central Wisconsin — including the City of Madison, Dane County, Madison Area Technical College (MATC), the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin (WDB), and the University of Wisconsin-Madison — to build and pursue a strategic vision for workforce development in the region. Ultimately, the partners are investing together in building “jobs with a future” for all residents of the region. The partners know that such work requires both stronger shared vision among the institutions, and a stronger role for the region's leading employers in implementing it.

First, then, JWF is a *strategic collaboration of leading workforce development institutions in the region*. JWF provides a forum for institutional partners to discuss diverse programs and bring them into better alignment. JWF provides the infrastructure for those institutions to develop and implement a stronger strategic vision for skills development in South Central Wisconsin. JWF allows partners to pursue joint efforts to make our workforce development system more efficient and responsive to area workers and employers. To date, JWF partners have dedicated over \$1 million to this effort.

Understanding that employers need to be brought into the system, JWF partners have invested heavily in building stronger employer organization in the region. Since its inception, JWF has built partnerships of employers to: 1) develop solutions to workforce problems common to area firms; 2) design training programs that provide local workers with relevant skills; 3) implement strategies for linking skilled workers to quality jobs; and 4) provide a forum for strategic discussions on regional economic and industry trends.

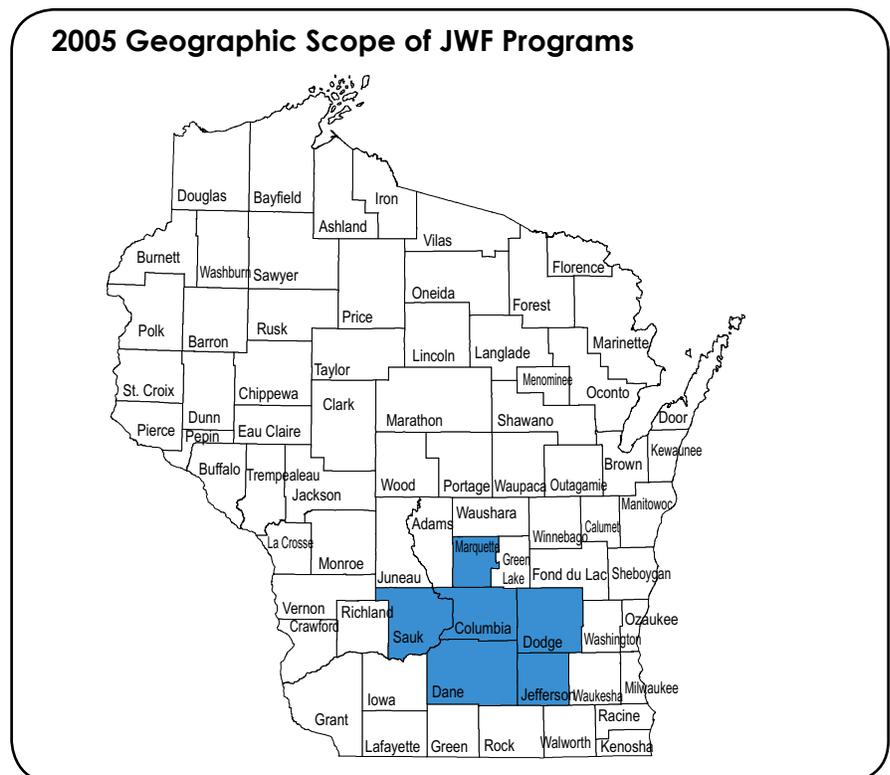
So JWF is a strategic collaboration of leading institutions, but it is also *partnerships of local employers and leading industries* — health care and manufacturing most recently — that are working with leading institutions on solving practical skill, training, recruitment, and retention problems. This dual infrastructure of institutional and employer-based collaboration and partnership leads to tangible results for the region's employers and workforce.

JWF helps the region's employers by facilitating dialogue designed to identify industry-wide problems (such as occupational shortages) that would have gone unnoticed by individual firms, and by providing the infrastructure to implement agreed-upon solutions to those problems (such as jointly purchased training) that many firms would find difficult to undertake on their own.

JWF helps the region's workers as well, by increasing the availability and relevance of training, allowing more workers a chance to move up, and providing workers with better information on labor market opportunities.

At the end of 2004, JWF's active sectoral partnerships — in health care and manufacturing — involve about 100 employers in the six counties of South Central Wisconsin: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Jefferson, Marquette, and Sauk. (For a list of employer partners, see Appendix 1.) Between the spring of 2003 and the fall of 2004, JWF sponsored career-track training programs for nearly 1,000 incumbent and dislocated workers throughout the region. These workers participated in more than 40 different courses, accounting for about 29,000 hours of training. (For a list of courses offered, see Appendix 2.)

From strategic discussion to on-the-ground training development, JWF is building a stronger workforce system for South Central Wisconsin.



JWF Key Strategic Collaborators

- City of Madison
- Dane County
- Madison Area Technical College (MATC)
- Madison Gas & Electric Economic Development Services
- South Central Federation of Labor
- United Way of Dane County
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
- University of Wisconsin-Madison Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS)
- Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin (WDB)
- Regional employers

JWF Operational Team

- Job Centers
- Madison Area Technical College (MATC)
- Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC)
- School-to-Work programs
- University of Wisconsin-Madison Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS)
- Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin (WDB)

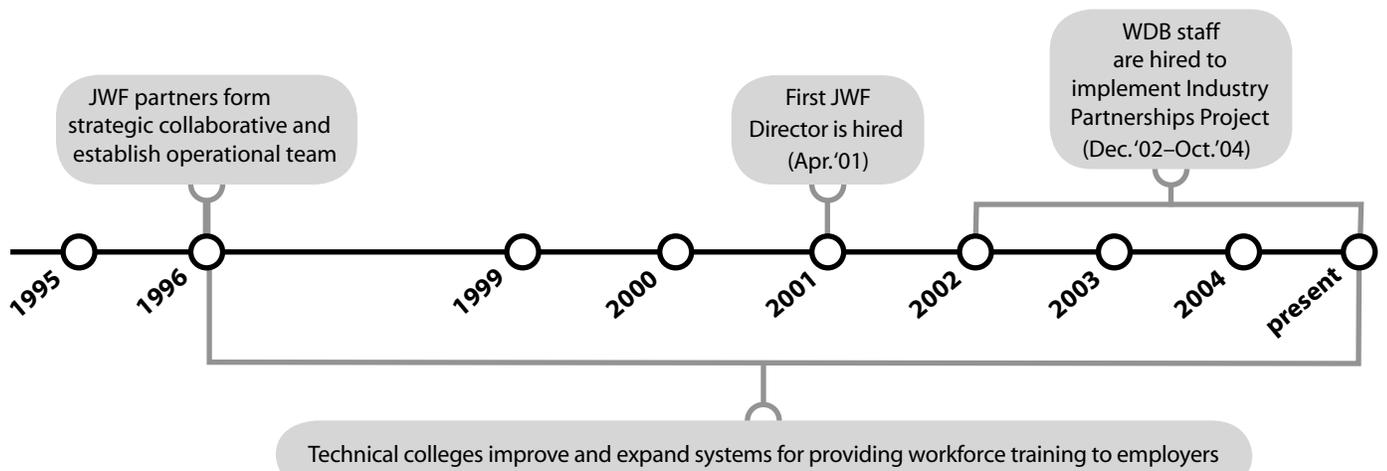
JWF Organizational Structure



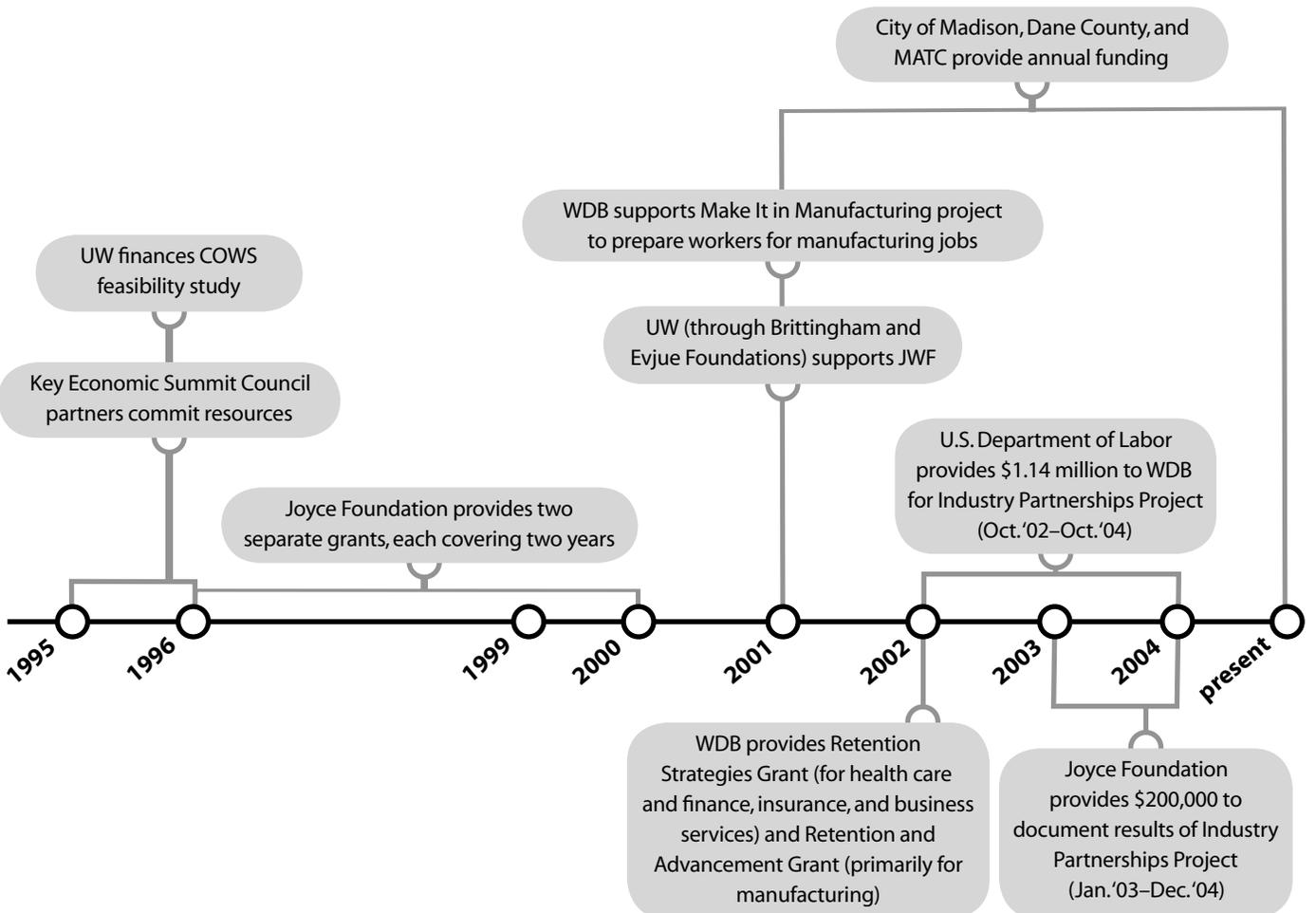
JWF Priority Outcomes

- Promoting job quality and job access
- Making lifelong learning a reality
- Increasing private-sector input and leadership
- Creating a sustainable and replicable model
- Laying the basis for future funding

JWF Staffing Timeline



JWF Funding Timeline





Origins

The story of JWF begins in 1995 with the formation of the Dane County Economic Summit Council (ESC), a blue-ribbon commission established by county officials to address the problem of increasing economic inequality in the region. Both public- and private-sector leaders had become deeply concerned about the large number of workers in the county who were trapped in “dead-end” jobs. To improve job quality and future prospects for these workers, the ESC dedicated itself to “building jobs with a future for all Dane County residents.” (Dane County, home to the state capitol of Madison, is the largest of the six counties that make up South Central Wisconsin, and is the region’s only major urban center.)

The ESC included leaders from the City of Madison, Dane County, MATC, the University of Wisconsin, United Way, the South Central Federation of Labor, and the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce.

At the ESC’s request, the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) — a University-affiliated research and policy center — conducted an analysis of the regional economy and labor market, based on input from employers and workers in a variety of industry sectors. The analysis showed that many workers in Dane County could be helped by career ladders (paths leading to advancement and better job opportunities). In order to implement this concept, COWS reviewed “best practices” from around the country and identified examples of projects and programs that could be adapted or incorporated locally.

Based on this research, COWS recommended the creation of sectoral partnerships in three of Dane County’s leading industries: health care; finance, insurance, and business services; and manufacturing. These industries stood out for their large share of employment (30 percent of all jobs in the county), the range of jobs available, and the leadership offered by their representatives. The ESC accepted the recommendation and agreed to move ahead to establish the partnerships. That is how JWF was born.

Why Partnerships?

To advance into better jobs, workers need clearer information about labor market conditions, greater opportunities and incentives to improve occupational skills, and stronger supports to help them transition into new jobs. By identifying areas of high labor demand, improving systems for delivering job-related training, and tying that training to the occupations employers most need to fill, sectoral partnerships can play a critical role in meeting workers' needs.

How do these partnerships work? When firms are organized into a common industry or production "cluster," they create the necessary infrastructure to achieve greater scale and leverage in labor-market reform. There are three main elements to this process:

- **Common solutions to common problems.** By sharing information, employers are able to identify industry-wide challenges — such as occupational shortages — that would have gone unnoticed by individual firms. Then, firms working together can identify ways to address those challenges — such as setting up a training course to meet industry demand — as a group.
- **Economies of scale.** Identifying solutions to common problems is an important step, but firms must then be able to implement those solutions effectively. By pooling their resources, or by working together to obtain assistance from other sources, they can collaborate on projects — such as jointly purchased training or retention studies — that no single firm would be willing or able to undertake on its own.
- **Unified industry voice.** Sectoral partnerships strengthen connections between employers and other groups that are part of the workforce development system — including labor unions, public-sector training institutions, and human services providers. When employers communicate their needs as a group, the system can serve them — and workers — more effectively. Closer ties among system partners can also generate new strategies and new resources to help meet employer demand.

The simple act of networking with colleagues from other firms helps employers to build trust with one another. From there, firms can learn from each other's experiences and generate new ideas that are "owned" by the entire partnership group. At the same time, they establish stronger links with workforce development institutions, and are able to make even greater strides in implementing a shared vision for the regional economy and labor market.

Bringing Key Partners Together

Employers

During 1996-97, the institutional partners of the ESC worked with COWS to identify potential employers for participation in the three JWF partnerships. ESC members spoke with friends, brainstormed recruitment lists, and wrote letters to CEOs of area firms. They also contacted more than 60 local employers who had expressed interest in a community career-ladders program.

The effort to build the JWF partnerships centered on identifying common needs and developing solutions to common training and skills-development problems. In 1997, partnership kickoff conferences were held with firms from each sector that highlighted shared concerns within the different industries. By 2001, more than 40 employers were participating in the three JWF partnerships.

As the partnerships developed, key institutional collaborators continued to build employer participation by leveraging their existing relationships with area firms. These included the Business, Industry, and Community Services (BICS) program at MATC (which coordinates education and training services for employers), area Job Centers, and the WDB. Other organizations that helped

Employer Partners and Training

As JWF was getting underway, employers in different sectors had varying reactions to the prospect of joining a partnership:

Manufacturing

At first, many manufacturing firms weren't sure partnership was right for them. After all, they already understood the connection between workforce training and productivity, and often provided their own training on-site. By 2000, however, a number of Dane County manufacturers were concerned about the need for basic skills training and English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for employees. Collaboration among JWF partners made these projects possible: MATC staff wrote grants, developed programming, and designed the curriculum, while the WDB provided crucial financial support.

Health Care

Numerous health care organizations in Dane County — ranging from large hospitals to small clinics and nursing homes — were excited about becoming part of JWF. As nonprofits driven by a “care” philosophy, many of these institutions understood that training would improve both job quality and patient care. They were eager to increase their involvement in workforce training, since only a few large health care facilities are able to “train their own.”

How Employers Benefit from JWF

Not surprisingly, firms can be hesitant to collaborate closely with peer employers, out of a desire to protect information about their own company practices. But participants in JWF have been pleased to discover the many advantages of sectoral partnerships. Here are just a few:

- **Learning about each other:** In the first years of operation, each of the three JWF partnerships met on a monthly basis at a different employer's worksite. This gave partners the unique opportunity to tour other facilities and gain first-hand knowledge about their operations. Further, in formal and informal ways, the partnerships have allowed for sharing of best practices and networking among members.
- **Identifying common problems and implementing shared solutions:** Through surveys, discussions, and reports, JWF employers have been able to recognize and address common challenges. For example, in preparation for the Finance, Insurance, and Business Services partnership kickoff in 1997, many employers shared their concerns about the coming of Y2K and whether they had the technical expertise needed to ensure a smooth transition into the new millennium. These concerns led to the creation of a Programmer/Analyst Trainee training course, which was well attended by staff from state agencies, insurance companies, and other firms.
- **Figuring out how "the system" works:** In addition to bringing employers together by industry sector, JWF connects firms to public-sector training providers and other institutions dedicated to workforce development. By collaborating with institutional partners through JWF, employers have gotten to know key players in the region's workforce development system as well as learn about the services they offer and how to access those services.
- **Getting better training:** JWF has strengthened relationships between employers and the technical colleges, especially MATC, with the following results:
 - **More training:** Because of contacts established through JWF, the technical colleges have been able to offer more occupational-skills training to employers.
 - **More targeted training:** Through sectoral partnerships, groups of companies have been better able to identify specific training needs and communicate those needs with technical college staff.
 - **More employer interest:** JWF has raised employer awareness about the availability of training through the technical colleges.
 - **More employer participation:** When single employers want workforce training, the technical colleges work closely with them to assess company needs, develop customized curricula, and evaluate the effectiveness of training. Sectoral partnerships have allowed the technical colleges to provide training for a larger number of employers, by offering courses that serve the common needs of more companies.
 - **More access for smaller firms:** Traditionally, smaller companies have not been able to get occupational-skills training from the technical colleges: they either lacked the resources to purchase training, or did not have enough workers needing to learn the same skill — or able to miss work at the same time — to make buying training cost-effective. By joining with other companies to purchase training as a group, smaller firms have been able to move workers into training for the first time.

strengthen employer involvement — particularly beyond Dane County — were the Jefferson County Chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management and the Sauk County Development Corporation.

Technical Colleges

The two technical colleges operating in South Central Wisconsin — MATC and Moraine Park Technical College — play a critical role in preparing future workers for employment in key industries. They have also been instrumental in building JWF.

In Dane County, MATC's BICS program had already been working closely with area businesses to develop, design, and deliver customized training programs for employees. Employers found this arrangement very beneficial, since it enabled students to learn workplace-specific skills that were most needed on the job. MATC representatives realized that, by becoming key collaborative partners in JWF, they would be able to gather even more information from employers about labor-market demand, skills shortages, and training needs — and thus be able to serve both employers and students even more effectively and efficiently.

In the early stages of JWF, participating employers helped nurture technical college involvement by writing letters of support for occupational training programs sponsored by the colleges. They also identified supervisors and workers who could assist with course development and serve as course instructors. In turn, technical college representatives provided leadership to JWF through grant-writing, course planning and coordination, curriculum design and delivery, and relationships with employers that had been built over the years.

Job Centers

Throughout South Central Wisconsin, local Job Centers are a critical point of entry for many individuals who are either unemployed or are part of the “working poor” — working, but earning too little to support their families and hoping to find better jobs.

Because the JWF mission centered on helping low-income workers advance in the labor market, early collaboration with the Dane County Job Center was very important. Through JWF, the center's staff members were able to provide job seekers with clear descriptions of entry-level jobs and to reach new groups of prospective employees, such as those moving from welfare to work. The Job Center also hosted meetings at which participating employers presented information, held panel discussions, and sometimes even distributed job applications or offered employment to job seekers attending the sessions. In turn, employers learned more about the services and resources available through the Job Center.

Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin

The WDB has been a key JWF collaborator in recent years. It is a non-profit organization whose board represents a wide range of interests — including business, labor, education, and human services. Working through JWF, the WDB is ideally positioned to carry out its stated mission: to build strong partnerships that support innovation and excellence in workforce development. The WDB has been instrumental in building capacity at the region's six Job Centers, providing Rapid Response assistance to dislocated workers, developing youth programming, and meeting employers' and workers' retraining and skills upgrading needs.

In particular, the WDB has dedicated considerable time (through grant-writing, administration, etc.) and resources (through direct funding) for workforce training projects developed through sectoral partnerships. For example, the WDB wrote grants — along with MATC and other key organizations — to support several pre-employment training programs coordinated through small groups of manufacturers, and to help move the training into area schools. These included Make It in Manufacturing (MIIM), a program started by five Dane County companies that were part of JWF, and Career Enhancement Opportunities (CEO), a consortium of manufacturers in Columbia, Juneau, and Sauk counties. Most recently, the WDB wrote a grant for \$1.14 million to the U.S. Department of Labor, for a major job-training initiative over two years.



The Industry Partnerships Project

In 2002, the WDB received a \$1.14 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to support and extend industry partnerships in the region: “Industry Partnerships: Developing Workers for Jobs with a Future.” The WDB used these federal dollars to help build the strategic and employer collaborations in the region.

The Industry Partnership Project, which operated from October 2002 through October 2004, had two main goals: 1) to provide partnership-based training for incumbent and dislocated workers in health care and manufacturing; and 2) to work with training providers in South Central Wisconsin to continue the development of fast-track skills training for incumbent and dislocated workers. The project’s commitment to health care and manufacturing reflects that these industries in particular are experiencing a growing need for skilled employees in the region.

The DOL grant enabled JWF to continue its expansion into new geographic territory (it now covers a six-county region, not just Dane County). It also allowed JWF to involve many more employers and workers than in the past: by the end of the grant period, some 100 health care and manufacturing employers had signed on as JWF partners, and nearly 1,000 incumbent and dislocated workers had received training at no charge.

Over the course of the Industry Partnerships Project, JWF’s institutional and strategic collaborators were able to strengthen their relationships with each other and area employers, and to enhance their capacity — both separately and collectively — to move the region’s workforce system forward. For example, the technical colleges greatly expanded capacity in such areas as course planning and coordination, curriculum design and delivery, instructor recruitment, grant-writing for workplace adult basic education, and flexibility in response to evolving training needs. Job Centers throughout South Central Wisconsin became increasingly important JWF partners, as they intensified efforts to connect job seekers, especially dislocated workers, to training and other resources available under the DOL grant. Finally, the WDB has broadened its commitment to promoting and supporting projects that are driven by the sectoral partnership model. As a result of these monumental efforts, JWF has received national attention for its innovative approach to solving employer problems while building pathways for workers into family-supporting jobs.

Developing a Common Vision

At the start of the Industry Partnerships Project, JWF's key strategic collaborators came together to craft a statement of their shared vision for improving workforce development in South Central Wisconsin. The Vision Statement outlines three priority outcomes: *promoting job quality and job access* in ways that simultaneously benefit employers and workers; *making lifelong learning a reality* by building a strong training infrastructure for the region; and *increasing private-sector input and leadership* by nurturing greater employer involvement in sectoral partnerships. For each priority outcome, the statement also identifies tangible metrics of success. The Vision Statement captures the spirit of cooperation already firmly in place among JWF's institutional partners, while codifying their commitment to continued collaboration in the years ahead.

The following institutions endorsed the Vision Statement: the City of Madison, Dane County, MATC, the South Central Federation of Labor, COWS, and the WDB.

JWF Outcomes at a Glance

Before the Industry Partnerships Project (1996-2002)

- More than 40 participating employers
- Nearly a dozen courses offered and attended, with multiple sessions offered
- More than 900 Dane County residents participating in JWF training
- More than 200 Dane County residents placed in quality jobs
- More than \$150,000 in training dollars leveraged from participating employers

During the Industry Partnerships Project (2003-04)

- 102 participating employers in health care and manufacturing
- 41 courses offered and attended, with multiple sessions offered
- 897 residents of South Central Wisconsin receiving training
- Nearly 29,000 hours of training logged

JWF Achievements at a Glance

Organization

- Created and strengthened partnerships through regularly scheduled single-partnership roundtables, all-partnership roundtables, and annual summits
- Conducted site visits at area firms and Job Centers
- Established a multi-partnership School-to-Work Committee to prepare students for the transition from school to the workplace
- Built a Retention Strategies Network to help employers improve retention and reduce turnover among frontline caregivers (in health care) and customer service representatives (in finance, insurance, and business services)
- Began developing Construction and Skilled Trades Partnership
- Held an all-partnership multicultural conference focused on attracting and retaining workers, creating an inclusive work culture, and resolving conflicts through improved cross-cultural awareness
- Developed and implemented systems for measuring the impact of workforce training on workers and employers
- Created a Vision Statement that expresses the shared goals of JWF strategic collaborators for improving workforce development in South Central Wisconsin

Documentation

- Produced the *Jobs With a Future Resource Book* (1999) and distributed widely to job seekers through schools, libraries, and employers
- Prepared *High Performance Partnerships: Winning Solutions for Employers and Workers* (1999) for the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development
- Released *Improving Retention of Frontline Caregivers in Dane County* (2002) and gave presentations on findings
- Issued *Caring about Caregivers: Reducing Turnover of Frontline Health Care Workers in South Central Wisconsin* (2003) and disseminated widely to health care industry and union representatives, public policy makers, and advocacy groups
- Wrote a number of major reports about the Industry Partnerships Project, including: assessments of specific training courses; evaluations of the broader impact of sectoral partnerships and targeted workforce training on employers, workers, and institutional partners; and a design and implementation guide for those interested in replicating the project in other regions (2004).

Education and Job Preparation

- Helped support the Upward Mobility Project of the Dane County Job Center, to help low-income workers advance in the labor market
- Helped manufacturing employers to coordinate and implement pre-employment training programs in Columbia, Dane, Juneau, and Sauk counties
- Offered job-shadowing opportunities
- Held job fairs
- Sponsored numerous training courses (see Appendix 2)

Innovating Change

While it is important to explain how JWF developed organizationally and structurally, we also want to present specific examples of activities that demonstrate “how the work gets done.” In the following pages, we highlight a series of cases where collaboration through JWF helped make a difference in our region’s workforce development system. These cases give a sense of the form that participation by various operational partners has taken, how participation in JWF has helped partners to change or improve what they do, and how these innovations, in turn, have led to the creation of stronger and more effective partnerships. In recent years many exciting new techniques have been introduced that are reforming the workforce system in South Central Wisconsin; we describe just a few of them here, to give a flavor of the impact this kind of work can have.

Innovation 1 Helping Multiple Employers Get Access to Basic Skills Training

Over the years, the technical colleges in South Central Wisconsin have done a particularly impressive job of meeting employers’ training needs — and through JWF, they have become even more effective at achieving this goal.

An example from MATC is instructive. A key element of MATC’s workforce training effort is its customized workplace adult basic education (WABE) program, serving employees of area firms. Through WABE, MATC provides basic instruction in reading, writing, math, computers, civic and financial literacy, English as a Second Language (ESL), and completing a high school degree.

The WABE program began around 1990, when federal funds became available to cover training costs. By the mid-1990s, funds were being administered by the state. MATC staff worked with individual companies to identify training needs and plan curriculum, and wrote grants to the state — known as Basic Skills Grants — to help pay for training. Participating employers are responsible for 25 percent of training costs in the first year of a Basic Skills Grant, and 50 percent in the second year.

In 1999, MATC wrote a grant to support basic skills training for a group of five manufacturers in Dane County — the first multiple-employer grant in the state. In the words of MATC’s Basic Skills Training Liaison, this new initiative was facilitated by the employer partnerships successfully established through JWF, which “helped us open the door for the first time to writing partnership consortium basic skills grants.” (Four of the five employers were JWF partners.) A major challenge was to convince state funders that the partnership approach was feasible — that training could still be customized even though more than one company was involved. MATC succeeded by working with employers in just one sector (in this case manufacturing), identifying common skill needs across

firms, and ensuring that the vast majority of services provided through the grant were offered at individual worksites. Frequent meetings with employer representatives kept the project on track.

Multiple-employer grants have presented a number of logistical challenges. It is much easier to provide training to a single employer, since there is just one purchaser to deal with and just one shift schedule to accommodate. Working with multiple partners has required that more time be spent on liaison/coordination activities: for example, scheduling planning and oversight meetings that all employer partners can attend, and determining course times and locations that work for employees on multiple shifts at multiple firms. Fiscal monitoring has also been more time-consuming, since multiple-employer courses involve multiple billing and more data-gathering for inclusion in final grant reports.

Over time, however, managing multiple-employer Basic Skills Grants has become easier. MATC's standard billing, scheduling, and other administrative procedures have been adapted to accommodate multiple-employer projects, and staff time is now included in grant budgets to cover project coordination and monitoring.

Further, the sheer scale of larger projects can sometimes seem daunting, and companies with different needs may find it difficult to collaborate on a single training effort. Because there are now a number of successful models for carrying out joint projects, however, it has become easier to bring firms together.

Through multiple-employer contracts, more employers have been able to obtain customized basic skills training services through MATC at a reduced cost. This is especially important for smaller firms with limited training budgets, which would be unable to make the required company contribution toward training costs. Since MATC began writing multiple-employer Basic Skills Grants, the average number of participating businesses has risen from 11 to 17 per year. Today, nearly 25 percent of MATC's Basic Skills Grants support multiple-employer contracts. It was the collaboration made possible through JWF, says the Basic Skills Training Liaison, that "made us willing to think about working together for basic skills."

Innovation 2 Restructuring Training to Serve Employers, Workers, and Technical Colleges

Like most educational institutions, the technical colleges in South Central Wisconsin typically offer courses in short sessions (of about an hour) over a period of several months or more. This arrangement has posed a challenge to employers who want workers to benefit from training — but also want them to move through training more quickly than the traditional course schedule allows. In response to these concerns, JWF’s operational partners began to develop “modular” training that could be delivered in a shorter span of time.

One of the first examples of this type of training was phlebotomy (blood-drawing). During early discussions among JWF’s health care employer partners, it became clear that area health care providers were experiencing two challenges: a shortage of phlebotomists, and difficulty recruiting and retaining Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs). Partner firms suggested that phlebotomy training could address both problems, if it were organized into a short-term “modular” training format and integrated into an upward career track for CNAs. (Traditionally, phlebotomy training had been part of a year-long Clinical Laboratory Technician course.)

This approach seemed likely to benefit entry-level health care workers as well. CNAs generally enjoy few opportunities for advancement, because the training needed to become Licensed Practical Nurses or Registered Nurses is costly and takes several years. As a result, many CNAs have felt stuck in low-wage positions, and health care firms have found it difficult to attract and retain them. The modularized phlebotomy training course promised to solve these problems by establishing a more accessible path to better-paying employment in health care.

After discussions between employers and MATC representatives, a seven- to eight-week modular training course in phlebotomy was created. The course offered 48 hours of classroom training held at MATC, and another 48 hours of clinical experience at hospitals and other health care facilities throughout the Madison area. The first course was held in the fall of 1999. After training, students were sent surveys asking about their experience with training, including job placement. Of the 13 students who attended, at least seven had obtained positions as phlebotomists by January 2000 (not all students returned their surveys).

The phlebotomy training offered short- and long-term benefits to workers and employers alike. At the end of the training, participants became certified phlebotomists and, in many cases, were able to obtain new jobs at higher wages. This, in turn, helped alleviate the shortage of phlebotomists that employers faced. Over time, the training may have made it easier for firms to attract and keep CNAs, since the position was now a pathway up into other health care professions.

In addition to helping firms and workers, the new training approach also benefited MATC. For example, because multiple firms were served by a single MATC contract, smaller employers — normally unable to afford their own training contract — were able to send workers to the course. This helped MATC develop stronger connections with smaller companies and find new ways of marketing its services to them. Also, JWF employer partners participated in developing the course curriculum — a process that helped MATC gather more information about the types of occupational skills most needed by area firms.

Altogether, including the very first course, MATC has offered modularized phlebotomy training nine times.

Upward Mobility: Moving the Working Poor into Better Jobs and Refocusing Job Center Case Management

◀ Innovation 3

Despite high rates of labor-force participation in Wisconsin, many jobs do not offer wages and benefits that are sufficient to support families — and many workers find it difficult to move beyond their first entry-level job. A key objective of JWF was to help low-wage workers get better jobs — especially jobs with good benefits — by educating them about labor-market opportunities, helping them get access to training, connecting them to high quality employers, and providing the guidance and support needed for workers to get ahead and stay ahead.

The Upward Mobility Project (UMP), carried out through the Dane County Job Center from January 1999 to early 2003, made a major contribution toward achieving these objectives. The program targeted low-income workers — generally those earning around the minimum wage and receiving some form of public assistance, such as Food Stamps or Medical Assistance — who demonstrated the potential to move beyond their current job. Potential participants were identified through a network of community-based organizations as well as through advertising by the Job Center itself. To be eligible for UMP, participants had to be currently employed for at least six months, show a stable employment history, and have income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold.

The Job Center was the center of UMP activity, providing participants with career information, counseling, and support; training referrals and subsidies to develop skills; and connections to higher wage employers. One important tool for communicating information to workers was the *Jobs With a Future Resource Book*, which identified higher-paying industries in the county, highlighted specific companies in those industries, and profiled employees in order to provide a realistic view of the types of work a participant could expect to perform. Job Center staff regularly attended JWF partnership meetings, where they “introduced” promising UMP job seekers to employers in hopes of matching employers and workers.

UMP had a positive impact on workers in Dane County. A total of 908 workers participated in the program, and of these, 631 (69 percent) were placed in new jobs (at least 92 workers were placed with JWF partner firms). The average earnings of UMP participants rose to \$10.23 per hour — nearly 20 percent higher than what they earned before starting the program (\$8.57). Further, the share of workers covered by benefits (including health insurance) increased from 15 to 51 percent. Finally, workers were able to increase their average work hours, from 31 hours per week before entering the program to 37 per week after placement in new jobs.

The UMP program had a significant impact on the Dane County Job Center as well. In order to handle the increased workload generated by UMP, the Job Center added three full-time staff. Job Center Case Managers began to coordinate UMP-specific activities, such as industry orientations, job shadowing, and site visits. Case Managers also began to focus more heavily on retention, in order to help UMP participants stay in their new jobs and gain confidence about their prospects for advancement. As part of the retention strategy, Job Center staff placed greater emphasis on support services such as child care and transportation assistance, and connections to peer mentors.

Finally, the Job Center became the central point of contact with employers (in the past, employers had had multiple contacts with multiple agencies). This change strengthened the relationship between Job Centers and companies, and made it easier for Job Center staff to prepare job seekers for — and connect them to — quality jobs. As a result, the Job Center assumed a major new role in both improving the earnings of low-income workers and serving area employers.

UMP was able to operate for four years due to resources made available through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. It ended in early 2003.

Innovation 4 Implementing Pre-Employment Training in the Manufacturing Sector

In recent years, JWF collaborators have had considerable success in building manufacturing partnerships in South Central Wisconsin. Because of the size and diversity of manufacturing firms, however, it can be difficult to identify projects in which all partners are interested and willing to participate. When manufacturers come together in smaller sub-groups within a larger partnership, they may find it easier to discover common goals and develop small-scale projects that meet all participants' needs.

One such project is Manufacturing Advancement Pre-Employment Skills (MAPS), now known as Make It in Manufacturing (MIIM). This project, which was launched in 2000, involved a small group of Dane County manufacturers — all of them members of JWF's larger manufacturing partnership. These employers were faced with a lack of qualified job candidates, as well as the dilemma of finding applicants who were even interested in manufacturing when other

types of employment seemed more attractive than “factory jobs.” After learning about a pre-employment training program established by a group of Ohio manufacturers, the Dane County firms decided to start MIIM.

The MIIM program came about as a result of active collaboration among employers, MATC, the WDB, and the Dane County Job Center. It provided pre-employment skills training in such areas as math, computers, teamwork, communications, safety, and quality. The manufacturers worked with MATC staff to write the MIIM curriculum, and company representatives served as instructors. (Some firms later adapted the curriculum for use with entry-level incumbent workers and offered it at their own worksites.) The Dane County Job Center helped with recruitment of course participants. The WDB provided the funding that made it possible to bring MIIM into area schools.

MIIM is an early example of how institutional partners and employers — with a shared commitment of time, energy, and resources — can create a training program that meets the needs of all participants.

Improving Training Services for Dislocated Workers

◀ Innovation 5

Plant closings and mass layoffs, particularly in manufacturing, have been a major concern in South Central Wisconsin in recent years. Along with helping incumbent workers to move up in the labor market, an important component of the Industry Partnerships Project was to help dislocated workers prepare for and obtain new jobs.

Under the Industry Partnerships Project, many new firms in the region signed on as JWF partners. Because they were familiar with the training opportunities offered through the project, they led the way in enrolling their own employees in training courses. However, workers who had lost their jobs due to mass layoffs or plant closings were not as likely to know about these training opportunities. In response, JWF partners developed new strategies to increase dislocated workers’ awareness of and access to training.

For example, at the outset of the Industry Partnerships Project, Job Center Case Managers were not always aware that some of the courses initiated through JWF partnerships offered degree credit. When dislocated workers asked Job Center staff about credit courses, they were often referred directly to MATC. Once Job Center personnel learned that DOL-funded training was available to dislocated workers at MATC, more dislocated workers were able to access the training.

Also, as dislocated workers interacted more closely with Job Center staff, JWF collaborators began to adapt Industry Partnerships Project training to more closely match those workers’ particular needs. At the start of the project, training courses were typically held once a week over a ten-week period. This model worked well for full-time incumbent workers, who could not afford to devote too much time at once to attending school. However, dislocated workers

wanted to learn new skills, acquire credentials, and reenter the labor force as quickly as possible. In response to their needs, the Industry Partnerships Project began offering more condensed and intensive courses on accelerated schedules. During the spring and summer of 2004, nearly 40 dislocated workers took courses through the program

Further, the initial line-up of training courses was geared heavily toward incumbent workers' needs. For example, JWF offered a popular series of Leadership Development modules that was designed mainly to help incumbent workers advance in their workplaces. However, these classes were not likely to help dislocated workers obtain new jobs. The Industry Partnerships Project made a greater effort to offer courses that were especially appealing to dislocated workers (such as health-care courses) and better suited to their immediate needs (such as computer training).

Finally, MATC established a General Education Institutes program to help dislocated workers get access to general education courses while waiting to enter programs leading toward an associates degree. Job Center Case Managers played a key role in identifying dislocated workers who could benefit from this program. During the spring and summer of 2004, nearly 40 dislocated workers took courses through the General Education Institutes.



Current Trends & Future Prospects

While the basic outlines of collaboration through JWF have remained in place for nearly a decade, the activities of key institutional and employer partners have evolved to reflect changing labor-market conditions and new opportunities for strengthening the workforce development system in our region.

In recent years, a series of economic challenges have been reshaping our region and state. The decline of the manufacturing sector, in particular, has led to a decline in the number of jobs that offer high wages and good benefits. In this new context, there is a greater need for both incumbent and dislocated worker training. If employers of South Central Wisconsin are to remain competitive, it is important to address critical labor shortages and the lack of skilled personnel. In the face of major plant shutdowns and large-scale layoffs, moreover, it is important to help workers find new jobs in new fields. Workforce training is a critical element in achieving both of these objectives, and JWF partners are focused increasingly on the best ways to achieve them.

Another evolution over time has been the increasing regional focus of workforce development. In the early years, system reform efforts through JWF focused on Madison and Dane County, and these entities are still key institutional strategic partners. But over time, the collaboration has spread to cover all of South Central Wisconsin. In part, this reflects the economic realities of the region, but also it has resulted from the WDB's growing investment in JWF activities. The WDB has provided a stable institutional base for JWF operations in the region; has helped JWF participants to strengthen relationships with local governing bodies and Job Centers throughout the six-county area; and has enabled JWF partners to tap federal resources that promise to provide long-term financial stability.

In response to these shifts, there has been rapid growth in employer interest and involvement in JWF. This is due in part, of course, to the availability of federal dollars for training through the Industry Partnerships Project. However, the high level of interest in JWF also reflects the reality that many employers simply cannot find workers with the skills they need. Moreover, based on feedback from training participants themselves, workers are very eager to learn new skills. Many more workers have been reached in recent years, both because workforce training became available at numerous sites throughout the region and because so many course options were offered to meet a wide range of needs.

Looking forward into the future, there are several key areas of JWF work that merit special attention. For example, as noted earlier, course modularization has been a very useful method of delivering training to job seekers and employees. Workers who attend modular training can gain basic knowledge in an area very quickly, obtain certification, and qualify for relevant employment. Once in a job, they can continue taking modular courses that will lead to further credentialing in that area. MATC in particular is committed to further expanding the range of occupational training courses that can be offered in a modular format.

Further, in working more closely with dislocated workers, JWF collaborators have found that groups of dislocated workers sometimes seek similar types of training. If a group is large enough to constitute a training course, the WDB in South Central Wisconsin will work toward contracting with MATC to deliver “cohort” training for the entire group. This is an important example of training initiated by workers rather than employers.

Finally, MATC will continue to promote General Education Institutes, as a way to move dislocated workers into training that will help them to fulfill degree requirements while waiting for more comprehensive programs to begin.



Summing Up

In this report, we have looked at how JWF got started and how it has developed over time. We have identified key innovations, achievements, and outcomes. Here, we summarize the impact on participation in JWF on employers and key institutional partners — the WDB, Job Centers, technical colleges — and by extension, its impact on the region's workforce development system as a whole.

Employers...

- are more willing to invest in in-house training
- are more likely to pursue shared training with other firms
- are more committed to partnering with peer firms more broadly through JWF
- are much better informed about the resources available through institutional partners, and have built stronger relationships with those partners

The WDB...

- is producing a single strategic workforce development plan for the entire South Central Wisconsin region
- has more JWF partner firms serving on its board than in the past
- has adopted a more systematic approach to workforce development
- has increased its focus on incumbent worker training
- views sectoral partnerships as the key element in identifying the needs of the business community

Job Centers...

- are learning more about the needs of employers in their areas
- are utilizing new resources to serve dislocated workers
- are sharing more information with local technical colleges
- are offering pre-employment training in their facilities
- have adopted WISCareers, an on-line tool for assessing training needs and resources

Technical Colleges...

- are restructuring course offerings to better serve employers' and workers' needs
- have changed billing practices so that multiple employers can purchase courses jointly
- are helping workers in new ways, through programs such as General Education Institutes and "cohort" training
- created linkages between modularized workshops and for-credit classes in associate degree programs

Conclusion

For nearly ten years, JWF has been at the forefront of workforce system improvement in South Central Wisconsin, by providing an umbrella for strategic discussion and planning and for the creation and expansion of strong sectoral partnerships. The project has encouraged many employers, normally accustomed to “going their own way,” to collaborate closely with other firms in their industries. Through JWF, these employers have been able to develop mutually beneficial relationships with other institutions that play a pivotal role in workforce education and training — including Job Centers, technical colleges, and the WDB. And through these relationships, JWF has produced positive outcomes for incumbent and dislocated workers alike. Through innovative strategies for reforming the workforce development system in South Central Wisconsin, JWF is helping to strengthen and stabilize the regional economy. We are confident that similar partnerships in other locations can do the same.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Dresser, Laura. “Building ‘Jobs with a Future’ in Wisconsin: Lessons from Dane County.” In Françoise Carré et al., eds., *Nonstandard Work: The Nature and Challenges of Changing Employment Arrangements*. Champaign, IL: Industrial Relations Research Association, 2000: 341-359.

Kelley, Tim. “Climbing the Ladder.” *Madison Magazine* 42 (1), January 2000.

State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. *High Performance Partnerships: Winning Solutions for Employers and Workers*. April 1999.

The Industry Partnerships Project: Overview of Design and Implementation. Prepared for the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin by Jobs With a Future, Center on Wisconsin Strategy. December 2004.

JWF Employers

Company Name	Industry	County
Agnesian Healthcare	Health care	Dodge
Alta Genetics	Manufacturing	Jefferson
Apache Stainless Equipment Corp.	Manufacturing	Dodge
B&G Food	Manufacturing	Dane
Beaver Dam Care Center	Health care	Dodge
Beaver Dam Community Hospital	Health care	Dodge
Bethesda Lutheran Homes	Health care	Jefferson
Black Hawk Senior Residence	Health care	Jefferson
Briggs & Stratton	Manufacturing	Jefferson
Capitol Warehousing	Manufacturing	Dane
Cardinal Glass	Manufacturing	Columbia
Cartonplast	Manufacturing	Dane
Central Wisconsin Center	Health care	Dane
Christian Home and Rehabilitation	Health care	Dodge
Clack Corp.	Manufacturing	Dane
Columbia Health Care Center	Health care	Columbia
Columbia ParCar Corp.	Manufacturing	Sauk
Columbus Community Hospital	Health care	Columbia
Community Living Alliance	Health care	Dane
Community Living Connections, Inc.	Health care	Dane
ConAgra Foods, Inc.	Manufacturing	Dodge
Country Nurses, Inc.	Health care	Jefferson
Countryside Home	Health care	Jefferson
Custom Care	Health care	Dane
Dane County Home Care Registry	Health care	Dane
Dean Health Systems	Health care	Dane
Del Monte Foods	Manufacturing	Columbia
Divine Savior Health Care	Health care	Columbia
Electronic Theatre Controls, Inc.	Manufacturing	Dane
Evco Plastics	Manufacturing	Dane
Fiskars Brands, Inc.	Manufacturing	Sauk
Flambeau Plastics	Manufacturing	Sauk
Fort Atkinson Memorial Health Services	Health care	Jefferson
Gerber Products	Manufacturing	Sauk
Grede Foundries	Manufacturing	Sauk
Group Health Cooperative HMO	Health care	Dane
Hammond Power Solutions	Manufacturing	Sauk
Hope Health and Rehabilitation	Health care	Dodge
Humane Manufacturing	Manufacturing	Sauk
Independent Living, Inc.	Health care	Dane
ITW Paslode	Manufacturing	Columbia
Jefferson County Countryside Home	Health care	Jefferson
L.A. Darling Company	Manufacturing	Dane
Lands' End	Manufacturing	Sauk
Legacy Gardens of Madison	Health care	Dane
Lodi Good Samaritan Center	Health care	Columbia
Madison (City of), Department of Public Health	Health care	Dane
Maplewood of Sauk Prairie	Health care	Sauk
Maysteel	Manufacturing	Dodge
Mayville Engineering Co.	Manufacturing	Dodge

Company Name	Industry	County
Medical Associates	Health care	Sauk
Meriter Health Services	Health care	Dane
Meriter Retirement Services	Health care	Dane
Metal Container Corp.	Manufacturing	Jefferson
Middleton Village Nursing and Rehabilitation Center	Health care	Dane
Milwaukee Valve	Manufacturing	Sauk
Montello Care Center	Health care	Marquette
NASCO	Manufacturing	Jefferson
Nazareth House	Health care	Dane
Nestlé Purina PetCare	Manufacturing	Jefferson
Non-Metallic Components	Manufacturing	Columbia
Northland Home Health	Health care	Marquette
Opportunities, Inc.	Manufacturing	Jefferson
Our House I, II & III Assisted Living	Health care	Marquette
Penda Corp.	Manufacturing	Columbia
Perry Judd's, Inc. – Baraboo Division	Manufacturing	Sauk
Pivot Point Inc.	Manufacturing	Dodge
Placon Corp.	Manufacturing	Dane
Plastic Ingenuity	Manufacturing	Dane
Pleasant Company	Manufacturing	Dane
Prairie Clinic, S.C.	Health care	Sauk
Reedsburg Area Medical Center	Health care	Sauk
Reedsburg Physicians Group	Health care	Sauk
RFDF, Inc.	Health care	Dane
Robbins Manufacturing	Manufacturing	Columbia
Royle Communications Group	Manufacturing	Dane
Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics	Manufacturing	Columbia
Seats, Inc.	Manufacturing	Sauk
Spacesaver Corp.	Manufacturing	Jefferson
St. Coletta of Wisconsin	Health care	Jefferson
St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center	Health care	Dane
Stoughton Hospital	Health care	Dane
Stroh Controls	Manufacturing	Juneau
Sunny Industries	Manufacturing	Dane
SYSCO	Manufacturing	Sauk
Teel Plastics	Manufacturing	Sauk
The Wisconsin Cheeseman	Manufacturing	Dane
TriEnda	Manufacturing	Columbia
TW Design and Manufacturing	Manufacturing	Marquette
Twin Rivers Assisted Living, LLC	Health care	Jefferson
UW Health	Health care	Dane
UW Hospital and Clinics	Health care	Dane
Valley Packaging	Manufacturing	Dane
Watertown Area Health Services	Health care	Jefferson
Webcrafters, Inc.	Manufacturing	Dane
William S. Middleton Memorial VA Hospital	Health care	Dane
YWCA Employment and Training Annex	Health care	Dane

JWF Training Courses

Before the Industry Partnerships Project (1996-2002)

Customer Service Representative
English as a Second Language (ESL)
Health Care Leadership and Teamwork
Manufacturing Advancement Pre-Employment Skills
Manufacturing Basic Skills
Manufacturing Leadership
Medical Transcription
Phlebotomy
Programmer Trainee I
Programmer Trainee II
Respiratory Therapy Aide

During the Industry Partnerships Project (2003-04)

Basic Skills

ESL Math Measurement
Foundations for Health Care
Key to Writing
Key to Writing/Basic Computer Skills

Academic/Employability Skills

Gen Ed: Algebra Concepts
Gen Ed: Intro to College Math
Gen Ed: Windows 2000
Gen Ed: Keyboarding
Gen Ed: College Success
Gen Ed: Communication Skills I
Gen Ed: Contemporary American Society
Gen Ed: Psychology of Human Relations
Gen Ed: Communication Skills II
International Computer Drivers License
Introduction to Computers

Technical Skills: Health Care*

Aspects of Aging
Body Structure and Function
Certified Nursing Assistant
Community-Based Residential Facility
Health Unit Coordinator
Medical Terminology
Medication Assistant
Phlebotomy

Technical Skills: Manufacturing

Advanced Electrical Maintenance
Blueprint Reading
Electrical Controls
Fluid Power
Programmable Logic Controllers
Technical Math

Soft Skills

Aligning for Workplace Success
Business Writing I
Business Writing II
Customer Service
Diversity and Change Management
Leadership, Problem Solving, and Meetings
Leadership Development
Legal Issues for Supervisors
Supervisory Human Resources Skills
Team Building and Problem Solving
Workplace Motivation and Morale (FISH)
Workplace Motivation and Morale (Whale Done)

* An online Mammography course was also offered; it is not included here, however, because it was ongoing when the DOL grant period ended on October 30, 2004.

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