

# **How Workers Win**

## **Building Workplace Skills Through the Industry Partnerships Project**

**August 2005**

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



# Introduction

Despite high rates of labor force participation in Wisconsin, a significant number of jobs in the state do not provide wages and benefits sufficient to support a family. These jobs also typically offer little room for upward mobility, making it hard for workers to move beyond entry-level positions. And with the recent decline in the state's manufacturing sector, thousands of Wisconsin workers have lost jobs — some of them high-paying — due to plant closings or mass layoffs; for many of these dislocated workers, the local economy offers few options beyond low-wage, dead-end jobs.

Jobs With a Future (JWF) seeks to address these and other hurdles in South Central Wisconsin's labor market. Created in 1996, JWF brings together leading local stakeholders — including the City of Madison, Dane County, Madison Area Technical College (MATC), the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin (WDB), and the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) at 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.

As a strategic collaboration of leading institutions in the region, JWF allows partners to pursue joint efforts to make our workforce development system more efficient and responsive to area workers and employers. Understanding that employers need to be brought into the system, JWF partners have also invested heavily in building stronger employer organization in the region — partnerships of local employers and leading industries that are working with key institutions on solving practical skill, training, recruitment, and retention problems.

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 and Electric Economic Development Services
- Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC)
- Regional employers
- South Central Federation of Labor
- United Way of Dane County
- University of Wisconsin-Madison, Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS)
- Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin (WDB)



# The Industry Partnerships Project

JWF was able to significantly expand its efforts to provide workers with pathways to career advancement through “Industry Partnerships: Developing Workers for Jobs with a Future.” This project was made possible by a two-year, \$1.14 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to the WDB, a key JWF partner. The Industry Partnerships Project had three main goals:

1. To provide training to incumbent workers that would enable them to take on new responsibilities and/or advance beyond entry-level positions in health care and manufacturing. The project aimed to overcome skill gaps in these industries by bringing together employers and public-sector educators to develop curriculum and deliver training relevant to incumbent workers’ needs.
2. To improve employment opportunities for the growing number of dislocated workers in the region. With plant closings and mass layoffs on the rise in South Central Wisconsin, the project adopted strategies to increase dislocated workers’ awareness of and access to job training. In particular, the WDB and its collaborators sought to connect these workers to training that could lead to new jobs in health care and manufacturing, in areas of occupational and skill shortage.
3. To build and strengthen relationships between employers and institutional partners. By bringing public- and private-sector stakeholders together, the project intended to help key collaborators better coordinate strategies and align resources for delivering effective workforce training in the region.

The grant enabled JWF to extend its geographic reach throughout the six counties of South Central Wisconsin — Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Jefferson, Marquette, and Sauk — and to involve new employers along with those already active in JWF. The project focused on manufacturing and health care because their share of employment in the region is significant, there is a range of jobs available in each field, and both industries have brought strong leadership to the table.

## An Overview of Worker Participation in Industry Partnerships Project Training

Between March 2003 and October 2004, the Industry Partnerships Project involved 102 health care and manufacturing employers and delivered free training to 987 area residents. (For a complete list of employers, see Appendix 1.) The workers participated in 41 different courses — on topics ranging from business writing and leadership development to electrical controls and phlebotomy — accounting for 28,803 hours of training. MATC and Moraine Park Technical College worked extensively on curriculum development and provided all of the training. (For a complete list of courses offered by JWF, see Appendix 2.)

The vast majority of workers — 823, or 83 percent — who benefited from training under the Industry Partnerships Project were incumbent workers: individuals currently employed who found out about courses while on the job. A smaller number of participants — 164, or 17 percent — were dislocated workers: individuals who lost their jobs and typically learned of course availability at WDB-sponsored “rapid response” sessions, where information on employment and retraining was provided to employees affected by plant closings or mass layoffs. Other dislocated workers found out about training offered through the project at their local Job Centers.

The data in Table 1 helps us to understand more clearly who benefited from project-sponsored training. As the table shows, a large majority of participating workers were female (about 61 percent), and 91 percent of them were white. A significant share of those who attended training — 45 percent — was between the ages of 36 and 50, and another 22 percent was 51 or older. As for educational attainment, nearly 40 percent of participating workers had no more than a high school degree. Further, 38 percent of participants were workers earning less than \$13.15 per hour when they enrolled in training. We define these workers as “low-wage workers” given that their income falls below what each adult in a two-parent family of four must earn to achieve economic self-sufficiency in Dane County.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1

### Worker Participation in Industry Partnerships Project Training

		# incumbent workers (% of all incumbent)	# dislocated workers (% of all dislocated)	Total (% of all workers)
<b>Gender (N=987)</b>	Male	339 (41%)	49 (30%)	388 (39%)
	Female	484 (59)	115 (70)	599 (61)
<b>Racial/ethnic origin (N=794)</b>	American Indian	3 (0%)	1 (1%)	4 (1%)
	Asian American	11 (2)	0 (0)	11 (1)
	Black	14 (2)	0 (0)	14 (2)
	Hispanic	31 (5)	7 (5)	38 (5)
	White	594 (90)	129 (94)	723 (91)
	Other	4 (1)	0 (0)	4 (1)
<b>Age (N=964)</b>	18-25	70 (8%)	9 (6%)	79 (8%)
	26-35	218 (27)	19 (12)	237 (25)
	36-50	366 (46)	73 (45)	439 (46)
	51+	147 (18)	62 (38)	209 (22)
<b>Educational attainment (N=781)</b>	No more than HS	217 (34%)	86 (64%)	303 (39%)
	Some college	226 (35)	31 (23)	257 (33)
	College degree or more	204 (32)	17 (13)	221 (28)
<b>Pre-training wage (N=900)</b>	< \$13.15	262 (34%)	76 (57%)	338 (38%)
	>= \$13.15	505 (66)	57 (43)	562 (62)

**Note:** Not all participants provided data for all indicators.

1. This figure is based on The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wisconsin, produced by the Wisconsin Women’s Network and Wider Opportunities for Women. We use the self-sufficiency wage for Dane County because this is where the largest concentration of workers participating in Industry Partnerships Project training reside. For more information on the self-sufficiency standard, see [www.wiwomensnetwork.org/selfsuffstd.html](http://www.wiwomensnetwork.org/selfsuffstd.html).

When we compare the data on incumbent and dislocated workers in Table 1, we note some startling distinctions between the two groups. For example, a much higher share of dislocated workers were female than was true for incumbent workers (70 percent compared to about 59 percent). Further, dislocated workers were far more likely to be older: 38 percent were at least 51 years old, compared to 18 percent for incumbent workers. Similarly, educational attainment was much lower among dislocated workers: nearly two thirds had no more than a high school diploma, compared to just one third of incumbent workers. (For all Wisconsin workers, the share is 45 percent.)

Finally, Table 1 shows that low-wage earnings were much more prevalent among the dislocated workers who accessed training: some 57 percent of dislocated workers had earned less than \$13.15 per hour when training began, compared to 34 percent of incumbent workers. In fact, in initial participation surveys more than 30 percent of dislocated workers reported having received some form of public assistance within the year prior to training (24 out of 78 respondents), compared with just over six percent of incumbent workers (38 out of 604 respondents).

As these data suggest, the Industry Partnerships Project served a large number of workers who are particularly disadvantaged in the current labor market — a testament to the project's success in meeting a critical goal: to reach workers who, with limited education and low earnings, would have difficulty accessing better labor-market opportunities on their own.

This report relates the experiences of workers who participated in training made possible by the Industry Partnerships Project, and answers the question: How did workers win through this training? In the pages that follow, we document how training helped these workers enhance their skills, secure new jobs, improve the quality of their employment, obtain higher wages, or otherwise advance their careers. We present aggregate data on workers who received training under the Industry Partnerships Project, as well as first-hand impressions from workers themselves. These personal accounts, perhaps more than anything else, demonstrate how skills training can have a concrete, positive effect on a worker's self-confidence, job performance, and career prospects.

# Training Benefits Incumbent Workers

The benefits of skills training for incumbent workers are multifold. They include gains that are easy to quantify — like wage increases and promotions — and those that are harder to measure but still important to job performance and employee morale — such as increased confidence, improved communication skills, and a newfound desire to move up. In the following pages, we look more closely at the employee demographics associated with the different types of training provided through the Industry Partnerships Project and document how workers benefited from the courses they took.

## Firms Invest in Low-Wage Workers

Table 2 shows that, of the 823 incumbent workers trained under the project, nearly one-third had low pre-training wages. Further, workers making less than \$13.15 per hour far outpaced those with higher earnings in terms of the amount of time spent in training: low-wage workers spent an average of 32 hours in training, more than double the number of hours logged by higher-wage employees (13).

Table 2 also shows that participating companies sent a greater number of employees with lower levels of education to training than their more highly educated counterparts. Fifty-four percent of workers trained possessed a high school diploma or some college education, while only 25 percent had obtained a college degree.

These data suggest that employers, given access to affordable and convenient training, will invest time to train these workers. This, in turn, implies a broader willingness to facilitate the advancement of low-wage workers and workers without much formal education into positions with more responsibility and higher wages.

## Training Boosts Job Performance and Facilitates Career Advancement

Participating firms' investments in workers, including those with low-wages and/or low levels of education, paid off. Overwhelmingly, workers completing post-training course assessments reported that training was a positive experience, increasing their confidence, productivity, and on-the-job performance:

- About 69 percent (155 of 226 respondents) felt more confident in their abilities as a result of training.
- Some 55 percent (125 of 226) found that they were more motivated at work.
- Large majorities either strongly agreed or agreed that they were using the information learned in training on the job (188 of 238 respondents, or 79 percent); were better able to perform their job (70 percent); and had increased their productivity at work (56 percent).

Table 2

### Incumbent Worker Training by Education, Wage, and Industry

		Total	
		# trained	Training Intensity
Educational attainment	No more than HS degree	220	15 hrs
	Some college	226	10 hrs
	At least college degree	205	13 hrs
Pre-training wage	< \$13.15	262	32 hrs
	>= \$13.15	505	13 hrs
Industry	Health care	320	38 hrs
	Manufacturing	491	14 hrs

**Note:** Not all participants provided data for all indicators. Also, some participants may have taken courses in more than one skill category.

A much smaller — but significant nonetheless — number of incumbent workers experienced material gains from training, such as raises or promotions. In follow-up surveys, nearly a third of incumbent workers (30 percent, or 73 out of 244 respondents) reported concrete benefits as a result of training. Of these, about 18 percent (13 out of 73) said they had gotten a raise, while just below ten percent had been promoted. Another ten percent reported that, as a result of training, they had applied for new jobs.

Take Kim Crain, for example. A 34-year-old high school graduate and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Kim works as a community support manager at Community Living Connections (formerly RFDF), a non-profit agency in Fitchburg, Wisconsin that serves seniors and people with developmental disabilities. After 11 years on the job, Kim was promoted into this position in 2003 as a result of her participation in Industry Partnerships Project training. She supervises about 50 staff members who work with developmentally disabled people in the community. With her new position came a significant raise; Kim went from making \$8.90 per hour as an in-home aide to \$15.84 per hour — a 78 percent increase in pay.

The free training offered through the project was the opportunity Kim's supervisors — recognizing her potential long ago — had been waiting for. Kim participated in the entire Leadership Development series, which gave her the managerial skills she needed to move up. She had this to say of the training she took: "I think it was great training. I learned a lot, and I'd actually like to go back as a refresher." In fact, Kim was so impressed with the training she received that she brought her course materials to work so she could share them with other members of the staff.

Travis Stebbins, a 36-year-old high school graduate who does general electrical repair and facility maintenance for the Flambeau Corporation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, is another example of someone whose career advanced as a result of training. After spending seven years on the factory floor, most recently as an injection molding operator, Travis jumped at an opportunity to move back into the maintenance department at Flambeau, where he started when he first joined the company. To assist this move, Travis' supervisor referred him to maintenance training offered through the Industry Partnerships Project.

After completing courses in electrical controls, hydraulics, blueprint reading, and technical math, Travis was promoted to his current position in the maintenance department and received a pay raise; after training, his hourly wage rose from \$11.57 to \$12.19. Eventually, he would like to move into the “lead” position on the maintenance team — a job with duties that require more training. As Travis said, “I know I need more training to do what I want to do in maintenance.”

Regardless of whether they experienced material benefits like Kim and Travis, incumbent workers offered an overwhelmingly positive assessment of the training itself. Some 82 percent (198 out of 242) of workers responding to post-training surveys felt the course/s had been useful, while 71 percent believed it would be helpful to continue training in the future. This remarkable show of support suggests that workers found the training enormously beneficial — even when it did not translate into higher wages, more responsibility, or advancement on the job.

## A Closer Look at Types of Skills Training

Leadership development, hydraulics, blueprint reading — workers trained under the project like Kim Crain and Travis Stebbins participated in very different types of courses. Some courses, like leadership development, are designed to boost workers’ interpersonal, supervisory, and team-building capacities — what are referred to as *soft skills*. Other courses, including hydraulics and blueprint reading, are intended to provide students with *technical skills* — the industry-specific knowledge they need to perform their jobs. Still others are geared to improving workers’ *basic skills* — their command of things like fundamental math, computer elementals, or English as a Second Language (ESL). Finally, *academic/employability skills* courses offer general education in a range of areas — from algebra concepts to communication to college success — and also cover computer skills at a more advanced level than a basic skills course would provide. (With one exception, Foundations for Health Care, academic/employability courses were attended exclusively by dislocated workers.)

In Table 3, we show the distribution of incumbent workers in each of these four categories of training by gender, wage, education levels, and industry. The table indicates that women, who accounted for 58 percent of all incumbent workers participating in training, were over-represented in basic and academic/employability skills courses (73 and 64 percent of participants, respectively). Incumbent workers with no more than a high school diploma (34 percent of all incumbent participants) were over-represented in basic (51 percent), academic/employability (86 percent), and technical (46 percent) skills courses, but not in soft skills courses (29 percent). Finally, incumbent workers with low earnings at the onset of training (34 percent of the total) had a very significant presence in basic (88 percent) and technical (72 percent) skills training, but were noticeably under-represented in soft skills training (16 percent).

Table 3

**Incumbent Worker Training by Gender, Education, Wage, Industry, and Skill Level**

	<i>Total</i>		<i>Basic Skills</i>		<i>Academic/ Employability</i>		<i>Technical Skills</i>		<i>Soft Skills</i>	
	# trained	Training Intensity	# trained	Training intensity	# trained	Training intensity	# trained	Training intensity	# trained	Training intensity
<b>Gender</b>										
Male	347	17 hrs	14	16 hrs	12	8 hrs	53	44 hrs	268	12 hrs
Female	489	22 hrs	37	36 hrs	21	7 hrs	88	68 hrs	343	9 hrs
<b>Educational attainment</b>										
No more than HS degree	220	15 hrs	16	38 hrs	12	3 hrs	50	43 hrs	144	4 hrs
Some college	226	10 hrs	11	28 hrs	2	3 hrs	30	41 hrs	183	4 hrs
At least college degree	205	13 hrs	4	36 hrs	0	0 hrs	28	49 hrs	174	6 hrs
<b>Pre-training wage</b>										
< \$13.15	262	32 hrs	37	30 hrs	13	7 hrs	94	65 hrs	121	9 hrs
>= \$13.15	505	13 hrs	5	31 hrs	15	8 hrs	37	48 hrs	453	10 hrs
<b>Industry</b>										
Health care	320	38 hrs	34	40 hrs	5	7 hrs	94	65 hrs	192	8 hrs
Manufacturing	491	14 hrs	16	9 hrs	24	7 hrs	41	44 hrs	419	12 hrs

**Note:** Not all participants provided data for all indicators. Also, some participants may have taken courses in more than one skill category.

As Table 3 also makes evident, the number of high-wage workers involved in soft skills programming greatly exceeded the number involved in other types of training, but participation differences across the skill categories were less stark among low-wage earners. Further, workers with some college education or a college degree were far more likely to take soft skills courses than classes that taught technical or basic skills. This suggests the particular importance of soft skills training to mid-level employees — workers who have moved beyond entry-level jobs and already possess the technical and basic skills they need — and is worth further discussion.

## Soft Skills Training Meshes Technical Know-How with Supervisory Skills

The importance of soft skills training, which provides workers with knowledge in areas like workplace diversity, team building, communication skills, and leadership development, is often overlooked. But our experience with the Industry Partnerships Project makes clear that many workers would not successfully transition to supervisory positions if not for this type of training. Employees who move into supervisory roles often do so without receiving any formal management skills training; as a result, they struggle to communicate their technical know-how to supervisees or fail to give direction in a constructive manner.

Without investing the time to properly train incumbent workers to move into supervisory roles, businesses can lose an opportunity to utilize someone with years of technical or clinical experience — experience that cannot be replicated by an outside hire. Further, employees who move up from the “shop floor” can act as liaison between workers and managers because they understand the demands associated with both types of positions. This link is solidified if incumbent workers develop relationships with their co-workers that they want to maintain after they are promoted.

For example, 44-year-old Rhonda Smith, a manufacturing supervisor and human resources associate at Humane Manufacturing in Baraboo, Wisconsin, insists on staying active on the factory floor where she started out, not wanting to abandon the personal interactions she enjoys for full-time desk duties. As Rhonda put it, “You can take the girl out of the factory, but you can’t take the factory out of the girl — which in my position actually works really well because I do most of the interaction between management and the guys on the floor.”

Access to training through the Industry Partnerships Project helped Rhonda’s transition into a supervisory position. In her own assessment, she uses the skills she learned in training “every day, all the time” and is in the process of obtaining her Supervisory and Management Associates Certificate from MATC.

## Soft Skills Training Builds Confidence

For the past two and a half years, Barbara Kessler, a 48-year-old Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at the Central Wisconsin Center — a residential facility for developmentally disabled individuals — has coached new residential care technicians (RCTs), helping them to perfect their patient care skills during their year of probation. As an RCT for over 26 years herself, Barbara is intimately familiar with the ins and outs of the job, but her supervisor thought she might like to enhance her job skills by attending “Assessing Your Leadership Style.” In her own estimation, this one class vastly improved her interpersonal skills. As a result, she not only feels more confident talking to the new hires, but finds communicating with her own supervisors less intimidating: “Bosses always seemed so scary . . . , but now I find talking to my supervisors a lot easier.” Barbara summed up the impact of the training she took by saying, “I just find that I can stand on my own two feet now.”

Like Barbara, other workers felt the soft skills training they received boosted their confidence on the job, and eased their relationships with their supervisors. Rhonda Smith of Humane Manufacturing, for example, feels “more equal” with her supervisor who, in turn, consults with her more since she has had the training. Similarly, Kim Crain’s supervisor at Community Living Connections described her as being “timid” before she took leadership development, team building, and legal issues training; now, however, “Kim comes into my office with confidence. She’s very professional.”

## Soft Skills Training Can Reduce Employee Turnover

Providing soft skills training to workers who move into supervisory positions can also have direct benefits for the lower-wage employees who must report to them. This type of training teaches workers to manage people more effectively, which can lessen dissatisfaction and turnover among the employees they supervise.

Michael Mark, a press room supervisor at Sunny Industries, a printing company in Mazomanie, Wisconsin, is a perfect example. After sustaining an injury that made it impossible for him to work the press itself, he was moved into a supervisory position where he makes \$28.85 per hour and is responsible for 100 to 150 employees on the factory floor each day. With no formal training for this role, Michael performed his job duties by example: he yelled at the workers the same way he was yelled at when he worked the press. He admits that he made some employees cry and others quit. In fact, an employee on work-release from prison quit because Michael's management style was so abrasive. "He would rather be in jail than work for me!" Michael recalls thinking.

Michael's employer realized that his lack of supervisory skills was hurting business, and sent him to leadership development training. Its impact was dramatic: employees now find that they can approach him with their questions and problems, no one he supervises has quit over poor treatment, and Michael no longer suffers from the stomach ulcers that plagued him when he spent his days yelling at employees.

Similarly, Cedric Fitch, a 20-year veteran at Humane Manufacturing who worked his way up from machine operator to production supervisor, confessed that his relationships with the employees under his watch were often rocky before he took team building and leadership development courses. He attributed this to lacking the skills needed to manage people effectively, reflecting that "training made me more careful about what I say and how I say it. I have more control and take a realistic view." As a result, Cedric's relationships with the workers he oversees are much less contentious than before.

Debbie Sidell, Vice President of Administration and Cedric's own supervisor at Humane, concurred: "Since we sent him to the courses, he has become much more participative in terms of his management style. He is really willing to take a step back to figure out what he can do to make this employee-supervisor relationship work. We always try to monitor employee turnover, and I think this has made a real difference for us."

Finally, it is worth mentioning that providing incumbent workers with the training they need to become supervisors sends an important message to other entry-level employees: if they work hard and show potential, the company will invest in them, and they will have the opportunity to move up even if they come in with fairly low education levels. This message can help boost morale and reduce turnover among employees.

## Employer Perspectives on Worker Training

Clearly, employees win when given the opportunity to access training. Whether training helps workers hone their technical or clinical skills or develop their leadership capabilities, evidence from the Industry Partnerships Project makes clear that better skilled employees are more likely to be confident, effective, and productive on the job. This means employers win too. In a separate report, *How Employers Win*, we examine in detail the ways in which firms benefited from participating in the project; here, it is simply worth noting that, when asked to assess the impact of training on job performance, employers were overwhelmingly positive:

- Among 81 employers completing follow-up course assessments, fully 99 percent said they would send employees to training in the future.
- Improved performance often led to advancement: according to employer course assessments, over a third (36 percent) of incumbent workers received a pay raise and/or promotion because of training.
- In their final evaluation of the project, 78 percent of employers reported that workers who participated in training were better able to perform their job.

The sentiments of one participating manufacturer summarized the value employers placed on project-sponsored training:

“Training builds confidence and helps employees achieve company goals as well as personal goals. The return on investment outweighs the time they are away from the job. Employees make that time up through their increased ability to perform on the job.”



# Training Benefits Dislocated Workers

Skills training can also be a key pathway to a new career for workers who have lost their jobs because of layoffs or plant closings — a major concern in South Central Wisconsin in recent years, especially in manufacturing. Along with helping incumbent workers to move up in their occupations, an important component of the Industry Partnerships Project was to help dislocated workers prepare for and obtain new jobs.

## A Closer Look at Who Participated

Like their employed counterparts, dislocated workers had access to courses that addressed the four major skill categories. As Table 4 shows, dislocated workers were concentrated primarily in basic and academic/employability courses. The table also illustrates that those with low incomes (57 percent of all dislocated workers who received training) were over-represented in basic and technical skills courses (67 percent and 85 percent, respectively), but were under-represented in academic employability (48 percent) and soft (14 percent) skills training. Dislocated workers with low levels of education — those who had only a high school diploma or less (64 percent of the total) — were under-represented in technical skills courses, and did not access soft skills courses at all. While women represented 70 percent of all participating dislocated workers, they accounted for an overwhelming share of technical skills training participants (89 percent).

Looking at Tables 3 and 4 we can see that, among incumbent and dislocated workers alike, those with higher wages and levels of education utilized soft skills courses in greater numbers than lower-paid and less-educated workers. The tables also show some important discrepancies between the experiences of incumbent and dislocated workers. For example, dislocated workers — in spite of their small share of total participants in Industry Partnerships Project training — benefited from a considerably higher level of training intensity, across the board, than did incumbent workers. This also held true generally for academic/employability skills training and technical skills training.

Overall, the data demonstrate that dislocated workers who participated in this project were significantly disadvantaged in the labor market. Much more likely to be female, older, and with low levels of education than their employed counterparts, they faced serious barriers to improved labor-market opportunities. At the same time, many of these workers were not earning high wages, as is typically assumed of those who have lost jobs in the declining manufacturing sector. This suggests that dislocated workers may be especially enthusiastic about learning new skills that will lead them into entirely new — though unfamiliar — fields.

Table 3

**Dislocated Worker Training by Gender, Education, Wage, Industry, and Skill Level**

	<i>Total</i>		<i>Basic Skills</i>		<i>Academic/ Employability</i>		<i>Technical Skills</i>		<i>Soft Skills</i>	
	# trained	Training Intensity	# trained	Training intensity	# trained	Training intensity	# trained	Training intensity	# trained	Training intensity
<b>Gender</b>										
Male	49	64 hrs	31	7 hrs	18	148 hrs	4	64 hrs	5	11 hrs
Female	115	67 hrs	64	20 hrs	42	105 hrs	34	92 hrs	5	15 hrs
<b>Educational attainment</b>										
No more than HS degree	86	40 hrs	50	14 hrs	32	71 hrs	8	60 hrs	0	0 hrs
Some college	31	43 hrs	14	13 hrs	16	63 hrs	4	30 hrs	2	3 hrs
At least college degree	17	45 hrs	7	10 hrs	1	112 hrs	6	89 hrs	3	17 hrs
<b>Pre-training wage</b>										
< \$13.15	76	83 hrs	34	23 hrs	29	94 hrs	28	99 hrs	1	30 hrs
>= \$13.15	57	85 hrs	17	13 hrs	31	136 hrs	5	66 hrs	7	13 hrs

**Note:** Not all participants provided data for all indicators. Also, some participants may have taken courses in more than one skill category.

## Training Builds Confidence

Like incumbent workers, dislocated workers reported higher levels of confidence as a result of the training they received through the Industry Partnerships Project. Fully 61 percent of survey respondents (40 out of 66) felt more confident after participating in training, while 39 percent said they were more motivated to find a job. One participant noted that the training “gave me the confidence and drive to better myself for the future of my children,” while another said it “helped me get back the confidence I had lost” after losing her job. Further, about two thirds of survey respondents (43 out of 66) affirmed that the training was useful, and 62 percent thought it was relevant to their job or career choice. Almost three-quarters (72 percent) believed it would be useful for them to continue training in the future.

Comments from dislocated workers revealed the ways in which the training helped them to succeed and enabled them to achieve their goals:

- “I got my CNA certification and have a better chance of getting a better job if I choose to.”
- “This course laid foundation for me to relearn skills necessary for advancement in the health field.”
- “The training fulfilled a requirement toward an associate degree in electronics.”
- “Found employment at a higher wage”
- “I now have a job I like with better wages.”

## Training and Career Advancement

As was the case among incumbent workers, a relatively small — but significant — number of dislocated workers reported that they had received material benefits from Industry Partnerships Project training. Twenty percent (nine out of 46 respondents) said training had led to concrete gains: all nine had obtained new jobs. Take, for example, Ann Dressel, a secretary and administrative assistant with 24 years of experience who lost her job when the electronics plant where she worked closed down. After being laid off, she decided on a career switch, and took phlebotomy training through the project. She is now employed as a phlebotomist at UW Hospital and Clinics in Madison.

There may be more success stories like Ann's than we know about. Only a small number of dislocated workers returned surveys after they completed training. Further, data obtained through local Job Centers — which served as a principal referral source for moving dislocated workers into Industry Partnerships Project training — suggest that the rate of reemployment among dislocated workers served through the project may be higher. And Job Center data tell us that more than half of dislocated workers trained through the project went on to enroll in degree, diploma, or advanced certificate programs — in areas such as general education, computer software training, medical coding, nursing, and accounting — to enhance their career prospects.

Nonetheless, given labor-market conditions in South Central Wisconsin, it is not surprising that dislocated workers — particularly those who had been employed in the declining manufacturing sector — continue to have difficulty finding work. Virginia R. Guerra, a 58-year-old from Jefferson, Wisconsin, with over 30 years experience in the furniture manufacturing industry, is a good example. She lost her job when St. Charles Furniture closed its doors for good in June 2003. A few months and several health care-related courses later, Virginia was able to obtain work as a personal care aide at Blackhawk Senior Residence in Fort Atkinson, making \$8.50 an hour — \$2.25 per hour less than what she made at St. Charles Furniture.

A brief stint as a kitchen and residential aide at another senior center some years ago contributed to Virginia's interest in returning to the health care field. She learned of the Industry Partnerships Project training when she placed a call to St. Coletta of Wisconsin — a facility for physically and developmentally disabled youth and adults — to inquire about training opportunities there. She was referred to the region's WDB, which directed her to the free training available to dislocated workers under the project.

In Virginia's own assessment, the training classes she took — which ranged from First Aid and Choking to Dietary Needs and Menu Planning — “opened more doors for me,” helping her to chart a new career path, no small feat for a 58-year-old woman whose native language is Spanish. As a next career step, Virginia intends to pass her CNA exam and seek opportunities to provide more skilled care. Ideally, she would like to obtain more training and become a physical therapist or registered nurse, but she feels that her age is a barrier to going back to school.

The active involvement of public workforce development staff in JWF helped to ensure that dislocated workers like Ann and Virginia got access to training, and led to program changes designed to meet the particular needs of laid-off workers. At the start of the Industry Partnerships Project, for instance, training courses were typically held once a week over a ten-week period. This model worked well for incumbent workers but not dislocated workers, who wanted to get through training more quickly in order to learn skills, obtain credentials, and reenter the workforce as soon as possible. As a result, the project began offering more condensed and intensive courses on accelerated schedules.

These adjustments aside, our experience suggests that one type of programming cannot simultaneously meet the needs of incumbent and dislocated workers, and that separate training models would better serve these populations. In the current economy, preparing dislocated workers for jobs that, at minimum, can match their previous wages requires further strategic thinking.



# Improving the Training Experience and Ensuring Success

While the majority of workers — incumbent and dislocated alike — provided a favorable assessment of Industry Partnerships Project, they also offered suggestions that, if implemented, could improve the training experience. For instance, several of the workers we interviewed revealed an insecurity about attending training classes alone; they would have been much more at ease had they had a co-worker in class with them. For workers who have not set foot in a classroom since high school or are generally uncomfortable in a school setting, the idea of encouraging two or more employees at a company to attend training together makes sense.

A number of workers also indicated a strong preference for hands-on or interactive classes over courses focusing more exclusively on written materials. Workers in soft skills training put a premium on the learning that took place through classroom discussion and small-group brainstorming, while those participating in technical skills training were eager to obtain the clinical or technical competence that only comes through practice.

While no training program is going to be perfect for everyone, there are ways to structure programming to maximize workers' access to and participation in courses. Training under the Industry Partnerships Project was successful among workers because it was provided at no cost, and courses were conveniently scheduled and relatively easy to get to. Training was offered multiple times in locations throughout the six-county region, with a wide array of course options in place to meet people's various needs. For example, some courses were divided into a series of modules, and employees were not required to attend each module but just those that fit their specific training needs.



# Conclusion

Whether they accessed technical or soft skills, attended a couple of modules or an entire series of courses, workers benefited from the training the Industry Partnerships Project provided. Some saw their wages rise and their careers advance, while others developed a newfound sense of confidence and a better ability to perform their jobs.

Among incumbent workers, it is clear that access to relevant, well-designed skills training is key to career mobility and job satisfaction. With this evidence in hand, employers who utilized the project's free training should be sufficiently motivated to pool their own resources to keep innovative training programs afloat in the coming years. After all, the payoffs for employees are inextricably tied to payoffs for employers.

Dislocated workers benefited from Industry Partnerships Project training as well. More than half of those participating in the project went on to pursue degrees, diplomas, or certificates, and a number landed jobs directly after taking project-sponsored courses. It is evident, however, that this training alone was not a direct path to jobs paying decent wages. JWF partners will need to continue to think strategically about how to retrain and otherwise prepare laid-off workers in Wisconsin for good jobs — a challenge in today's economy, particularly for those at the lower-end of the labor market.

# Appendix 1

## Industry Partnerships Project, Participating 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), Dept. of Public Health	Health care	Dane
Maplewood of Sauk Prairie	Health care	Sauk
Maysteel	Manufacturing	Dodge
Mayville Engineering Co.	Manufacturing	Dodge
Medical Associates	Health care	Sauk

<b>Company Name</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>County</b>
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
RDFI, 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

# Appendix 2

## Industry Partnerships Project, Training Courses

### **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.



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

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