



For Immediate Release

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**Workforce Development Efforts Get Boost in Wisconsin Rapids and Milwaukee;
\$750,000 in Grants to Streamline Efforts to Reconnect Low-Skill and
Low-Income Workers to Family-Supporting Jobs**

Washington D.C.— As America faces increasingly hard economic times, a promising \$30 million national initiative to address the nation's workforce shortages is gaining momentum with more and more communities across the country looking for both innovative ideas and proven solutions to grow their economies.

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions (NFWS) announced today the addition of 11 regional collaboratives including the Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance (Funding Alliance) and the Partners for Workforce Innovation (PWI) serving South Wood County, to its national effort to move low-wage workers into higher paying jobs while providing employers with the skilled workers they need.

The newly formed Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance and the Partners for Workforce Innovation are community-based grant-making partnerships for workforce development consisting of business, academic, government and workforce development funders. The Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance will receive \$150 thousand annually over three years for a total of \$450 thousand, and the Partners for Workforce Innovation will receive \$100 thousand annually over three years for a total of \$300 from NFWS. Since NFWS invests 20 percent of the budget of a local collaborative, local funders will invest an additional \$1.8 million in Milwaukee and an additional \$1.2 million in South Wood County as a result.

"The workforce challenges confronting America are too massive, too complex, and too urgent for any one public or private entity to solve alone," said Marlene Seltzer, President and CEO of Jobs for the Future, a national partner of NFWS. "To provide all workers—especially the lower-skilled—with the education and training they need to succeed in an increasingly demanding labor market, America needs an adequately resourced, comprehensive workforce development system."

The Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance and the Partners for Workforce Innovation will join 19 other NFWS regional collaboratives from across the country implementing the NFWS workforce approach, characterized by its sector-based, dual-customer workforce partnerships that seek to meet the needs of employers and low-skilled workers along with its emphasis on extensive public, private and community partners.

In addition to the NFWS grant, the Funding Alliance and PWI will participate in NFWS-supported technical assistance, peer learning, research, and evaluation with other funding collaboratives from across the nation to strengthen their ability to implement



proven solutions, strategies and techniques for maximum impact on their area's economy. The national aggregation of analysis and strategies is a tangible benefit for the collaboratives, allowing them to learn about proven solutions and reduce risk as they address the big picture of Wisconsin's economy and employment.

"Workforce development programs are incredibly vital to the health of our community," said Kathryn Dunn, Community Investment Officer at the Helen Bader Foundation and Chair of the Funding Alliance. "It's just as vital that we take a collaborative approach to how we support these program so that employers and job-seekers can be connected."

"Funders of all types need to look at best practices nationally and work together to apply them here," said Deborah Fugenschuh, President of the Donors Forum of Wisconsin and a member of the Funding Alliance Leadership Council. Members of the Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance include private foundations as well as public workforce development funding agencies and major local corporations.

The Funding Alliance includes such businesses as Harley Davidson, MillerCoors, Rockwell, Froedtert Hospital, and JP Morgan Chase. The opportunity of receiving NFWS funds brought new partners together including the Helen Bader Foundation, Urban Strategies, the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board, the Donors Forum of Wisconsin, the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, the Manpower Foundation, Jane Bradley Pettit Foundation, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Sewerage District, and the Mayor of Milwaukee.

"This opportunity is not only exciting, but also is very timely as the hard-working people and organizations of our community partner to recreate our local economy from one that has been heavily dependent on the paper industry. Participation in this national initiative will have a direct positive impact on our workers and our companies," said Kelly Lucas, President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Greater South Wood County, Managing Partner for PWI. "Matching available jobs with skills development and establishing new workforce pipelines is essential for economic growth."

The local PWI collaborative, which was created around the opportunity to receive NFWS funds and assistance, resulted in new partnerships among funders, businesses and service providers –including Ocean Spray Cranberries, NewPage Corporation, the Alexander Charitable Foundation, Bell Family Charitable Foundation, Riverview Health Care Foundation, Mid-State Technical College, North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Heart of Wisconsin Business & Economic Alliance, Urban Processing, and others. According to Lucas, PWI aims to grow in both size and scope to be truly reflective of a broad, community-based effort.

"Helping our workforce adapt to meet changing needs is critical to future economic prosperity," said Cheryl Urban, President of Urban Processing, a cranberry grower/food processor and a founding member of PWI. "The NFWS initiative is providing the platform for us to create new relationships and a community-wide focus on the importance of comprehensive workforce development. We are pleased to be part of this effort."

The PWI collaborative is taking a dual-customer approach to its work over the next three years - investing in low-skilled individuals to grow prosperity one person at a time by integrating education and supportive services as well as focusing on articulating clear and detailed career pathways in four industry sectors vital to the region: healthcare, manufacturing, technology, and skilled trades. And in a vivid illustration of the



community's economic transition, programs for developing renewable energy using existing paper industry infrastructure are being evaluated and pursued.

"It is a priority for us to adapt our workforce to meet future needs of a diversified economy. Through this approach we can build economic self-sufficiency into our community," said Carl Wartman, Chairman of Riverview Health Care Foundation and a retired paper industry executive.

NFWS is a five-year, \$30 million effort to strengthen and expand high-impact workforce development initiatives around the country. NFWS is dedicated to moving America's low-wage workforce into higher paying jobs, while providing employers with the skilled workers they need. NFWS is supported by the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Hitachi, John S. and James L. Knight, Prudential and The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg foundations, Microsoft Corp., and the U.S. Department of Labor. Jobs for the Future and the Council on Foundations are national partners with the National Fund for Workforce Solutions.

For more information, please visit the NFWS website at: <http://www.nfwsolutions.org>

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