



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 15, 2009

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NEW REPORT: LARGEST PORTION OF JOB OPENINGS PROJECTED FOR WISCONSIN BY 2016 ARE “MIDDLE-SKILL”

Wisconsin’s Economic Recovery Tied to Preparing Workers Now for Future Jobs Requiring Short-Term, Tech College Training

Federal Recovery Dollars to Create Jobs in Middle-Skill Industries; Report Urges Greater Opportunities for Training Beyond High School

MILWAUKEE— In what will play a major role in Wisconsin’s economic recovery, more than 426,000 “middle-skill” job openings—those that require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree—are projected for the state by 2016, concludes a new study released today by The Workforce Alliance (TWA) and the Skills2Compete-Wisconsin campaign, an affiliate of the national Skills2Compete campaign. But to unleash the full economic benefits of these openings, Wisconsin will need to continue to invest in proper training and education for its workforce.

While the recession is stifling current employment growth, the report projects that middle-skill jobs (including new jobs and replacement) would account for 46 percent of all openings between 2006 and 2016.

The report, which for the first time tracks Wisconsin’s jobs at the middle-skill level, notes that funds from federal economic recovery legislation, especially the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, are also expected to create more than one million new jobs across the country—especially in industries dominated by middle-skill occupations like construction, manufacturing and transportation.

The report also notes that while Wisconsin has a number of exemplary middle-skill education and training opportunities, these opportunities must continue to keep up with the anticipated demand for middle-skill workers. Prior to the national recession, Wisconsin, like most states, was already experiencing shortages of middle-skill workers in crucial industries. About 54 percent of all jobs are classified as middle skill but only 46 percent of Wisconsin workers likely have the credentials to fill them. As Wisconsin and all states move from recession into recovery, employers will likely once again face the challenge of finding quality middle-skill workers—slowing the pace of economic growth.

“This is really an important time for Wisconsin to invest in training,” urges Andrea Ray of TWA, the convening organization for the national Skills2Compete campaign. “If Wisconsin seeks timely economic recovery and long-term prosperity, the state must ensure that its workforce has the necessary education and training to meet the labor demands of the future. The national recession provides a time frame for businesses and the state to be strategic, evaluate labor and skill needs, and train and prepare for the jobs that are expected to grow.”

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Wisconsin's *Forgotten Middle-Skills Jobs* also assesses the current and future middle-skill employment and education patterns in the state:

- **Shortages in manufacturing and healthcare will increase.** In a 2007 survey of Wisconsin manufacturing CEOs, 58 percent noted they were unable to find workers for skilled production jobs. And a survey of the health care workforce in central Wisconsin finds that more than 25 percent of workers plan to retire within next ten years—28 percent of whom are nurses.
- Middle-skill jobs expected to grow by 2016 in Wisconsin include **police and sheriff's patrol officers with an average annual earning of \$45,269; carpenters with an average annual earning of \$38,760; and registered nurses with an average annual earning of \$57,376.** The report includes a list of 30 high-demand middle-skill jobs in Wisconsin.

The report also finds that 67 percent of the people who will be in Wisconsin's workforce in the year 2020 were already working adults in 2005—significantly limiting the state's ability to rely on a traditional pipeline from high school to a two-year or four-year degree. The Skills2Compete campaign says this finding underscores the need for Wisconsin to continue to target training and education to people who are working or who could be working today.

Tim Sullivan, CEO of the Milwaukee-based Bucyrus International and Chair of the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment, said the report highlights his ongoing priorities, "We've experienced shortages in skilled workers for years. While the current recession limits our ability to grow, we know that when the economy bounces back we will need a strong, skilled workforce to sustain growth and keep our company moving forward."

The analysis for the study was performed by TWA using data from the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, American Community Survey and state labor market data from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. The analysis is based on the methodology developed for the national Skills2Compete report—*America's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs*—by labor economists Harry Holzer and Robert Lerman.

Echoing a vision put forward by the national Skills2Compete campaign, President Obama first challenged every American to commit to at least one year of postsecondary education or training in February 2009, and has continued to signal that investing in a range of skills for America's workforce—"be it at a technical college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship"—will be a priority for his Administration.

"This is a federal call to action that speaks directly to Wisconsin's strengths. The President has called on all Americans to obtain some form of postsecondary education or job training and has backed that up with commitments to invest in technical colleges and other middle-skill training opportunities," notes Sarah White of the Center on Wisconsin Strategy, a lead partner in the Skill2Compete-Wisconsin campaign. Patricia Schramm of the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin, another lead partner, agrees, "Wisconsin should advance this federal vision, and take proactive policy actions to train more state residents for better, more plentiful middle-skill jobs and careers."

The Skills2Compete-Wisconsin campaign is calling on state leaders to embrace a strong vision, building on investments that Governor Doyle and the state have already taken, to guide an economic and education strategy that would allow residents to meet or exceed the President's challenge: Every Wisconsinite should have access to education or training past high school—leading to a technical college degree or diploma, occupational credential, industry certification, or one's first two years of college—to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries. An education strategy guided by this vision would give Wisconsin a competitive edge for recovery and long-term growth.

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Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman said the report supports Governor Doyle's Grow Wisconsin investments and efforts to train workers for jobs of the future. "Skills2Compete builds on our existing efforts, from the Governor's investments in the Wisconsin Covenant program and the technical college system to efforts such as the Wisconsin Sector Strategies Initiative, Opportunity Grants and Skills Jump Start to plan for growing, emerging sectors. As Wisconsin looks to remain a strong competitor in the global economy, it's critical that we create career paths for workers with limited training and prepare them for jobs of the future."

President Dan Clancy of the Wisconsin Technical College System also strongly supports the campaign's vision. "This is really about creating a culture of lifelong learning in Wisconsin that will ensure a skilled workforce for generations to come," Clancy said. "Given the rapid pace of technological advancements in the workplace, high quality education and training for all workers has become an economic imperative."

Wisconsin's technical colleges and workforce development boards have already begun to develop innovative career pathways in many regions that are specifically targeted to dislocated workers and working adults.

The report is funded by the Joyce Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance.

"Citizens in the Midwest, and Wisconsin in particular, need access to education to prepare for middle-skill jobs that will support their families," said Ellen Alberding, Joyce Foundation president "Wisconsin's Shifting Gears project will help people learn the right skills for the right jobs and participate in the state's economic recovery."

"It's vital to have independent research on the region's education and skill gaps, and these findings provide a roadmap," said Kathryn Dunn, chairwoman of the Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance, a coalition of corporations and foundations working on issues affecting low-income workers. "If we can meet those needs, we'll have a better-prepared workforce that can bolster long-term economic growth."

Members of the Skills2Compete-Wisconsin campaign will meet in Washington, DC in November with congressional leaders to review the study's findings and encourage further federal efforts to ensure all workers can get the skills they need to play a role in economic recovery. The campaign will brief state policymakers on the report's findings and begin to explore ways to make Wisconsin a leading state in addressing the middle-skills gap.

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Skills2Compete is a non-partisan campaign to ensure the U.S. workforce has the skills needed to meet business demand, foster innovation, and grow broadly shared prosperity. The campaign's diverse and growing list of endorsers include national and local leaders from business, labor, education and training, community and civil rights groups, and the public sector. The Skills2Compete Vision: Every U.S. worker should have access to the equivalent of at least two years of education or training past high school—leading to a vocational credential, industry certification, or one's first two years of college—to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries. Every person must also have the opportunity to obtain the basic skills needed to pursue such education. For more information visit www.Skills2Compete.org and www.Skills2Compete.org/Wisconsin.

TWA's mission is to advocate for public policies that invest in the skills of America's workers, so they can better support their families and help American businesses better compete in today's economy. The Workforce Alliance is a national coalition of community-based training organizations, community colleges, unions, business leaders, local officials, and leading technical assistance and research organizations. This alliance of stakeholders, who have not previously come together, ensures that our efforts are not in the self interest of a particular group, but are instead in the broader public interest of the nation. For more information, visit www.workforcealliance.org.