

TO: Legislative Colleagues
FROM: Senator Feyen and Representative Rohrkaste
DATE: January 10th, 2019
RE: Co-sponsorship of LRB-0206/1 & LRB 1222/1, relating to: workforce training grants for seminars in high-demand fields to teach new skills and provide micro-credentials and making an appropriation.
Deadline: Friday, January 18th, 2019 at 5 pm

The Talent Pipeline Package: Bill 1

LRB 2026/1 & LRB 1222/1 create a new arm of the Fast Forward program to support upskilling programs.

Upskilling, sometimes also referred to as micro-credentialing, is defined as the process of learning new skills. Upskilling programs are a quicker way to meet workforce needs than a more traditional technical school diploma or college degree. The concept has been embraced by private sector companies as a way to improve their current workforce and has a host of opportunities for public sector use.

Other [countries](#) and [states](#) have begun to implement upskilling programs, including states as close to home as [Iowa](#). While all upskilling programs look different, they serve a common goal: get individuals into well-paying, high-need jobs in order to better the individual's life and the community's workforce.

This bill creates a new arm of Fast Forward with \$2 million in funding over the biennium to provide grants to non-profits and institutions of higher education to create and administer upskilling programs to unemployed or under-employed individuals.

Lakeshore Technical College administered a successful micro-credentialing pilot program in their region of the state and provided some helpful insight as to how the program this bill creates could be useful. The average adult student's income at Lakeshore Technical College is \$19,300. Programs at technical colleges that do not result in either a Technical Diploma or Associate Degree are not eligible for most types of state or federal financial aid. Therefore, unless funding was provided, the average student would struggle to afford enrollment in an upskilling program, therefore hindering their ability to better their economic outlook and help ease Wisconsin's workforce shortage. This bill states that non-profits and higher education institutions receiving upskilling funding cannot charge participants tuition or program fees in excess of 10% of the cost of administering the program to ensure that students have skin in the game without being priced out of participation.

If you are interested in co-sponsoring this legislation please contact Senator Feyen's office at Sen.Feyen@legis.wi.gov or 6-5300 or Representative Rohrkaste's office at Rep.Rohrkaste@legis.wi.gov or 6-5719 by Friday, January 18th. All co-sponsors will be added to the Senate and Assembly versions of the legislation unless specified otherwise.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill allows the Department of Workforce Development to award grants to nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education in high-demand fields for the purpose of upskilling unemployed and underemployed workers and incumbent employees of businesses in this state and

providing micro-credentials to such individuals. The bill defines "upskilling" as the process of teaching new skills and a "micro-credential" as a stand-alone education product that certifies the achievement of a set of skills and knowledge required by an industry or a professional association.