

ResCare works so that America can too. | Workforce Services

Partnering To Help Build A Better Milwaukee

April marks the first year of ResCare Workforce Services' partnership with local Milwaukee County businesses and community



organizations that are working together to help build a better Milwaukee. We're proud of the alliance of community and business-minded partners who are part of Wisconsin's Food Share Employment Training program (FSET). Working together with our community partners expands employment and training opportunities for individuals in the program and provides additional solutions for businesses looking to hire skilled workers.

We're also proud of the FSET program accomplishments to date, which resulted in more than 12,000 Milwaukee County residents participating in the program within its first year. More than 4,400 individuals have been hired and are contributing to our local economy.* With a job attainment rate of nearly 36 percent, this number is greater than twice the national average.** This is a testament to the work ethic of the citizens of Milwaukee County, like one of our clients who began participating in the FSET program in November 2015. By January, he was certified as a machine operator and working full time at a large local manufacturer. Another client began participating in the FSET program in May, and by December, he received Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certification and began employment with a construction company that is working on the Northwestern Mutual building.

Programs that Meet Individuals Where They Are in Life

FSET includes training courses and opportunities that meet the needs of individuals who are in different stages of their career development. For example, our office location at the Teutonia Avenue Center on the north side of Milwaukee offers on-site General Educational Development (GED) and High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) classes. Another service we offer is ResCare Academy, an online training curriculum that provides access to a library of more than 4,000 free employment-related courses. These on-demand courses not only prepare individuals to enter the workforce and meet program participation requirements, they also assist in future career development as they are offered free for one year after employment.

Closing the Skills Gap

In the past two biennial budgets, Governor Scott Walker and Wisconsin's Legislature have invested more than \$50 million in the FSET program to provide employment and training services through a regional model, as well as to require able-bodied adults without dependent children to meet work or job training requirements by working with agencies like ResCare Workforce Services, as a condition of eligibility for FoodShare benefits.

Employers in the Milwaukee area are in need of employees to fill positions, but lack qualified applicants. Through job training programs managed by Milwaukee-based staff, and recruitment events at Milwaukee-area workplaces, the FSET program helps to close the skills gap through the development of qualified applicants. This solves recruitment issues for employers and delivers opportunities to program participants.

Since the program's inception in 2015, more than 800 Milwaukee County participants have enrolled in workforce training, securing employment in skilled positions such as CDL-licensed drivers, machine and forklift operators and certified nursing assistants. It's exciting to see the impact they are making in the community. They are working to help rebuild the Zoo Interchange, installing windows in the new Northwestern Mutual headquarters and working at leading manufacturers. Others have the opportunity to build something from the ground up as they help construct the new Bucks Arena. Graduates of the training program can be proud that they are helping to build a better Milwaukee.

Creating Solutions

As important as the educational components are, facilitating technical training and practical workforce experience are only part of the FSET program's mission. The program includes many partner organizations from the community to help shatter employment barriers. For example, we are proud to partner with the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (MAWIB). MAWIB provides help to individuals in the FSET program to make informed career choices.

"Almost every day a different employer asks me to help them with a recruiting challenge," said MAWIB President and CEO Earl Buford. "Often they need workers with specific skills, but in today's economy, businesses also have high demand for entry-level positions."

Additionally, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership/BIG STEP (WRTP) works with the FSET program to prepare and connect Milwaukee-area residents to jobs and careers in the manufacturing and construction industries.

"Through our FSET partnership, we have been able to leverage resources to serve more individuals, which are critical to responding to the increasing needs of local employers," said President and CEO of WRTP/BIG STEP Mark Kessenich.

Together with our community partners, we are creating solutions to problems that are common stumbling blocks to employment, like transportation and temporary housing needs. Legal Action of Wisconsin serves as an FSET program partner to provide legal counsel for entanglements that might otherwise prohibit individuals from working.

As one of our clients told us, "I had no idea this much help was available to me. Everyone has been so caring and kind."

These stories are just a few of the hundreds of success stories that are building a better Milwaukee, one job at a time.

^{*}Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) data.

^{**}USDA national data, 2013.