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FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Holds Workforce Hub Convening in Milwaukee, Announces Commitments to Expand Pathways into Good-Paying Jobs

Today, President Biden announced new actions from his Investing in America agenda to connect Milwaukee, Wisconsin residents to good-paying jobs, including replacing lead pipes and upgrading infrastructure through the Milwaukee Workforce Hub. The city's Hub is one of nine [Investing in America Workforce Hubs](#) launched by the Biden-Harris Administration to ensure all Americans—including women, people of color, veterans, and other that have been historically left behind—have access to job opportunities, and the training needed to fill them. This announcement comes during President Biden's visit to Milwaukee, where he announced EPA's final rule to replace lead pipes within a decade and announced \$2.6 billion in new funding to deliver clean drinking water nationwide.

Thanks to funding from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, infrastructure projects totaling nearly \$100 million are in the works across the City of Milwaukee. As part of these investments, the city has begun replacing 100 percent of its lead service lines, reducing the timeline for replacement from 60 years to 10 years in alignment with the President's goal. The Biden-Harris Administration will create thousands of jobs for Milwaukee residents through these investments, and will continue to collaborate with local organizations, ensuring the city is training the skilled workers needed to accomplish these projects. The City of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District are leading the charge in creating workforce opportunities for the community.

Today, collaborators in the Milwaukee Workforce Hub are announcing commitments that will expand pathways into these good-paying jobs to meet the President's goal.

Scaling Up and Expanding Apprenticeships

Registered apprenticeships are the gold-standard model for training a new generation of workers in the skilled trades and provide pathways to high-quality jobs for women and other historically underrepresented groups. Since taking office, the Biden-Harris Administration has invested more than \$730 million to expand Registered Apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships nationwide, leading to the hiring of more than 1 million apprentices.

In Milwaukee, local organizations are taking steps to use more apprentices on public projects and prioritize graduates of local pre-apprenticeship programs which serve underrepresented populations. These steps build on the city's existing program, which puts residents on a path to a journey-level position in a skilled trade.

In total, these actions will create opportunities for hundreds of new apprentices and help to grow certified pre-apprenticeship programs serving underrepresented populations, including high school students from Milwaukee Public Schools. These opportunities include:

The City of Milwaukee's Department of Public Works and Milwaukee Water Works will run a pilot from 2025 to 2027 and require that 10 percent of all labor hours within each craft go to apprentices—half of whom must come from certified pre-apprenticeship programs that serve residents of Milwaukee who are currently underrepresented in apprenticeships. The new requirement would apply to multiple major road construction bids totaling \$102 million, including a \$36 million Reconnecting Communities project to reconnect communities divided by a road that prioritizes vehicle traffic over bikers and pedestrians, and a \$24.3 million RAISE project to make complete streets improvements along one and a half miles of Villard Ave, including raised bike lanes, signal improvements, and curb extensions. The pilot will apply to all contracts replacing at least 300 lead service lines, creating 175 apprentice jobs and covering an estimated \$82 million of lead service line replacement funding from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

- **Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD)** will also change their procurement policies to require apprenticeships for all crafts

working on all their projects, helping to bring new workers into specialized crafts like pipefitting and operating engineers. For 2025, this policy would apply to construction bids totaling approximately \$90 million for the reclamation facilities, the conveyance system, and flood management projects. This policy is estimated to create at least 80 apprentice jobs, 40 percent of whom will be required to come from certified pre-apprentice programs serving traditionally-underrepresented residents of Milwaukee.

- The **Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)** continues its efforts to develop a local workforce to build state highways. Currently, WisDOT has implemented a Federal Highway Administration pilot on a \$65 million freeway project which sets incentives for local residency workforce and apprentice requirements as part of federally funded highway projects. The department will consider the use of the special provisions in future projects to grow this effort in the Milwaukee area.
- **Milwaukee area unions and postsecondary providers** have committed to increase their apprenticeship classes as demand for apprentices on public contracts increases—projecting to increase classes by at least 200 apprentices. Specific union level increases include 50 new apprentices from the Laborers' International Union of North America, 70 from the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers, 75 from the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, and 20 from International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.
- The City of Milwaukee's **Environmental Collaboration Office** will also implement a Community Benefits Agreement as it builds a new public Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network in the city through a nearly \$15 million federal grant from US Department of Transportation. This Community Benefits Agreement will require electrician apprentices on each EV charging installation and include local hire requirements consistent with the City of Milwaukee's Resident Preference Program. At least 40 percent of the chargers will be put in historically disadvantaged communities.

Expanding Pipelines into Apprenticeship

These expanded registered apprenticeship slots will create new opportunities for hundreds of workers in the Milwaukee area. The Milwaukee Workforce Hub will work to ensure every resident has access to these opportunities, by investing in pre-apprenticeship programs that offer disadvantaged communities a chance to develop the skills and work experience needed to succeed in these apprenticeships. As a result of the Milwaukee Workforce Hub, dedicated funding for pre-apprenticeships in the area will grow by at least \$650,000.

The **Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership/Building Industry Group & Skilled Trades Employment Program (WRTP | BIG STEP)** currently serves 1,000 individuals every year and has been a leader in the Milwaukee construction sector for decades. In the coming months and years, WRTP | BIG STEP will lead the workforce hub's construction sector coordination and job training, convening industry partners to develop workforce programs that provide Milwaukee residents access to good-paying and union job in the skilled trades. New investments include:

- **MMSD** will invest \$350,000 in WRTP | BIG STEP for certified pre-apprenticeship programs, including transportation assistance, stipends while participants are in training, and on-going placement and retention for first-year apprentices.
- **Employ Milwaukee and philanthropic organizations** will invest up to \$400,000 in additional funding for WRTP | BIG STEP, including capacity building to increase participation in apprenticeship-readiness initiatives. Employ Milwaukee, the workforce board for Milwaukee, will use formula funds from the U.S. Department of Labor to support innovative customized training cohorts in to meet the needs of the local construction industry with a goal of training 60-80 workers.
- **Unions in the Milwaukee region** will expand their investment in WRTP | BIG STEP. Unions have been investing about \$625,000 per year in this pre-apprenticeship program, which trained over 1,000 people in 2023. Over the next two years, regional trades are striving to increase their investments in WRTP | BIG STEP to at least 3 cents per hour of member work on regional mega projects, including a \$3.3 billion data center being built by Microsoft in Southeast Wisconsin. Unions will also partner with

Milwaukee Public Schools to prepare students for pre-apprenticeship programs.

Providing Supportive Services

The Milwaukee Workforce Hub will also support residents as they begin working in these growing fields, by helping residents with supportive services, including career navigation services and stipends. These investments will help ensure that workers have the resources and skills they need for continued success in the industry.

- The **Wisconsin Department of Transportation** will invest \$507,000 in workforce development through the Highway Construction Skills Training (HCST) program. WRTD | BIG STEP receives \$143,800 in funding from WisDOT to run HCST. This year, WisDOT used grant funding from US DOT to lead a pilot to expand stipends and supportive services for job training participants in HCST. Lessons learned from the pilot, will be used to look at where stipends and higher supportive services help increase graduates in the program.
- **MMSD** is partnering with **Employ Milwaukee** and **Milwaukee Community Services Corps** to provide career navigation services and paid work experience for 64 participants in water sector careers with \$1 million from the U.S. Department of Labor. The funding also supports the development of water industry career pathways and competency maps in partnership with the Council for Adult & Experiential Learning.

Additional Federal Support for Workforce Development

In addition to commitments from partners, the Biden-Harris Administration is making millions in direct investments in Milwaukee to support job training and upskilling to meet the need for these historic investments.

- **EPA's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative** will incorporate key workforce development and labor best practices into the estimated \$320 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and other funding to clean up the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern. EPA will, for the first time, incorporate Project Labor Agreements into contract task orders with an estimated \$275 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding. This

initiative will support local and regional jobs cleaning up contaminated sediments in the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern. In addition, EPA is collaborating with local organizations to support local workforce development as part of the estimated \$45 million in activities to restore important habitats across Milwaukee.

- **The City of Milwaukee Water Works** is partnering with **Employ Milwaukee** to upskill at least 60 city of Milwaukee workers in occupations to support the replacement of lead service lines. Employ Milwaukee is using \$500,000 from the U.S. Department of Labor Community Project Funding to fund this partnership.
- **Employ Milwaukee** also received a \$5 million Building Pathways to Infrastructure Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor that will prepare more than 480 unemployed and underemployed individuals for high-demand infrastructure jobs, including advanced manufacturing, information technology, and professional, scientific, and technical service occupations that support the growing sectors of renewable energy, transportation, and broadband infrastructure. Over \$900,000 from this grant is going to the Milwaukee Area Technical College to assist underrepresented populations in accessing academic and non-academic support to enter civil engineering and drafting occupations that will support transportation and water investments from the Biden-Harris Administration. Other partners in the grant include Waukesha Area Technical College, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards, WOW Workforce Board, MKE Tech Hub, City of Milwaukee, and a variety of employers.
- **The City of Milwaukee** is investing more than \$25 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding to remediate lead paint. To help meet that demand, the City provided \$3 million for Employ Milwaukee's Healthy Homes Construction Careers Program, which is designed to connect trained workers with lead abatement certifications to contractors who are paid by the City of Milwaukee Health Department to remediate high lead risk homes. The training is free to the student, including the cost of training, certification, exam fees, stipends, incentives, and wages during work experience. To date, 344 workers had been enrolled in training so far.

- **The Wisconsin Biohealth Tech Hub** received nearly \$50 million through President Biden's CHIPS and Science Act to establish the region as a leader in personalized medicine. Biden-Harris Administration funding for the Wisconsin Tech Hub will create inclusive talent pipelines that can help develop and deploy cutting edge medical technologies; addressing workforce challenges that often face new industries.

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