



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #245

### Windows to Work Expansion (Corrections -- Adult Institutions)

[LFB 2021-23 Budget Summary: Page 128, #13]

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#### CURRENT LAW

The Department of Corrections currently operates a "Windows to Work" job services program for inmates, pre- and post-release from prison. Current funding for the program is \$1,692,200 GPR annually.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Windows to Work (WTW) is a job services pre- and post-prison release program administered in partnership with the Department of Workforce Development's Workforce Development Boards (WDB). The program is designed to address criminogenic needs of medium- to high-risk offenders that may lead to recidivism, such as employment, education, anti-social cognition, anti-social personality, and anti-social companions. The goal of WTW is to "promote self-sufficiency for individuals returning to the community through the development of constructive skills and the modification of thought processes related to criminal behavior."

2. While still incarcerated, inmates participate in programming including cognitive intervention, general work skills and expectations, financial literacy, community resources, job seeking, applications, and resumes. The institutional portion of the program begins approximately three to 12 months prior to release from incarceration. Following a participant's release from incarceration, the WTW coach will work with the participant's Division of Community Corrections agent to assist participants with job search and job retention activities. Participants may receive additional assistance, as needed, in accessing available community resources to address needs for food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and other services, depending on the WDB area's funding. Post-release programming is provided for approximately 12 months after release, but may be extended with written approval by Correction's Reentry Employment Coordinator, if a WTW coach feels that a participant needs services beyond 12 months.

3. In 2019-20, the Windows to Work program had 418 newly-enrolled participants (admitted to the program at a participating institution during their incarceration) and 115 transfer participants (enrolled at participating institutions, but transferred to a new coach for the post-release portion of the program).

4. Workforce Development has 11 regional Workforce Development Boards responsible for labor training and development activities in specific geographical areas of the state. Corrections contracts with each of these boards to provide a pre- and post-release WTW program at correctional institutions or county jail facilities in the particular workforce development area.

5. Facilities where WTW programs operate and the WDB with which Corrections contracts include the following:

<u>Facility/Jail</u>	<u>Workforce Development Board Area(s)</u>
Chippewa Valley Correctional Treatment Facility	Northwest, West Central
Fox Lake Correctional Institution	South Central
Green Bay Correctional Institution*	Bay Area
Jackson Correctional Institution	Western
Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution	Bay Area
Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility	Milwaukee
New Lisbon Correctional Institution	Western
Oakhill Correctional Institution	South Central
Oshkosh Correctional Institution	Fox Valley
Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution	Southwest
Racine Correctional Institution	Milwaukee, Southeast
Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility	Southeast
Redgranite Correctional Institution	Fox Valley
Stanley Correctional Institution	Northwest, West Central
Taycheedah Correctional Institution	Bay Area
Adams County Jail	North Central
Douglas County Jail	Northwest
Rock County Jail	Southwest
Washington County Jail	Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington
Waukesha County Huber Facility (Jail)	Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington
Wood County Jail	North Central

\*Pilot site

6. Under 2019 Act 9 (the 2019-21 biennial budget) the 2018-19 WTW base budget (\$1,492,200) was increased by \$200,000 GPR annually. The Department used this funding to expand the WTW program to every minimum- and medium-security facility in Wisconsin (which most recently included the addition of Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility programming).

7. In addition, 2019-21 funding was used to plan and operate a pilot WTW program at Green Bay Correctional Institution (GBCI) starting in March, 2020 (the first WTW program at a maximum-security correctional facility in Wisconsin). In 2019-20, there were seven GBCI WTW participants and in 2020-21 there have been 10 participants (small group sizes were chosen as a

COVID-19 precaution). The program was temporarily suspended a week after starting due to the public health emergency, but has since resumed. As of March, 2021, all WTW programming at GBCI has been conducted virtually. A second group of six participants started virtual programming in May, 2021. While the program has not been active long enough to accumulate post-release employment data (especially due to the temporary suspension), the program has allowed GBCI residents to release to community supervision with job readiness programming, which they otherwise would not have had access to.

8. The WTW program has a current base budget of \$1,692,200 GPR annually. Funding is allocated as supplies and services under the Becky Young community corrections appropriation and supports costs such as coach positions, offender services, administrative costs, and training materials and supplies.

9. As indicated previously, WTW had 418 newly enrolled participants in 2019-20. According to the Department, enrollments were higher in 2017-18 (507 participants) and 2018-19 (517 participants) as the public health emergency impacted programming in the last quarter of 2019-20. The public health emergency continued to impact WTW enrollments in 2020-21, as the current average daily population for the program is down to 358 participants. However, the Department projects enrollment for 2021-22 and 2022-23 to be similar to pre-public health emergency fiscal years, plus more, if additional funding is provided.

10. During the 2019-20 fiscal year, participants obtained 447 episodes of employment at an average starting hourly rate of \$13.70 per hour. An episode of employment includes temporary placements, on-site job training, work experience, seasonal employment, and full- and part-time employment.

11. While WTW does not maintain a waiting list, approximately 2,200 individuals were identified as program-eligible as of March, 2021. An individual is eligible if he or she is: (a) currently incarcerated at a participating institution or county jail; (b) has an established agent in one of the contracted WDB areas; (c) is releasing from incarceration between three and 12 months; (d) has at least one year remaining on community supervision after release; (e) has no detainers that would prevent participation post-release; and (f) has a medium- to high-risk on a validated risk assessment. In addition to these criteria, individuals are further screened prior to enrollment as coaches and institutional staff look to identify the appropriateness of placement in the program (for example, if a WTW-eligible individual has other programming needs that take priority), mental health status of the individual, history of Social Security and Disability Insurance benefits to determine if the individual is able to work, and motivation level of the individual to participate (given that the program is voluntary). While 2,200 individuals are program-eligible, some may choose not to participate, or be screened out for other reasons.

12. Under current program operations, funding is provided to local WDBs by contract to support released participants in the area and inmate participants in areas with prison facilities. It is up to WDBs to determine how the funding they receive should be allocated. Many WDBs supplement the program utilizing additional federal and/or state funding (the exact amounts are not tracked by Corrections and may vary from year to year).

13. Corrections negotiates contracts with each of the WDBs to determine the exact allocation of funds provided under the bill. According to the Department, increased funding is intended to expand the pre-release portion of the program to: (a) include three new institutions; and (b) increase enrollments by approximately 90 individuals per year.

14. Specifically, the Department anticipates allocating increased funding to expand WTW to three maximum security facilities: Columbia Correctional Institution, Waupun Correctional Institution, and the Wisconsin Secure Program Facility. According to Corrections, 589 individuals are released to community supervision from these three institutions each year, without any job readiness programming. The Department plans to provide programming for approximately 30 participants at each of the three facilities (an increase of 90 participants annually). Each programming cycle takes an average of 90 days to complete. The Department indicates that it would request each facility conduct three group cycles in 2021-22, with eight to 10 participants per group, and four group cycles in 2022-23, with eight to 10 participants per group. According to the Department, "there is no disadvantage to participating while still in a maximum security institution. One of the eligibility requirements for the program is that a proposed participant's release date is between 90 days and 12 months from release. We will be screening and enrolling participants [that meet this criteria] and therefore, there will not be a long gap between pre-release and post-release programming."

15. The bill does not specify how the funding would be allocated between WDBs. Rather, as under the current program, Corrections would negotiate contracts with the WDBs to provide the services Corrections determines may be appropriate for WTW participants in a particular WDB area. This process requires the WDBs to outline the dollar amount and funding allocations necessary to expand the program to new institutions and to support an increased population. These assessments are sent to the Reentry WTW Coordinator, and are used by Corrections to determine the final allocation of funds. While the proposal would only expand the institutional, pre-release portion of the WTW program, funding still goes through the WDBs that have the new institutions in their jurisdiction, as opposed to going directly to the institutions. The WDBs contractually oversee all components of the WTW program, and often supervise the same individuals pre-release and post-release (transfers to other areas occur in less than 30% of cases), so it is beneficial for WDB staff to build rapport and begin working with inmates during the pre-release programming phase.

16. Given the program's successful post-release job placements, the Committee may wish to provide \$250,000 GPR annually to expand the program to allow for an additional 90 participants per year. Under this alternative, WTW would expand pre-release programming to three maximum security institutions (currently, GBCI is the only maximum-security institution with WTW programming). The Department, through contracts with the WDBs serving the geographic areas in which the institutions are located, would have discretion to allocate funding based on estimated offender need in the WDB area served. This would be similar to the manner in which the Committee provided additional funding to WTW in the 2019-21 biennial budget. [Alternative 1]

17. However, the number of participants in 2019-20 was lower than prior years, and the current 2020-21 average daily program population is lower yet. While the Department indicates that the enrollment rate has been impacted by the public health emergency and is anticipated to rebound in the 2021-23 biennium, as of May, 2021, institutional populations remain lower than the average

daily population in every fiscal year since 2011-12. In addition, the GBCI pilot program has not been active long enough to allow analysis of WTW program completion or post-release employment data for participants in maximum-security facilities. As a result, the Committee could provide \$200,000 GPR annually to expand the program on a smaller scale. Under this alternative, the Department would have to negotiate contract agreements and expand the program with a smaller budget available for distribution. [Alternative 2]

18. On the other hand, the Department projects enrollments for 2021-22 and 2022-23 to surpass pre-public health emergency fiscal years with additional funding for expansion, as program eligibility currently exceeds availability. Despite currently reduced institutional populations, the three institutions recommended for expansion release a combined 590 individuals each year who would be eligible for WTW, if programming was available (significantly more than the proposed expansion by 90 participants). In addition, if current trends continue, any impacts on programming from the public health emergency will continue to decrease. Given these factors, the Committee could provide additional funding, beyond what was identified under the bill as introduced. If an additional \$300,000 GPR annually was provided, the Department could allocate increased monies to WDBs to assist with increased populations and expand programming. [Alternative 3]

19. The Department currently has approximately \$1.7 million GPR in base resources budgeted for WTW. If the Committee does not take any action, base resources would be available to continue the existing program. Funding for the program was increased in the last biennial budget, and the Department did not request additional funding for WTW in the agency's 2021-23 budget request. [Alternative 4]

## ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide \$250,000 GPR annually to expand the Department's Windows to Work program to Columbia Correctional Institution, Waupun Correctional Institution, and the Wisconsin Secure Program Facility, and to include 90 additional participants per year.

ALT 1	Change to Base
GPR	\$500,000

2. Provide \$200,000 GPR annually to expand the Department's Windows to Work program.

ALT 2	Change to Base
GPR	\$400,000

3. Provide \$300,000 GPR annually to expand the Department's Windows to Work program.

<b>ALT 3</b>	<b>Change to Base</b>
GPR	\$600,000

4. Take no action.

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