



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

One East Main, Suite 301 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 266-3847 • Fax: (608) 267-6873
Email: fiscal.bureau@legis.wisconsin.gov • Website: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb>

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #298

Technical Mobile Labs (Corrections -- Adult Institutions)

[LFB 2023-25 Budget Summary: Page 136, #10]

CURRENT LAW

The Department of Corrections currently operates five technical mobile labs, with a sixth to be added in Summer, 2023. The funding for technical mobile labs comes from the Becky Young community corrections; recidivism reeducation appropriation, as well as a Department of Workforce Development (DWD) grant. The amount spent by the Department of Corrections varies each year, depending on how many labs/cohorts are in operation, and how much, if any, funding is received from the DWD. The Department has not had GPR funding budgeted for the cost of instructors, but rather, all instructor funding approved in previous biennial budgets was one-time funding from DWD. In 2021-22, DWD provided funding for all of the costs of mobile lab instructors (\$742,400), which included four fully-operational labs, and one partially-operational lab and the Becky Young appropriation expended \$352,300 on equipment and supplies for the mobile labs.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Technical mobile labs are self-contained classrooms inside a trailer located on institutional grounds focused on career and technical education (CTE) initiatives. The Department currently operates five mobile labs in the following functional areas and at the following institutions: (a) computer numerical control (CNC) at Racine Correctional and Kettle Moraine Correctional (one at each location); (b) welding at Taycheedah Correctional; (c) electro-mechanical at New Lisbon Correctional; and (d) mechatronics at the Racine Youthful Offender Facility. In addition, the Department notes that a new, sixth lab is expected to arrive this summer to replace the lab at Racine Correctional, at which point the old lab will be repurposed and moved to Green Bay Correctional as an industrial maintenance lab.

2. In 2021-22, 67 individuals completed mobile lab CTE programming, which represents the Department's second-highest annual number of program graduates (one participant lower than in 2020-21, in part due to the Jackson Correctional CNC lab not having an instructor available from January to June, 2022 (the lab was relocated to Kettle Moraine Correctional in August, 2022)). Mobile lab programming is anticipated to grow, with the additional sixth lab.

3. While the Department does not maintain outcome statistics specifically on mobile lab participants, the mobile labs fall under the Department's general CTE initiatives, for which data is available. For example, the Department of Corrections reports that CTE program completion rates ranged from 81.8% to 97.9% between 2014-15 and 2021-22 and nearly half of CTE participants found careers in the production field post-release over the same time period. In 2021-22, among CTE program graduates, the average hourly work release wage was \$18.59.

4. Beyond obtaining employment skills and credentials, CTE education is also associated with lowered recidivism rates. According to Corrections' 2021-22 Annual Becky Young Report, CTE participants had a 20.4% re-conviction rate, compared to a 41.6% re-conviction rate in the control group after three years. The three-year re-arrest rates and re-incarceration rates were also lower for the CTE group compared to the control group, but the margin was smaller, differing by approximately 3% for each category.

5. The Department currently contracts with the Wisconsin Technical College System to provide instruction for the mobile labs. Funding for instruction is in part provided by a DWD Fast Forward grant. The Department's agreement with DWD is set to expire on June 30, 2023, and the Administration has indicated that mobile lab funding from DWD will not be available after that date. In 2021-22, DWD provided \$742,400 to cover all costs associated with mobile lab instructors (although not all labs were fully operational in 2021-22).

6. Under the bill, annual funding would be allocated as supplies and services under the Becky Young community corrections appropriation, for each of the following programs: (a) \$165,900 for the Racine lab; (b) \$190,200 for the Taycheedah lab; (c) \$126,000 for the Kettle Moraine lab; (d) \$126,000 for the New Lisbon lab; (e) \$205,000 for the Racine Youthful Offender lab; and (f) \$162,700 for the Green Bay lab. Cost estimates were based on past contracts with local technical colleges, and is in part based on the number of credits and length of each of the programs (for example, the Racine Youthful Offender lab has the highest projected cost, but also provides the highest number of credits and class hours (18 credits over 520 hours)). The Department anticipates that an additional 204 individuals could complete mobile lab programming annually, if all labs are fully staffed, at which point the labs would be fully operational year round (with three additional cohorts per year, per lab).

7. Given the number of inmates completing the mobile lab program and the recent growth of the program (including the addition of a sixth mobile lab), coupled with the heightened need for skilled employees in the current job market, the Committee may wish to provide \$975,800 GPR annually to support instructor costs at the existing six technical mobile labs. This alternative would ensure that the Department has a consistent fund source for instructors going forward, rather than relying on temporary one-time grants from DWD, or potentially not being able to operate some or all of the labs. [Alternative 1]

8. As noted previously, the mobile labs have received DWD Fast Forward grant funding in the past for instructor costs. The Fast Forward grant is funded through DWD's workforce training grants GPR appropriation, which is intended to be used to award grants to public and private organizations for the development and implementation of workforce training programs. The objective is to award funds to businesses from all Wisconsin industry sectors that reimburse the costs of customized occupational training for unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers. The customized, business-driven training must qualify workers for full-time employment, higher levels of employment, or increased wages. The annual appropriation is budgeted \$6,250,000 in 2022-23. In 2021-22, Wisconsin Fast Forward Grants were issued to 37 entities in the amount of \$6,000,000. Fast Forward grant funding has not yet been allocated for specific purposes in the 2023-25 biennium. On May 23, 2023, the Finance Committee reduced Fast Forward funding to \$5,250,000 annually under Motion # 61.

9. The Committee could alternatively direct DWD to provide Corrections with \$975,800 GPR for each year of the 2023-25 biennium in Fast Forward grant funding for mobile lab instructor costs. [Alternative 2] As a result, Corrections could continue to operate the program as in the past. However, according to Corrections, there have been administrative challenges with receiving Fast Forward funds in the past. For example, the two agencies had to come to an intergovernmental agreement/memorandum of understanding, which requires input from multiple entities (such as legal counsel, program staff, fiscal staff, and the secretary's offices), and could delay the receipt of funds. In addition, past agreements have included the requirement that Corrections submit quarterly reports to DWD, in addition to the Becky Young report that Corrections already publishes annually on all reentry programs. Fast Forward grant funding would be limited to the 2023-25 biennium.

10. Given that Corrections has received DWD Fast Forward grant funding for a number of years to operate the mobile labs, the Committee could also require the transfer of \$975,800 GPR annually from DWD's workforce training grants appropriation budget to Corrections' Becky Young appropriation budget. This alternative would provide permanent funding for mobile lab instructor costs, but would also permanently reduce the amount of Fast Forward grant funding available each year. [Alternative 3]

11. If no action is taken, the mobile labs would likely remain on-site, unused until such time as Corrections could reallocate existing funds or receive additional grant funding. [Alternative 4]

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide \$975,800 GPR annually to the Department of Corrections to support instructor costs for technical mobile labs.

ALT 1	Change to Base
GPR	\$1,951,600

2. Require the Department of Workforce Development to provide, in each year of the 2023-25 biennium, \$975,800 GPR in Wisconsin Fast Forward grant funding to the Department of

Corrections to support instructor costs for technical mobile labs.

3. Transfer \$975,800 GPR annually from the Department of Workforce Development's workforce training grants appropriation to the Department of Corrections' Becky Young appropriation to support instructor costs for technical mobile labs, and to reduce the amount budgeted for Wisconsin Fast Forward grants.

ALT 3	Change to Base
Corrections	
GPR	\$1,951,600
Workforce Development	
GPR	<u>-1,951,600</u>
Total	\$0

4. Take no action.

Prepared by: Shannon E. Huberty