

Training pays off even when budgets are tight

Wisconsin local governments have access to a wide choice of affordable training resources in their own backyards.

CUTTING BACK on staff training has a measurable downside. Budget-strapped public agencies that eliminate training altogether or rely on minimal on-the-job training will see the hidden costs as the lack of technical training keeps new hires from getting up to speed quickly and leaves current employees in a rut. Economizing in this area might save money in the short term, but over the long haul the approach can undermine productivity and morale.

Studies show that employees energized by programs where they learn something new go back to work with valuable ideas for getting things done more efficiently and effectively. Targeted training also helps agencies retain good people. Researchers say one of the top reasons good employees move to other organizations is a lack of opportunity to learn new things, and develop and grow on the job.

Wisconsin local governments have a wide choice of affordable training resources in their own backyards. Reasonably priced quality options for management training, important for improving leadership skills in an organization,

and training in technical skills are found throughout the state.

Practical programs

The Transportation Information Center (TIC) offers one-day workshops in seven locations around the state that focus on technical topics of interest to local officials responsible for maintaining local streets and highways. Updated annually to include current issues and new methods, equipment and requirements, these practical programs cover the basics:

- *Winter Road Maintenance and Operations*
- *Highway Safety*
- *Work Zone and Flagger Safety*
- *Road Maintenance*
- *Using PASER and WISLR to Manage Your Roads*

Other training courses offered by UW-Madison Engineering Professional Development (EPD) address more advanced and focused technical topics, including Fleet Management, Storm Water Management, Soils Engineering, Repair of Concrete, Concrete Bridge Repair, Project Management, and Public Works Construction Inspection. TIC scholarships for

these intensive, multi-day courses cover two-thirds of the registration fee. In the past fiscal year, 17 local government employees received scholarships, saving their communities a total of more than \$10,000 in registration fees.

TIC also offers On-Site Workshops in Work Zone Traffic Control and Basic Surveying that allow one or several local agencies to train employees at their own facility. The TIC Video Lending Library is a good source for transportation-related training videos and DVDs that agencies can fit into their work schedules.

Management and supervisory training

Co-sponsored by the UW-Madison Department of Continuing Studies and the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA), two training programs provide participants with the chance to build essential leadership skills that prepare them to supervise and manage people and projects. The national APWA recognizes both the Public Works Supervisory Academy (PWSA) and the Public Works Management

Resources

<http://tic.engr.wisc.edu>

TIC site has information on training workshops and free library materials.

<http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/pda/public-mgmt/academy.htm>

Link to Public Works Supervisory Academy site with class and registration details on the fall 2010 and spring 2011 program.

<http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/pda/public-mgmt/institute.htm>

Link to Public Works Management Institute site with information about the fall/spring program registration. *Classes also available individually.*



Other training opportunities

Programs to gain certification in correct and safe procedures are available to local governments. And many groups in the state offer training programs that make it possible, at low cost, to keep employee skills up to date.

Pesticide Operators Training (now on DVD) from the University of Wisconsin <http://ipcm.wisc.edu/pat>

Highway Technician Training Certification Program <http://www.uwplatt.edu/htcp/>

Chain Saw Safety Training (DVD/hands-on) from Forest Industry Safety & Training Alliance (FISTA) <http://www.fistausa.org/>

Wisconsin County Highway Association Conferences <http://www.wcha.net/>

American Public Works Association Wisconsin Chapter Conferences <http://wisconsin.apwa.net/>

League of Wisconsin Municipalities Public Works Conference <http://www.lwm-info.org/>

Wisconsin Towns Association Regional Meetings and Conferences <http://www.wisctowns.com/>

Wisconsin Technical Colleges for specific skills training <http://www.witechcolleges.org/>

Institute (PWMI). APWA members are eligible for scholarships.

The expanded PWSA curriculum covers basic skills including good communication, customer service, personnel management, workplace safety, assessments, purchasing and inventory control, and fundamentals of government/ethics for lead workers and first- and second-line supervisors. The nine one-day courses (54 hours of course work) follow a fall and spring timetable.

PWMI is the next step in training for managers and those who seek management positions. Participants study advanced communication skills, budgeting, fund accounting and grant administration, labor relations and negotiating, and the fundamentals of municipal engineering. The program's 90 hours of coursework include these PWMI courses plus the nine PWSA courses.

Valuable return

A well-trained, competent and committed workforce is essential when it comes to stretching tight budgets to fit the demands of managing local roads. Thanks to resources available through TIC, the UW-Madison, statewide member organizations and other outlets, it is easy to find dynamic, relevant training programs close to home that provide a valuable return on the investment local governments make in staff development. ■

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RESOURCES

Publications

Sign Retroreflectivity Guidebook, FHWA, 2009. Guidebook and CD-based "Toolkit" developed to help small agencies meet new Federal traffic sign retroreflectivity requirements. Includes information to guide local agency in decision making for implementation of sign retroreflectivity management and inspection methods. Limited number of copies available from TIC.



Complete current Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 346 **Rules of the Road** which incorporate the U-turn law changes.

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/statutes/1969/69Stat0346.pdf>

The National Asphalt Pavement Association funds research and education programs in technical and management areas.

<http://www.hotmix.org/>

The American Concrete Institute has education resources that include webinars and other e-learning programs.

<http://www.concrete.org>

Link to **Field Guide to Terrestrial Invasive Plants in Wisconsin** at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources site.

<http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives>

Print copies of listed publications available free from TIC. Download or request items at [Publications](#) on TIC website. Video, CDs, and DVDs loaned free at county UW-Extension offices. Also see [Video Catalog](#) on TIC website.

TIC website
<http://tic.engr.wisc.edu>

Web Sources

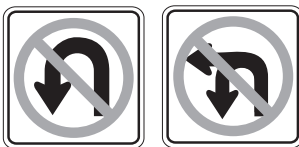
Link to **Operational and Safety Effects of U-Turns at Signalized Intersections** Transportation Research Board journal article. Focused primarily on four-lane roads with medians, it explores conditions associated with more frequent U-turn accidents.

<http://pubsindex.trb.org/view.aspx?id=761624>



Links to text of 2009 Wisconsin Act 97 with changes to the U-turn law.

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2009/data/acts/09Act97.pdf>



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