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For Immediate Release
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Forward Analytics Releases
An Economic Evolution: Job Growth, Pay and Education Since 2012
Wisconsin's Growing Economy Focuses on Workers Needing More Education and Skills

Forward Analytics has released *An Economic Evolution: Job Growth, Pay and Education Since 2012*. The report, from the research division of the Wisconsin Counties Association, shows a growing economy that is evolving into one in which jobs require more education and skills. It also documents an economy in which job growth is not occurring in low paying occupations, but rather in those further up the pay scale.

“Since 2012, Wisconsin has experienced both strong job growth and an unemployment rate falling to record lows. These trends have been well documented,” said Director of Research and Analytics Dale Knapp. “What has been less studied are the kinds of jobs created during this period. Our new report tackles that question, as well as the types of education needed for those jobs.”

Occupational data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for 2012 and 2018 show that new jobs were more likely to be on the higher end of the pay scale and disproportionately required post-secondary education. Annually, BLS reports information on the number of jobs and their pay distribution for more than 800 occupations.

According to Knapp, in 2012 Wisconsin businesses and governments employed about 264,000 people in 121 occupations that on average paid \$68,600. Employment in those occupations increased 16% to over 305,000 by 2018. Growth was driven by large increases in the number of STEM related careers: engineers, computer and software occupations, as well as doctors and other high paying medical occupations.

“At the other end of the pay scale in our state, about 264,000 workers were employed in 15 occupations that paid an average of less than \$20,100 annually. During 2012, the number of jobs in these occupations declined 0.2%, a sharp contrast to the large gains at the top of the pay scale.”

Though not as stark, a similar pattern is found among occupations in the middle of the pay scale. Generally, the number of jobs in higher paying occupations grew faster than the number in lower paying ones.

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“Increasingly, new jobs are requiring postsecondary education,” said Knapp. “In 2012, just under 25% of Wisconsin jobs required an associate degree or more. However, 38% of the new jobs created during 2012-2018 required those levels of education.”

Knapp concluded, “The numbers in this report are incredibly telling. They reinforce Wisconsin’s need to invest wisely in education at both the K-12 and postsecondary levels, to ensure all residents have the education and skills necessary to successfully compete in an evolving economy.”

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It is the mission of Forward Analytics, the research division of the Wisconsin Counties Association, to use the best data available to highlight challenges facing Wisconsin and share this information to assist policymakers in understanding the data in pursuit of informed policy decisions.

Forward Analytics is led by Director of Research and Analytics Dale Knapp, who brings more than two decades of research experience in economics and public policy to the Association.