

# Central Iowa PY20 WIOA Annual Report Narrative

## Executive Summary

Program Year 2020 (PY20) was a year of many changes, challenges and successes. The year began with the focus to transform Region 11 into the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) compliant Central Iowa Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA). Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) from each of the area's eight counties came together to develop a new shared liability agreement and to appoint members to the Central Iowa Workforce Development Board (CIWDB).

Through formal procurement, the members of the CIWDB selected Children and Families of Iowa (CFI) to provide the Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth services. CFI added new staff to expand services beyond the already established youth programming to serve the adult and dislocated worker populations in Central Iowa. The role of the One-Stop Operator was also formally procured, with CFI named as the winning bidder.

The board and CEOs met virtually throughout the pandemic to continue making progress in becoming WIOA compliant. As the board found ways to succeed in transformation efforts, partner organizations found ways to overcome challenges to ensure the needs of customers were being met.

Many of the strategies developed during the pandemic resulted in expanded access with the capability to reach more customers. The board established a strong foundation to continue to facilitate the collaborative efforts of the WIOA partners, ensuring Central Iowa will grow to meet the ever-changing workforce needs of the local area.

## Local Workforce Development Area System

The Central Iowa LWDA consists of Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Marion, Madison, Polk, Story, and Warren counties.

The Central Iowa LWDA's comprehensive center is located in Des Moines (Army Post Road). Two Satellite offices, Park Fair Mall (Des Moines) and Ames, are also located within the local area. Titles I, III and IV are co-located at the comprehensive center.

## LWDA Strategic Objectives

Central Iowa LWDA Strategic Objectives:

- Drive collaborative partnerships with businesses, job seekers and providers to create a robust area in which:
  - ❖ Every workforce member achieves a livable wage and a sustainable career.
  - ❖ Work talent is connected to employer needs.
  - ❖ Impactful policy changes are made.

A strategy for fulfilling Central Iowa's vision of collaborative partnerships is an important step in streamlining the workforce system. Title I (Children and Families of Iowa), Title II (Adult Basic Education provided by Des Moines Area Community College-DMACC), Title III (Iowa Workforce Development-IWD) and Title IV (Iowa Department for the Blind-IDB and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services-IVRS) are considered the core partners of the workforce system under WIOA.

The core partners met on a regular basis to collaboratively address processes, issues, and partnering opportunities. Coordinated efforts to serve employers is one example of how the core partners worked together to reduce redundancies in the system and present seamless services to employers and job seekers.

## COVID-19 Pandemic Response

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the WIOA partner programs in the Central Iowa LWDA made accommodations to ensure high-quality, integrated service delivery for job seekers and employers was continued, while adjusting to support the surge in pandemic-related employment and training needs.

The Title I programs offered virtual recruitment sessions and individual meetings to job seekers, businesses and community partners. The Adult/Dislocated Worker program adjusted support services to meet the financial needs of students enrolled in online learning. As one example, students enrolled in online learning had a decreased need for transportation and dependent care support services and an increased need for required online learning tools, such as personal computers. Also, as job seekers' interest for remote work opportunities became necessary or preferred, career planners developed individualized plans with participants to address these objectives successfully.

During PY20, the majority of Title III Wagner-Peyser staff shifted from the provision of career services to assist IWD with the provision of Unemployment Insurance services. The IWD Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) team continued to meet with dislocated workers, provided virtual one on one meetings and offered several online workshops. Veterans Program staff continued to provide virtual services to veterans with significant barriers to employment.

Staff continued to assist employers with job postings and social media marketing. The Local Veteran Employer Representative continued to advocate the benefits of hiring veterans and hosted several virtual career fairs throughout the year. Offices were open for a short time in September and October of 2020 and then reopened with limited career services in May of 2021.

## Sector Strategies

During PY20, the Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker team, in coordination with Title III and other partner programs, responded to the hiring needs of in-demand sectors, including health care, information technology, and advanced manufacturing in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Central Iowa LWDB funded training and education programs in these targeted demand sectors with the aim of providing a skilled pool of work-ready candidates to employers in these sectors.

Additionally, Rapid Response teams, in coordination with partner programs, coordinated Employer Information Meetings and Worker Information Meetings for affected businesses.

## Business Services & Employer Engagement

With services such as talent recruitment and retention assistance, labor market information, accessing untapped labor pools and employee up-skilling; the Title III team ensured effective, demand-driven products and services were provided to employers during PY20. By creating and maintaining relationships, this team was able to provide targeted workforce information and solutions throughout the LWDA.

A collaborative Business Services Team was established, bringing together business services and placement specialists representing all the Core Partner programs. The purpose of this team was to align outreach and communication efforts with local employers. Unfortunately, the Business Services Team meetings were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the workforce system realignment, and the addition of new service provider staff.

## Program Highlights & Innovation

### Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, & Youth

CFI was selected to continue to provide Youth services and also became the service provider of the Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs in January of 2021. CFI ensured a smooth transition by immediately serving the participants enrolled by the previous service provider. Additionally, all new program staff were trained on Title I programs and the Iowa Works data management system.

The first several months of 2021 included integration into the Core Partner group and co-location into the Iowa **WORKS** Center. Title I program leadership worked with operations managers, core partners, the CIWDB and One-Stop Operator to establish relationships and educate partners regarding program services and collaboration opportunities.

The CIWDB was awarded the COVID-19 National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG). This grant provided funding for Occupational Skills Training (OST), On-the-Job Training (OJT) and individualized services for workers dislocated due to the pandemic. Participants eligible for this NDWG were also evaluated for eligibility of co-enrollment into partner programs to obtain additional support services. OST funding included education programs in Information Technology (IT), Accounting, Commercial Driver's License (CDL), Digital Marketing and the Python Application Developer Certificate.

### Rapid Response

In PY20, Rapid Response services were provided for multiple employers, including layoff events at Gannett, INC., Nationwide Insurance and XPO logistics. Title I Adult/Dislocated Worker staff worked with the core partner team including Title III, Title IV and the Trade Assistance Act (TAA) partners to complete the Employer Information Meetings and Worker Information Meetings for these companies. Employees were given information related to Unemployment Insurance, basic and individualized career services and supportive services available as a result of their layoff.

### Registered Apprenticeship

While employer outreach and services were limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic, three Registered Apprenticeships (RAs) were completed through the the Employment Innovation Grant. These RAs were in the occupations of Vet Tech, Automotive Tech and Retail Management.

For Registered Apprenticeship Week in November 2020, Title III staff hosted two Registered Apprenticeship webinars. One webinar was specifically geared to job seekers and the other was designed for educators and career planners.

### Offender Re-Entry

Partners have taken a collaborative approach to providing offender re-entry services in Central Iowa. One highlight of PY20 was partnering with United Way of Central Iowa's OpportUNITY program to host an entire conference dedicated to offender re-entry during Re-Entry Month in April 2021.

### Serving Job Seekers with Disabilities

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) staff is co-located or has a presence in the Iowa**WORKS** Center in the Local Area, and has worked hard toward having a completely accessible facility. In addition, customers who accessed Wagner-Peyser or Title I services that attested to having a disability or barrier to employment were referred to IVRS when appropriate.

### Veteran Services

Two Career Planners from the Iowa**WORKS** Center in Des Moines assisted the VA Community Resource and Referral Center with Mock Interviews in April 2021. Staff were joined by Bobby Collier, the Military and Diversity Recruiter for Hy-Vee, and a retired Sergeant Major with the United States Army. The candidates being interviewed were homeless, at risk of homelessness, or were recently housed. All candidates had upcoming interviews and one did so well he left with a personal recommendation to apply for positions with Hy-Vee.

March 24, 2021 marked the day the Vet2Work quarterly series began. This panel discussion was designed for service members and spouses to explore career opportunities in different sectors. The Healthcare sector was the focus of the first event. Mercy and UnityPoint served as the business panelists.

### Implementation of Priority of Service

Veterans and their spouses are given priority to all services offered in the Iowa**WORKS** Center, which means they are served before other individuals who are seeking services at that time.

When individuals enter the Iowa**WORKS** center they are asked if they have served in the military or if they are the spouse of a service member. Staff are honored to always express gratitude to military members and their families for their service. Special packets of information containing center and Veterans' services are also provided.

## Participant Success Stories

Henkel Construction Company was interested in hiring three job seekers with limited English skills who had recently relocated to the US from Puerto Rico. Henkel had some reservations in hiring the individuals due to language barriers, lack of housing stability and lack of work experience in the construction field.

Henkel was referred to CFI's Youth program, Connect 2 Careers (C2C), and inquired whether Title I funding would be able to assist the employer and the employees to eliminate the identified barriers. C2C enrolled the three job seekers into the Adult program based on priority of service eligibility.

The job seekers were connected to stable housing and provided work appropriate clothing and footwear through approved supportive services. C2C connected the job seekers with Lutheran Services in Iowa, a provider of English Language Learning classes. C2C also developed OJT contracts with Henkel and reimbursed 50 percent of wages for the duration of the training period which totaled 1,040 hours. After the training period ended, Henkel hired the job seekers for full-time employment with a starting wage of 17 dollars per hour.

## Annual Performance Analysis

Title I programs served 102 participants in PY20. A total of 3,822 participants were enrolled in Title III Wagner-Peyser services in PY20. The total number of employer services documented in Iowa Works during this time period was 6,740.