

# East Central Iowa WIOA PY20 Annual Performance Report Narrative

## Executive Summary

Overcoming the changes and challenges of PY20 showcased the creativity and perseverance of the stakeholders in East Central Iowa. The year began with transforming Iowa's Region 10 into the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) compliant Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) of East Central Iowa. The new local area continued to serve the counties of Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn and Washington throughout the transformation process which included establishing a new agreement among county elected officials, a new board and the procurement of contractors to provide One-Stop Operator and program services.

In and of itself, a system transformation is a large project to tackle. Our local area managed to meet deadlines and goals, even when faced with a Derecho and a pandemic simultaneously. Being Iowans, we came together to help our neighbors while meeting our prior commitments to serve the workforce community. Virtual meetings allowed the board to continue making progress toward achieving compliance. Partners continued to find ways to provide services to job seekers and businesses.

The COVID19 pandemic changed how WIOA partners serve customers. Some partners shifted focus to priority programming. While making quick, drastic changes to the provision of services was at times stressful, it also helped the WIOA partners identified new and innovative ways to serve customers making it easier for customers who lack reliable transportation or who live in rural areas to seek and receive services. Throughout it all, the partners kept the residents of the local area as a top priority and continued to work collaboratively where possible.

## LWDB System

The East Central Iowa Local Workforce Development System serves 7 counties in Iowa: Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn and Washington. There are two IowaWORKS Centers in the local area: Cedar Rapids and Iowa City.

## LWDA Strategic Objectives

**Outreach and Intake:** Develop a referral committee composed of team members from each title to focus on how to best serve individuals and remove barriers to connecting individuals with core WIOA services.

**Business Engagement:** Identify a Title 1 and Title 2 team member to attend Business Service team meetings monthly to coordinate services for training completers, DW clients, and Title 2 IET/IELCE services.

**Career Pathways:** Develop stronger communication, and education between sector boards and WIOA core staff to ensure job seekers are connected with appropriate job services and training.

**Evaluation of Career Services:** Coordinated programming for targeted populations such as ESL, HS completion students, individuals with disabilities and those with barriers. Continuous improvement of Career Services by hosting customer focus groups and completing regular surveys.

## COVID19 Pandemic Response

The Title 1 program staff transitioned to a work from home model in March 2020 and returned to the office September 8, using COVID19 safety protocols to keep staff and customers safe. The team continued to provide services and enroll participants throughout this time, shifting to an online model. The program developed soft skill training and job search training that could be provided online in a 1:1 model or online small group setting. Online Information sessions were established. The new model also established online office hours from non-profit locations within the local area, a new way of connecting with and providing services.

Participants were able to receive services in either a face-to-face or online model after September 8<sup>th</sup>. Between March, 2020 to September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 services were only available online.

The Title 2 program moved to a 100% online model from March, 2020 to August, 2021. In person testing, in a safe and socially distanced manner, was developed and utilized from May 2020 through August 2021. Staff worked from home from March 2020 to June 2020. Staff returned to the office in June and were able to work with students in person to help with tutoring, questions, testing, registration and orientation. Classes remained online. Some students did not have access to a device or internet. The Title 2 team worked with the IT team at Kirkwood Community College to establish a lending library of used, but still operational iPads and laptops. The Title 2 team purchased hotspots with COVID19 emergency funding to loan out as well. This allowed students who didn't have internet or a device, or who may need to share a device with a child taking online K12 classes, to fully participate in the online programming. While the majority of classes are now offered in person, we will continue to offer an online version of HSED and ESL for students who cannot come onsite for programming and a technology lending library.

The Title 3 team was greatly impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. The IowaWORKS offices were primarily closed to the public beginning in March 2020 through June 2021. Staff continued to mostly work within the center. The Title 3 team focused their attention to Unemployment Insurance during this timeframe, staffing the 800 line to assist lowans applying for unemployment. Unfortunately, most business services, job search and placement activities were put on hold as well.

The Title 4 team provided hybrid services and support to job candidates. They developed a job focus group to support online engagement with job candidates to provide information on community services, job search tips, and connection to businesses. The Title 4 program has streamlined pieces of their processes, such as the signature process, allowing candidates to receive services remotely. Title 4 continues as a flexible workplace, offering a work from home environment option for team members.

## Sector Strategies

Sector boards remained active during the report period, despite COVID 19 limitations. As a result, the six sector boards in East Central Iowa offered virtual meeting options to ensure the safety and well-being of all attendees. The sector boards represented Health Care, Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Business Services, Architecture/Construction/Engineering (ACE), and Transportation. These sector boards are business led and focused on two main goals: Introducing career options to the future workforce and recruitment of the current workforce. Due to the workload demands, title 3 staff were unable to attend these sector board meetings for the vast majority of the program year, with the exception of June 2021. Title 1 and 4 were able to maintain attendance.

## Business Services and Employer Engagement

During PY 20, title 3 was limited in services provided to businesses outside of the unemployment insurance realm. Businesses were assisted in updating their profiles in IowaWORKS and placing jobs orders. Despite this limitation, the Title 4 business engagement team members were able to continue meeting with employers and provided a weekly virtual job club where job seekers could connect and meet local employers. This was created in place of the Reconnect Employer Panel, which was placed on hold during the entire PY 20 period as a result of Covid 19 and the changing needs of business needs changing. At the end of PY 20, Reconnect resumed along with a mini recruiting event, Grab A Job. As a result, recruiting events are held weekly at both the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City IowaWORKS offices.

The business engagement team meets biweekly and is represented by Titles 1,3, and 4. This integrated approach to business service results in a streamlined experience for businesses, minimizing multiple points of contact and unnecessary, duplicative meetings.

The business engagement team coordinates and plans recruitment events for the service delivery area as well as relevant training topics for the human resources community. On 6/30/21, the team coordinated the Open

Air Job fair, which was held in both Cedar Rapids and Iowa City at the same time. A local radio station held a live spot at both locations to help promote the event and increase attendance. The outdoor events were well attended by both employers and job seekers, while providing a safe alternative to a crowded inside event given the pandemic being experienced.

## Program Highlights and Innovation

### Title 1 Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker

Adjusted signature process, online service availability, remote office hours available from partner agencies, 100% online serves to better support rural and those with transportation barriers, on-boarded a business services consultant to support the youth team with experiential learning development.

### Rapid Response

Rapid response services for business leaders as well as services provided to the impacted workers were all moved to an online model last year. Services to impacted workers were expanded to include information on where to access internet, computers and to find free workshops and training related to basic skills (computer literacy) and job search training (resumes, interviewing). The worker survey used to learn more about the impacted workforce was also moved to an online model instead of paper. This shift allowed us to continue to serve those impacted with quality services, and provide a large amount of information in a manner that can be easily referenced for future use, supporting job seekers with awareness of services and connection to free services and training.

### Registered Apprenticeship

One WP staff member from the local area was tasked to assist with companies statewide, requesting information about Registered Apprenticeship. That staff member responded to all inquiries from the Earn and Learn Iowa website, numbering just over 150. Of those, 22 programs were registered as a direct result of the staff person's effort and 23 programs are still in progress to be registered in the future. Local staff member also provided support for a virtual National Apprenticeship Week that was held by local community partners and included several social media posts.

### Offender Re-Entry

Title 1 and Title 4 stayed connected with corrections by regularly meeting with staff from the local community corrections team to ensure all are aware of services and still available to those leaving the prison system. In addition, the team was invited to share information on WIOA services to all recently released individuals at monthly information sessions at community corrections.

### Serving Job Seekers with Disabilities

IVRS Business Service Consultants provided weekly Job Focus group for job seekers and community partners which highlighted employers from various business sectors along with content to support job seekers in soft skill and job seeking skill development. IVRS regional teams provided a hybrid approach to service delivery, expanding virtual meeting capabilities that support continuity of service delivery through pandemic. Agency has moved forward in establishing workplace flexible opportunity for staff to align with optimal service delivery strategies. IVRS support summer Pre-ETs opportunities via virtual and in person learning events throughout this past year.

### Veteran Services

The Cedar Rapids office has hired a new 50/50 Disabled Veterans Outreach Program/Wagner Peyser staff, to serve all Veterans. Where a 100% DVOP can only work with qualified veterans and their Spouse. This is the first

50/50 DVOP in Cedar Rapids. It has strengthened the AJCs ability to serve and it has assisted with making sure that Veterans are receiving the services that they are eligible for and the services that they desire. Our new DVOP has implemented weekly motivational/informational emails that was praised by HBI program management who look to replicate this approach statewide.

### Implementation of Priority of Service

When clients register, either at each point of entry or by Internet applications, they self-disclose on their Veteran status. All veterans and eligible spouses accessing the center must be pre-screened for eligibility by non-DVOP staff as part of the welcome process. The DVOP serves only those veterans who are aged 18-24 (as allowed in VPL 04-14/TEGL 20-13) or who have Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) as defined in VPL 03-14/TEGL 19-13 or is the caregiver or family caregiver of an eligible veteran as defined in VPL 08-14. If a veteran is assessed to meet the eligibility of working with a DVOP, a referral is made to the DVOP in the district.

### Participant Success Story

As a single mom at 16 years old, Annie dropped out of high school. She was 17 when she enrolled in the Creating Futures program (WIOA Title 1) knowing she needed to finish high school to be able to provide for her daughter. Annie, currently 19, has been actively involved in the WIOA Creating Futures Program. She successfully completed her HiSET credential. She also participated in a work experience which lead into an internship as she explored a career in the legal sector. She was recently hired on at a local law firm and is currently participating in an on-the-job training program. Through the Creating Futures program Annie took advantage of the opportunity to work with her career planner and participate in activities that would allow her to build her work history while exploring occupational interests. Her knowledge and experience from her work experience and internships allowed her to gain employment at a local law office. She has reached her goals with determination and a positive attitude. We're so proud of Annie and all the hard work she's put in to completing her high school credential, exploring career fields and being so successful in the first step of her career.

Dropping out of high school was very scary. In 2018, I had nothing. When I say nothing, I mean it, I did not have a high school degree, I did not have a job, I didn't have a car, I didn't have a good path in life. I was pulled in by my school counselor and she told me to get my HiSET through Kirkwood. I am so glad I took that advice because it changed my life. I went through the program at Kirkwood and earned my HiSET credential. Next, I took my placement exams for college. I score high on those exams for Kirkwood Community College and started towards my dream of becoming a teacher so I can be that change in students' lives. Now I am at Kirkwood coming off two straight Dean's Lists averaging a 3.5 GPA. I have started working as a Lead Teacher at a before and after school program for elementary school students. This is a dream job! Now, I am now applying for universities to continue my academic dream of becoming a teacher. I attribute all my success in life to the amazing people at Kirkwood's High School Completion Program. Without them pushing me to be the best I can be, I have no idea where I would be in life.

A US Navy veteran was laid off from the nuclear power plant earlier this year and had fallen on hard times financially. Shane Sawyer, Disabled Veteran Outreach Specialist (DVOP), helped the veteran revise his resume and introduced him to Mace Huffman, Local Veteran Representative (LVER), who connected him with Home Base Iowa. Shane assessed a lack of confidence with the veteran's interviewing skills and conducted a mock job interview involving himself and several co-workers. The veteran successfully interviewed for a few jobs but never walked away with an offer. He did, however, walk away with the confidence he so desperately needed. In early June 2021, Shane sent Katherine Pine, Business Marketing Specialist (BMS) a copy of his resume. She was able to relate a word in his resume with a position available at Collins Aerospace. She sent the resume to Collins who then called the veteran personally and asked him to apply. The veteran had a basic electrical knowledge test to take. James passed the test and interviewed for the position June 22, 2021. Shortly after he was offered the job with a starting salary of \$78K. The veteran has called numerous times to thank us for helping him. Since his hiring, the veteran quickly revealed his quality and has been placed in charge over two different departments within Collins.

Target features products from Iowa City IVRS Job Candidate! A local Job Candidate's participation in the Iowa Self Employment Program helped to jump start her innovative 3D Prosthesis businesses. The Iowa City resident, a new prosthetic user, was frustrated with the few options available when she was looking for 3D prosthesis covers. When she could not find one she liked, she decided to create her own line. Her innovation has paid off, as she was recently awarded a contract with Target's web based sales platform. Her items will be available to purchase online @ Target.com, which increases her visibility in this niche market. By partnering with her IVRS team, University of Iowa Incubator program, as well as Target's Entrepreneurial program, this female entrepreneur is proving again that Iowans with Disabilities can excel at business ownership.

## Annual Performance Analysis (numbers served by program)

### Title 1 PY20 Performance Summary

| WIOA Title 1 Performance | Entered Employment | Retained Employment | Credential Rate | Measurable Skill Gain |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Adult                    | 75%                | 67.8%               | 50%             | 55.6%                 |
| Dislocated Worker        | 86.4%              | 78.6%               | 76.9%           | 72.2%                 |
| Youth                    | 87.0%              | 78.0%               | 69.2%           | 72.4%                 |

Title 1: 101 Participants Served

### Title 2 PY20 Performance Summary

| WIOA Title II Performance       | PY2020 Goal | PY2020 Actual |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Total Participants              | 1500        | 1274          |
| Total Participants Post-tested  |             | 681           |
| Post-test Rate                  | 65%         | 56%           |
| Overall Measureable Skill Gains | 47%         | 46%           |
| Number of IET Participants      |             | 38            |
| Number of IELCE Participants    |             | 16            |

### Title 4 PY20 Performance Summary

| PY2020 (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021) |  |      |                     |                                    |                               |   |  |
|--|--|------|---------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Area Office                            | Total Number of Successful Closures 26-0 | Goal | Percent of Goal Met | Rehab Rate 26-0/(26+28) Goal 55.8% | Average Hours Worked Per Week | # of Cases Greater than Minimum Wage \$7.25 | % Cases greater than minimum wage \$7.25 |
| Cedar Rapids                           | 115                                      | 312  | 37%                 | 41.4%                              | 30                            | 115   | 100%                                     |
| Iowa City                              | 131                                      | 234  | 56%                 | 50.8%                              | 27                            | 131   | 100%                                     |
| Total Agency                           | 1718                                     | 3510 | 49%                 | 51.7%                              | 9                             | 1715  | 99.83%                                   |