

# North Central Iowa PY20 WIOA Annual Report Narrative

## Executive Summary

The year began with Chief Elected Officials of the former Region 5 coming together to develop a shared liability agreement and select members of the newly formed North Central Iowa Workforce Development Board (NCIWDB). This work was the beginning of the North Central's transformation to become a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) compliant Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA).

Through formal procurement, the members of the NCIWDB selected Children and Families of Iowa (CFI) to provide the Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth services. CFI expanded services beyond the already established youth programming to also serve the adult and dislocated worker populations in North Central Iowa. The role of the One-Stop Operator was also formally procured, with the State Public Policy Group (SPPG) selected 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, 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 the necessary growth to meet the ever-changing workforce needs of the local area.

## Local Workforce Development Area System

The North Central Iowa Local Workforce Development Area consists of Calhoun, Hamilton, Humboldt, Pocahontas, Webster, and Wright counties.

The North Central Iowa Local Workforce Development Area is made up of one comprehensive center located in Fort Dodge and one expansion office in Webster City. Title I, III and IV are co-located at the center in Fort Dodge. Title II is not currently co-located; however, they do maintain a presence. The Webster City office has a Title III representative there one day a week to provide information about partner services.

## LWDA Strategic Objectives

Northwest Iowa LWDA Strategic Objectives:

- The area's employers will have access to advanced, skilled, diverse, and Future Ready workers.

- All Iowans in the area will be provided access to a continuum of high-quality education, training, and career opportunities.
- The area's one-stop delivery system will align all programs and services in an accessible, seamless, and integrated manner.

## COVID-19 Pandemic Response

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

Title I staff continued to meet with participants in-person when safely possible and virtually by utilizing Zoom and phone calls. The Title I Program Director co-enrolled Trade participants and attended meetings to serve Eaton employees, affected by the Belmond plant closure, through Zoom and phone conferencing. While the IowaWORKS office was closed to the public, Title I staff utilized office space provided by Wright County to conduct face-to-face meetings to better assist Eaton employees with program enrollment and employment services.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Title III Workforce Services were limited to an appointment-only basis starting March 20, 2020. During this time individuals seeking appointments were referred to the IowaWORKS.gov site to utilize job seeking and resume builder tools. Referrals were also sent to partners. Title III staff job duties were routed to assist with the Unemployment Insurance Division's unemployment claims processing. Services opened briefly to walk-in customers on September 8, 2020, allowing the use of computers for job seeking purposes, limited appointment-only services resumed on November 12, 2020. On March 8, 2021, the center opened again to limited walk-in services for the public to access computers for self-service and basic direction from staff. On June 1, 2021, the center re-opened to offer full service. Virtual workshops were created to help reach individuals unable to travel and assist with social distancing within the center.

## Sector Strategies

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

## Business Services & Employer Engagement

A new Business Marketing Specialist was hired for North Central LWDA in PY20 and is housed in the Iowa**WORKS** office. 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 are provided to employers during the program year. By creating and maintaining relationships, this team was able to provide targeted workforce information and solutions throughout the Local Area.

A collaborative Business Services Team brought together business services and placement specialists from all of the Core Partner programs. This team was established to align outreach and communication efforts with local employers, which was gaining momentum until the Business Services Team meetings were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

One highlight during PY20 was the partnership with Prestage Foods of Iowa. Prestage opened its pork plant south of Eagle Grove and began operations on March 4, 2019. The goal was to hire 950 employees and reached a staffing level of 800. Since June 5, 2019, Prestage worked with IowaWORKS of Fort Dodge to hold open interviews, totaling 206 individuals interviewed and 180 individuals hired.

## Program Highlights & Innovation

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

Two Title I Youth participants were employed through Work Experience Programs (WEP) during PY20. One of these participants continued working on the job site during the pandemic and one had to be reassigned due to closure of the office where she was working. She was reassigned to another business, who needed a receptionist, and she was ultimately hired by that employer at the end of her WEP.

Twelve Occupational Skills Training (OST) participants in Title I programs earned a credential during PY20. These participants succeeded in completing the programs after the college courses moved to a virtual platform.

### *Rapid Response*

In PY20, partners responded to WARN requests from local employers for Worker Information Meetings with representation from (at a minimum) Title I (Adult/Dislocated Worker Services) and Title III (Wagner-Peyser). These Rapid Response meetings were initially coordinated via contact with the local area employer in which information such as workforce size, dislocation dates, union representation and accommodations related to primary language and disability access were discussed. The Rapid Response meeting occurred at a location, date and time which was most convenient for the impacted employees. Information was shared regarding Unemployment Insurance, Basic and Intensive Career Services, Training Services, Support Services, and information on partner programs. Partners also utilized the diverse expertise of the staff to address the unique needs of the employees such as needing alternative languages and expertise in serving customers with disabilities.

During PY20 there were two Rapid Response efforts to serve Eaton of Belmond, IA and CertainTeed Gypsum of Fort Dodge, IA. Eaton closed due to foreign trade which allowed access

to TRADE Act Benefits for the employees impacted. The CertainTeed Gypsum closure took place during the pandemic in June 2020 which resulted in virtual services. Information packets were taken out to the site to provide to the employees. A virtual meeting was set up to present on unemployment benefits and employment services through Iowa**WORKS**, allowing time for questions. A link to a video was also provided to the business to share with impacted staff to watch at their convenience. In total, 128 employees were impacted by these two Rapid Response efforts—184 employees from Eaton and 44 employees from CertainTeed.

### *Registered Apprenticeship*

Dane Sulentic, Iowa Department of Corrections Apprenticeship Coordinator along with Brian Pibal, Iowa Workforce Development, Re Entry Advisor, were facilitators at the National Industries Correction Association (NCIA) conference in Minneapolis. More than 500 attendees packed the conference workshop rooms to learn from national experts in the areas of reentry, handling conflict, certification programs, sales force management, employee communications, and more. Sulentic and Pibal provided two different sessions- “Implementing Registered Apprenticeships within Correctional Facilities” and “A Day in the Life of an Incarcerated Apprentice.” The Department of Corrections offers 24 Registered Apprenticeships that are currently offered in all 9 correctional institutions.

### *Offender Re-Entry*

The Re-Entry Advisor was called back from the Department of Corrections in North Central Correctional Facility (NCCF) at Rockwell City on May 8, 2020, due to the pandemic and was routed to provide unemployment insurance processing support. Re-Entry Services resumed in January 2021. Fisher Hydraulics hired six individuals after their release. An incarcerated individual, who served 18 years and has a learning disability, completed the Maintenance Technician program. Another individual was the first at NCCF to train to be a Barber Apprentice.

### *Serving Job Seekers with Disabilities*

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

### *Veteran Services*

The new Veteran Representative through JVSG was hired at the beginning of the calendar year, became acclimated to the new Iowa Works system, and then went on to take NVTI training in Colorado. PY20 saw the completion of all six counties of North Central (Humboldt, Webster, Wright, Pocahontas, Wright, and Calhoun) becoming Home Base Iowa Communities. Outreach to the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility led to the discovery of a group of Veterans that get together internally. Awareness of this group led to partnership development to provide the group members with additional services. In March of 2020, services were limited to virtual outreach, emails, or calls. Connections to these veterans became significantly harder. The

Veteran Representative position then became vacant from July 2020 through May 2021. The position was not filled immediately due to a hiring moratorium that was in effect during the pandemic for Title III Workforce Services.

### *Implementation of Priority of Service*

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

When individuals enter the IowaWORKS 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

### *Kaitlyn*

Kaitlyn is 32 years old and lives in Eagle Grove, Iowa with her significant other and her three young children. Kaitlyn had been living in Texas when she became unemployed due to a business closure. She was pregnant with her third child and decided to move back to Iowa where she had the support of family and friends. Kaitlyn was enrolled in Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs in the North Central Iowa LWDA in 2018 to pursue her career in nursing at Iowa Central Community College.

Kaitlyn obtained her CNA in the fall of 2018 and started the Practical Nursing program in the Fall of 2019. During this time, she gave birth to her third child and continued to work as a CNA. The Covid-19 pandemic created some challenges in that nursing classes went virtual.

In the Spring of 2021, Kaitlyn received her diploma in practical nursing and passed her boards to work as an LPN. She is currently employed as an LPN at Southfield Wellness Community in Clarion, Iowa where she earns \$23.00 an hour. Her career goal is to go back to school to complete her RN and eventually her BSN. The Title I program assisted her with support services including transportation reimbursement for clinicals, testing fees, and uniforms. In addition, Title I assisted with tuition and fees for her classes.

### *Ricky*

Ricky was referred to the Youth Employment program in Fort Dodge back in 2016. At the time, Ricky was 15 and attending high school. Ricky was being raised by his mother and had little motivation to do anything.

His first goal was set to find employment along with motivational factors that would assist him in doing well in his future. Ricky didn't know what he wanted to do once he graduated. All he knew is he wanted to get his High School Diploma which was also his mother's goal. Ricky struggled with his grades in high school and needed reminders to get his work done and turned

in. He still did not want to work; felt he was too young to work and just wanted to stay at home and play video games.

After a while Ricky changed his mind and felt like it was time to work and began to apply to jobs on his own. Due to his lack of job skills, Ricky did not find employment. In May of 2018, staff discussed with Ricky the possibility of a work experience to assist him in learning job skills that he would need to be successful in the workforce. Ricky agreed.

Ricky started his work experience in June of 2018 at The General Store. Ricky was working about 20 hours a week and overall was gaining the skills he needed to do well, but then his grades began to slip. Ricky stopped working until his grades improved, his education was the number one priority. Ricky was able to bring all his grades up within a month and was able to start working again. During this time at The General Store, Ricky gained skills and began to improve drastically. Before his work experience was over, staff helped Ricky apply to other places in the community. Staff helped him obtain appropriate job interview clothing and prepare for interviews. At the beginning of March 2019 Ricky completed his work experience and was hopeful that he would locate employment soon.

In April, Ricky got an interview with Wendy's that went very well, and he began working at Wendy's on April 17th. Ricky was very excited to locate employment on his own and was excited to start. Ricky continued to work part-time and attended school full-time.

In June 2019, Ricky passed all his classes and graduated with his class! Shortly after, Ricky got a raise at his job at Wendy's for how well he was doing and was up to working 30 hours per week. Ricky was learning to budget his money and was assisting his mother in paying his bills. Ricky has come a long way since he walked in the door in 2016 and we could not be prouder of him!"

### *Deb*

Deb had been employed by HBG doing janitorial work and was enjoying it. However, a miscommunication caused her to be fired, and at the same time she was informed by her wife that she was divorcing her. Deb had several jobs in the past few years, and she was concerned she may not find new employment within the community. Deb came to the AJC and received one-on-one assistance on her resume and interviewing skills. Deb has been through substance abuse treatment and had been doing very well, but she became very anxious that she might slip with all the extra stress of finding a new home, new job and going through a divorce.

Deb normally has a very tough exterior, but she broke down each time she came to the center from anxiety and fear she would end up homeless. At the same time, she wanted employment that would have more satisfaction, and she wanted to work with people, rather than provide janitorial services. The new Community & Family Resources (CFR) was about one week from opening when we found a position for which she wanted to apply. Deb was made aware CFR typically hires individuals who have experienced substance abuse treatment firsthand. Staff helped Deb practice talking about her history with substance abuse and how she achieved

sobriety over the years upon learning she was granted an interview. Two days after the interview, later Deb called crying happy tears to say she got a job with CFR and she feels like this was the change in her life she needed.

## Annual Performance Analysis

A total of 67 participants were served by Title I programs in PY20 (104 participants received services prior to enrollment). A total of 2,143 participants received 12,493 Title III services in PY20.