

Northwest Iowa PY20 WIOA Annual Report Narrative

Executive Summary

The year began with Chief Elected Officials of the former Region 3/4 coming together to develop a shared liability agreement and select members of the newly formed Northwest Iowa Workforce Development Board (NWIWDB). This work was the beginning of the Northwest's transformation to become a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) compliant Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA).

Through formal procurement, the members of the NWIWDB selected Goodwill of the Great Plains to provide the Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth services. 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 Northwest Iowa Local Workforce Development Area consists of Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Kossuth, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, and Sioux counties.

The Northwest Iowa Local Workforce Development Area is made up of one comprehensive center located in Spencer. Title I, III and IV are co-located at the center. Title II is not currently co-located; however, they do have a presence there.

LWDA Strategic Objectives

Northwest Iowa LWDA Strategic Objectives:

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

- Effective partnerships are not only maintained but expanded and strengthened.
- Ongoing commitment to braid funds through partnerships in service management.
- Working in partnership to ensure workers possess a solid work ethic with appropriate skill sets.
- Northwest Iowa is committed to partnering with business and education to ensure we have workers who possess the needed skill sets within the local area.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response

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

Employers still had hiring needs, but traditional job fairs and office events were not feasible. IowaWORKS took advantage of an online career fair program called Brazen. Using Brazen, we can setup virtual career fairs that allow employers and job seekers to meet right from their computers or mobile device. Employers engaged with job seekers on a video chat or normal chat feature, encouraged job seekers to apply for open positions, and employers had the power to decorate their virtual booth with information and videos to attract talent. Our first and very successful event was held on November 13, 2020, and was a Virtual Veteran Career Fair. There were 45 business representatives in attendance ready to chat with skilled Veterans. Our staff invited Veterans registered in IowaWORKS and Home Base Iowa. 118 Veterans registered allowing all the employers to then have access to resumes and 63 Veterans attended the event to chat with employers. Another career fair was held in June of this year with 37 employers and 62 job seekers in attendance.

Staff from Title I continued working with anyone seeking services, especially dislocated workers. Due to limited outreach efforts, options, and opportunities, staff made many phone calls and tried to set up virtual meetings whenever possible. The limited number of people seeking assistance or going through the One-Stop for assistance greatly limited services under the grant during this time frame.

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

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 Local Area.

A collaborative Business Services Team, which brought together business services and placement specialists from all of the Core Partner programs was established to align outreach and communication efforts with local employers, however, the Business Services Team meetings were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the workforce system realignment, and new service providers being brought on.

Title I staff conducted strategic outreach to businesses and community partners across the LWDA including, but not limited to: Cherokee Villa, Dollar Fresh in Emmetsburg, ISU Extension, The Bridge, Buena Vista University, Storm Lake Schools, Buena Vista Regional Medical Center, Iowa Central Community College, Northwest Iowa Community College, Mid Sioux Opportunity, Roscrance Jackson Centers, Spirit Lake Schools, Probation and Parole Officers in most of the counties, United Community Health Center, Atlas, Upper Des Moines Community Action Agency, Plains Area Mental Health, Catholic Charities, Wal-Mart, Sioux County Planning Council, Lyon County Planning Council, Family Crisis Center, and Discovery House. These relationships had a great impact on Title I services.

Title III welcomed a new Business Marketing Specialist in November 2020. Since that time, he has been working with local business and employers providing services and making partnerships.

Program Highlights & Innovation

Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, & Youth

In early 2021, staff were able to enroll three (3) participants in dislocated worker and the youth programs. These enrollments led to work experience programs (WEP), which helped youth gain hands on experience and build connections with businesses and industries.

On a regular basis during late PY20, staff attended the YWCA women's substance abuse program to talk to the women about what career services are offered at the center as well as the Title I program they may be eligible for.

Rapid Response

There were no Rapid Response services needed or provided in the Local Area in PY20.

Registered Apprenticeship

IowaWORKS partners collaborate on Registered Apprenticeship (RA) outreach. The primary goal of this outreach is to educate employers on the core components of developing and maintaining RA programs. IowaWORKS partners and staff attend community partnership and association meetings for in-demand sectors. This involvement has increased outreach opportunities.

The new Business Marketing Specialist, once acclimated to his new role, worked to make connections and partnerships with local employers. One notable achievement was the establishment of a partnership with the Iowa Lakes Corridor and Iowa Lakes Community College for a Registered Apprenticeship program in the agriculture field.

Offender Re-Entry

Title I staff connected with high school counselors and juvenile court officers to learn about the youth who need assistance and educate everyone about the services that are available. The interaction with DHS gave staff a better opportunity to get to know, first-hand, those youth who are out-of-school that might benefit from Title 1 program services the most. This knowledge has continued to help Title 1 staff build better relationships with high schools and justice-involved youth across the LWDA.

Serving Job Seekers with Disabilities

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) staff is 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 attest to having a disability or barrier to employment were referred to IVRS if appropriate.

Veteran Services

The partners were awarded the Veteran's Grant Incentive Award for their work with veterans throughout the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The award honors an outstanding service to Vets in our workforce development area and grants the office approximately \$3300 to invest in and provide further services for Veterans in the LWDA.

Basic/core services were provided in-person when possible or over the phone due to the pandemic. This included many individuals, though the specific services were not tracked.

Employment services continued to be offered to Veterans during the pandemic. A program highlight was Virtual Veteran Career Fair, mentioned earlier. 118 Veterans registered allowing all the employers to then have access to resumes and 63 Veterans attended the event to chat with employers. Below are two success stories from the partners' work with veterans in PY20:

Veteran had been recovering from an injury/surgery for over a year. He wanted to work again but wasn't sure if he would be able to drive Truck again, he is an OTR truck driver. We explored employment options, but with COVID, it was difficult for him to find a job in his remote

location. We updated his resume and worked on interview skills. Vet completed the onet interest profiler and we narrowed down some career paths. Vet kept coming back to driving truck, it is his passion. During harvest, Vet was able to get hired on helping out a Farm. He worked for a few months and was excited to have a purpose and do a job. He knew this wasn't a job that would be full time. We talked about his medical limitations and how he could pass the DOT physical and get back to a truck. Veteran was able to pass the physical and was rehired by the company he previously worked at before he had the surgery. Vet is now a OTR truck driver now and loves his job. He is so happy to get back to work.

Veteran has had an uphill battle that was physical in nature. Veteran went to school through the VA VR&E ch.31 program and become a C.N.A. He worked for different agencies and traveled the NW Iowa region working in many facilities. He loved his job but due to some complications, he had to make a tough decision and refocus on a new career. Veteran networked in the small town he lives in and was able to get hired on at a local grocery store. He started working the beginning of February. They are working to meet his needs. Veteran was very excited to get back to working again.

Implementation of Priority of Service

Priority of service is given to Veterans when posting positions on the lowaworks.gov website. All positions are placed on a 24-hour Veteran hold allowing Veterans the opportunity to apply first. If a Veteran fits the job criteria, staff will typically do a direct referral.

Participant Success Stories

Lisa

"Lisa" was a dislocated worker that started in the WIOA Title I program in 2018 and was a referral from the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. Prior to her referral she had worked for a large company in Spirit Lake and was let go due to business downsizing. At about the same time, she experienced several family issues and ended up becoming a single mom to a newborn and an older toddler. To make sure she could be self-sufficient she decided to go back to school to become a nurse in a field where she knew she could have job security. Throughout her time as a student, she experienced challenges to keep her grades at a high enough level to stay in the program and keep her family going. Once she was able to get assistance with tutoring, she was able to maintain the grades and balance she was desperately working toward. She graduated in December 2020 with her degree as a registered nurse (RN). She studied to take the boards and sat for them in March and successfully passed them. She was hired right away at a local hospital in the NWI area. She credits a lot of her success to the Title I program not only for funding though also for being there when she needed it most. Her long-term goals include going on and completing her BSN with her new passion to increase her skills and help others with their skills."

Sara

“Sara” came to the WIOA program in 2018 as a referral from Promise Jobs. Sara was an unemployed, low-income parenting youth. While attending Iowa Lakes Community College (ILCC) Sara faced some other challenges as well. Her young son was hospitalized, she had ankle surgery, addressed a mental health concern, and after some legal issues, took the proper steps to ensure that she would not have those issues again. Through it all, Sara continued to focus on her nursing classes (even in the middle of a pandemic) and continued to be a very good student. WIOA Title I and PJ worked together with Sara to help ensure she had what she needed (childcare, transportation, career guidance, and emotional support) to complete the nursing program. Sara graduated from the ILCC RN nursing program in December (2020). She recently sat for and passed her RN boards and now works at a medical facility in the LWDA. With guidance from WIOA and PJ and Sara's unwavering perseverance she has become a true success story.

Customer 1

A center customer inquired with Spencer IowaWorks as she was job searching. The customer had been working in the fast-food industry most of her teen/adult life but had recently graduated from college, gaining a degree in the medical field. Career Planner Rosemary Aden had been working with a local medical facility to fill a job order for a position that had been historically difficult to fill. The customer was connected with the medical facility and was hired. She continues to work for the same medical facility today.

Customer 2

A center customer came to Spencer IowaWorks because she was having issues with her unemployment. Upon resolving the customer's unemployment issues Career Advisor Rosemary Aden asked customer what her desired job field was. Customer explained that she has experience as a Dental Hygienist. A local Dental Clinic had placed a job order the week before looking for a Dental Hygienist. Rosemary told the customer of the job opening and directed her to lowaworks.gov to apply. The customer called Rosemary a few weeks later letting her know that she was hired as a Dental Hygienist at the Dental Clinic Rosemary referred her to and thanked Rosemary for her help.

Annual Performance Analysis

A total of 6 participants were served by Title I programs in PY20. A total of 935 participants received Title III services in PY20.