

REGION 3-4 PY18 ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Summary

Program Year 2018 was a year of continued low unemployment rates. The region has seen limited business closures in PY 2018 and has seen somewhat of a balance in new business and business expansions.

The region has focused on assisting business with obtaining employees as a result of expansion and retention of employees through an on-site in-depth meeting whereby numerous recruitment/retention strategies are discussed and analyzed.

Region 3-4 hopes to continue improving the regional access to employment and training opportunities in the community as well as meeting the needs of the employers in the region.

Regional Snapshot

Iowa Region 3-4 is comprised of the counties of Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Kossuth, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto and Sioux. The One-Stop Center (AJC) for Region 3-4 is located in Spencer, Iowa. The core partners located in the center include Iowa Workforce Development and Northwest Iowa Planning and Development Commission (NWIPDC), the Title I partner. The AJC houses eight IWD employees and 4 Title I NWIPDC employees.

Regional Initiatives and Partnerships

During PY 2018, the Region 3-4 partners continue to provide support to the Advanced Manufacturing Sector Board. The Advanced Manufacturing Sector Board has been working on marketing manufacturing opportunities within the Iowa Lakes Corridor region and filling the talent pipeline.

Through a partnership with Spencer Community School, IowaWORKS Region 3-4 continues to support and participate in several youth extended career experiences. The career experiences are available in the areas of manufacturing, construction, health care, entrepreneurship, and art and music. Youth participate in the extended career experience during second semester and are onsite at the business location for two to three days each week.

In PY18, the region partnered with Iowa Lakes Corridor Development, Iowa Lakes Community College, local employers and numerous partner agencies to coordinate and hold a successful Future Ready Iowa summit in Spencer, Iowa. As a result of this "kick off" event, the Clay County Future Ready Iowa initiative was born. IowaWORKS staff continues to promote and participate in the Clay County Future Ready Iowa partnership.

Employer Services and Business Engagement

During PY 2018 the Region 3-4 Core Partners expanded the integrated Business Services Team. The business services team members represent staff from all Core Partners in the region. The partners have developed a common intake form and brochure intended to be utilized by the team during the first business visit. The business visits are focused on gathering information about the business needs and successes and sharing basic services offered by all Region 3-4 Core Partner programs. Subsequent employer visits have been scheduled based on employer need and are provided by the partner(s) that can best meet that need.

A common concern continues to be heard from local employers needing assistance to address soft skills. The workshops offered by IowaWORKS Northwest Iowa were updated and revised during PY18 to address the concern of employers. An increase in the number of individuals taking advantage of the workshops was realized in PY18 as a result of changes to the customer flow process in the region.

IowaWORKS has created a presentation for businesses that are contemplating expansion, or those businesses that have a need to hire a significant number of workers in a relatively short period of time. During PY18 presentations were provided to employers and economic development groups who are looking at expansion and also had a need to expand their current workforce. In addition to an extensive overview of services available at the IowaWORKS center, the presentation includes discussion of recruitment and retention ideas the employers might consider.

Promising Practices and Success Stories

1. Rapid Response

PY18 was a year of limited rapid response activity in the region. In order to properly meet the needs of the individuals who have been dislocated, Region 3-4 utilizes a team of partners that meet with dislocated workers to share information about programs and services that are available to them as they transition to reemployment.

2. Registered Apprenticeship

Region 3-4 has focused a great deal of efforts on the development and expansion of Registered Apprenticeship opportunities. PY18 was largely used to ensure that staff was well versed in Registered Apprenticeship. Business service staff works closely with area employers to promote Registered Apprenticeship. In PY18, IowaWORKS of Northwest Iowa staff focused on developing and expanding Registered Apprenticeship Programs in the region through a new customer service process.

3. Offender Re-Entry

During PY18 the Region 3-4 Youth staff continued a partnership through the Iowa Juvenile Reentry System and Forest Ridge Youth Services. Through this partnership, IowaWORKS

Northwest Iowa and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation are partnering with Forest Ridge to provide reentry-related activities for the youth placed at Forest Ridge. On a monthly basis, staff from IowaWORKS and IVRS facilitate two to three hour sessions with the youth. These sessions address personality and employability skills necessary for success in the future. In addition, IowaWORKS and IVRS staff provides contact information for workforce and vocational rehabilitation services in their home communities.

4. Serving Customers with Disabilities

The Disability Employment Initiative Grant ended in Program Year 2018. Through this grant, the region hired a Disability Resource Coordinator to ensure services to individuals with disabilities could be enhanced through the one-stop system. This position is being sustained through Ticket to Work funds.

5. Veteran Services

In September of 2018 a celebration was held at the Storm Lake Armory. The Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve partnered with IowaWORKS and the Employers' Council of Iowa to hold the annual Center of Influence. A Center of Influence event gives civilian employers and community leaders the opportunity to experience the professionalism and expertise of our Iowa National Guard and Reserve service members.

6. Priority of Services

Management monitors the various programs offered within the region to ensure priority of service is followed. Both WIOA Director and IWD Manager have educated staff to ensure compliance.

7. Youth

The NWIPDC School-to-Work program continues to operate in Region 3-4. During PY 2018, the STW program consisted of seven school districts continuing to contract with NWIPDC for STW services. This consortium utilizes Carl Perkins funds received by the school districts to do career and technical programming for grades 9-12. The NWIPDC coordination consisted of oversight for all career and technical programs within the districts as well as fiscal oversight of the Carl Perkins funds. In addition, NWIPDC, the WIOA service provider, coordinates and delivers a summer Supervised Career Preparation Program (SCPP). The SCPP utilizes a combination of Perkins funding and business contributions. SCPP youth are placed in employment at various businesses with the business paying the wages of the youth. This program is available to all high school youth 16 years of age and older. The program offers youth an opportunity to work in an area of career interest. Youth were eligible for high school and college credit after successfully completing the program. The program has been in operation for 26 years and has allowed the region to maintain a program for summer youth employment when no such program was funded through the federal employment program.

8. Success Story

Local seasonal Veteran farm worker, Brad Thill, continues to reach out to IowaWORKS, since his having started services with Veteran Advisor. He recently called to offer an update on his career progress. Finally, after a delayed transition from farm worker to farm owner, Brad has newly acquired land, machinery, crops and livestock for his self-owned farming business. He now has become mostly a specialty organic crop farmer. Peaches, pears, plums, cherries, raspberries and a couple varieties of walnuts make up a large portion of his farmland. Over 1500 fruit trees total have already been planted for next Spring. Just recently, he bought two more acres where he planted 450 more trees. Eight acres of ground yet remain for clearing and preparing spring planting as well. One added bonus to working part-time for local Ag employer, Max Yield, is that he can purchase organic fertilizer at a significant discount. Another beneficial circumstance is that a neighboring farm family is currently negotiating to sell their apple trees from their orchard to Brad as they plan to retire soon.

After Brad began working with IowaWORKS staff, we connected him to a few local and statewide entities to fulfill his most immediate work needs and career interests. The following organizations have and continue to contribute to the success of Brad's growing operation: Proteus/National Farm Worker Jobs Program (NFJP), IFVGA – Iowa Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association and Labor4Learning Program of PFI – Practical Farmers of Iowa. Specifically, PFI's Labor4Learning has Brad working with a farming mentor. The local Bode Farms has it set up to share tools, equipment and farming practices for cost-saving and educational purposes. Also, Algona's school system has begun using Brad's farm as an "outside classroom" for students. The school pays him for the kids' on-farm learning. Currently, the Small Business Association (SBA) is working with him on further financial planning, as he has applied for several grants to purchase more land. One unique money saving method is that he repurposes old military equipment so he can work the ground and maintain his entire operation. A priority long-term goal for Brad is that he plans to purchase two high tunnels so he can grow and sell peaches year round. A couple other permanent opportunities have surfaced in local "estate transfer," where neighboring retiring farmers are looking to entrust Brad with continuing their farming businesses under his own Farmer Sarg's Sweet Fruits & Veggies.

Since having worked with IowaWORKS staff, Brad has made measurable progress and has kept each service provider up-to-date on his career journey. He continues active work with Veterans in Agriculture and Beginning Farmer Center through ISU Ext. & Outreach. A true example of how our partnerships expand careers in Iowa!

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