

REGION 13 PY18 ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Summary

Program Year (PY18) for Region 13 was focused on continuing to assist job seekers with multiple barriers to obtain greater skills. As the unemployment rate continues to remain low, this year the region focused on creative solutions to close the barrier gaps for these job seekers. The region worked with many agencies and local partnerships to create new opportunities for these job seekers.

Regional Snapshot

Region 13 includes the counties of Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Page, Pottawattamie and Shelby. The American Job Center (AJC) located in this region includes Title I Career Planners (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth), Adult Basic Education staff teaching HiSET courses, Wegner Peyser Career Planners and PROMISE JOBS staff to coordinate the various job seeking needs within the region.

Regional Initiatives and Partnerships

Future Ready Iowa (FRI) has many tools that can be useful for both students and teachers on the website. Throughout the past year, this region has spent a great deal of time showcasing the FRI site to schools throughout the area. School partnerships are an integral part of what we do.

For the 3rd year, this office assisted with the 8th Grade Career Forum in partnership with Iowa Western Community College, Council Bluffs Community Schools, Lewis Central Community Schools, and the Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce. The event was held in October of 2018 with a focus on bringing in various trade employers. Positions were chosen not by required college degree, but instead those requiring training through a certificate or registered apprenticeship program, allowing job seekers to earn money while they learn the job. The forum also focused on inviting parents to see that not all jobs that pay well, require a college degree. Parents were given the information needed to help their children choose the high school courses that best help them on a path to their desired career. The event had over 100 parents and students participate in sessions with approximately 15 employers in different career fields.

In March 2019, Harrison, Pottawattamie, Mills, and Fremont counties were hit hard with flooding. This resulted in many farms and businesses having to stop their operations, employees unable to access roads to get to work, and people displaced from their homes. Our office responded by setting up mobile offices in Missouri Valley, Glenwood, and Hamburg. Title I and Wagner-Peyser staff were on hand for a few weeks assisting employees and farmers with

Unemployment applications and once approved, Disaster Unemployment applications. We also partnered with organizations like the Salvation Army to offer other flood recovery services at our mobile sites. Once FEMA was able to establish disaster recovery centers in and near these same towns and counties, we then moved our operations to their centers so that those affected only needed to go to one place for their immediate needs related to flooding. We continued to provide supportive services and staff until the disaster recovery centers were closed.

In May 2019, Iowa Workforce Development was awarded funds for the Iowa Disaster Recovery Employment Program (DREP) and announced applications for funding for regions needing assistance with flood recovery were available. Within the following month, Title I staff worked with County Supervisors, Emergency Management offices and private contractors to identify needs for recovery and cleanup efforts as outlined in the grant. These coordinated efforts resulted in an application of \$1.7 million to employ Dislocated Workers throughout the region at worksites in Fremont, Harrison, Mills and Pottawattamie counties for cleanup and rebuild efforts to be commenced over the following 2 years.

Employer Services and Business Engagement

Business outreach is conducted on a daily, ongoing basis. The Business Services staff listen to what businesses need and try to provide tools and resources to address the need of the business. Tools range from Work Opportunity Tax Credits, job fairs, and other hiring events to starting registered apprenticeship programs. Below is a snapshot of the events held throughout the year:

The region held 4 career fairs in Atlantic, Council Bluffs, Clarinda, and Shenandoah, which resulted in 88 businesses attend. This provided the businesses with the opportunity to speak with and interview hundreds of area job seekers. Each career fair had an emphasis on hiring various demographics, including disabled job seekers, veteran job seekers and ex-offenders or individuals who were incarcerated.

There were 13 Employer Council of Iowa training seminars held that provided training for 179 business professionals. Trainings included: Drug Testing in the Workplace, OSHA 10 Hour Training Industrial & Construction, Workers Compensation, Unemployment 101 & Appeals, and Tips for Company Recruiters.

Business Services staff coordinated to hold 54 employer specific hiring events at the Council Bluffs American Job Center (AJC), and helped hundreds of job seekers connect with businesses for on-the-spot interviews.

Promising Practices and Success Stories

1. Rapid Response

In October 2018, this region received word that the KMart in Council Bluffs would close at the end of December, affecting 47 employees. Title I and Wagner-Peyser staff set up meetings with those affected on December 5th. Meetings began at 8am and were held intermittently until 6pm, providing these employees with information for unemployment, job seeking services, and potential training opportunities. Rapid Response meetings were also held for affected employees of Owner Revolution, Inc. at Plastic Professionals in Atlantic and Schafer Systems, Inc. in Adair.

In the beginning of April 2019, we received notification that all of the Shopko retail stores within the region would be closing. Within 2 weeks, Wegner-Peyser and Title I staff worked together to coordinate with local Shopko management and partner agencies to schedule Rapid Response events for all locations. Rapid Response events were held in Clarinda, Glenwood, Harlan & Missouri Valley to share information regarding assistance with job searching, unemployment claims, and access to resources within these communities. Through these meetings, it was determined that many employees were part-time and had found other positions. There were 3 attendees of these meetings that were interested in assistance with employment and education. Business Services and Title I staff worked collaboratively to help connect each of these identified individuals with their career goals and transitioning from their positions within the company.

Success Story: Trevor was laid off from his job 2 years ago and had in depth discussion with a Title I Career Planner about education and career goals. He was a part of a WARN notice and participated in both a Rapid Response Meeting and State Trade Meeting, where he learned about educational resources available to him. He worked with his Career Planner and completed an intensive Trade training application. His application was approved, and he attended Iowa Western Community College where he obtained an Associates of Science in Application & Web Programming in May 2018. After completing his education, Trevor worked with his Career Planner and Business Services on his resume, interviewing skills, and applying for jobs within his field and community. Trevor applied for a job as an IT Assistant with the Shenandoah Community School District, but he did not have all of the skills they were looking for. His Career Planner reached out to the school and offered an On the Job Training (OJT) to help offset the expenses of training Trevor in the skills he did not yet possess. The school agreed, and he was hired in July 2018 with the school district to begin his OJT. Trevor successfully completed his OJT in November 2018 and continues to be employed at Shenandoah Community School District.

2. Registered Apprenticeship

Region 13's Business Team has submitted 5 referrals to the Office of Apprenticeship to create 5 registered apprenticeship programs, and placed 4 apprentices into apprenticeship programs. Programs included apprenticeships for welding, HVAC, and electrical. Our Business Services team has helped create more programs than any other region in Iowa this year. The region's Business Marketing Specialist (BMS) spent a great deal of time learning about how to start these programs and make it easy for businesses to take advantage of them. When speaking with a business, the BMS first listens to see if a registered apprenticeship is appropriate, and if so, coordinates with them in a way that makes it easy for the business to begin a program.

Connecting schools with businesses to create talent pipelines to in-demand job occupations is a big part of the Future Ready Iowa initiative. This region has helped create 6 quality pre-apprenticeship programs between area school districts and businesses that are registered apprenticeship sponsors. High school students are getting hands on training from industry experts right in the classroom. They then can take this training and roll it into time completed toward an actual registered apprenticeship. This saves businesses time and money on training, as well as gives students (now apprentices) a head start on their program requirements.

3. Offender Re-Entry

Region 13 works with the Clarinda Correctional Facility by providing soft skills workshops to inmates. Some of the presentations consist of information on how to use Future Ready Iowa and IowaWORKS.gov. There are also tips for creating a good resume and preparing for a job interview.

In June 2019, we held our first ever job fair at the Clarinda Correctional Facility. This was a result from another employer event held the previous year that focused on educating employers about the benefits of hiring ex-offenders. 13 employers attended this job fair and IowaWORKS coordinated with the facilities staff to make this job fair a success. Tables were set up in the gym for employers to showcase their businesses and meet with the inmates. 4 groups of 40-50 inmates came through the fair. Staff received 26 resumes from inmates to refer on to businesses. The businesses that attended were grateful for the opportunity.

Success Story: After attending a POETS workshop at the facility 6 months ago, Theodore was inspired and motivated. When Theodore was released, he came into the AJC to work with our team. After some assistance, he was hired at Tyson for general production. Several months later, Theodore came in to get help with his resume to apply for a forklift position with the same employer. Theodore got the position and came back to the office one last time to thank staff for all the support, and yet again get

assistance to apply for another position, Food Safety Quality Assurance Trainer, within the company. Theodore received his 3rd promotion at Tyson and now earns over \$18.00 an hour.

4. Serving Customers with Disabilities

The 3rd Annual Reverse Job Fair was held in Council Bluffs on May 2, 2019. Each year this event focuses on connecting youth with disabilities (ages 16-24) with employment, as well as providing education to employers on employing individuals with disabilities. This year, partner agencies who participated on the planning committee included: Council Bluffs Community School District (HR Department and TAP program), Goodwill, Iowa School for the Deaf, League of Human Dignity, IowaWORKS (Business Services and Title I), and Vocational Rehabilitation. The Reverse Job Fair planning committee is unique, as all partners work collaboratively to plan details of the event, identify and prepare youth job seekers, and reach out to employers in the community to attend. This year's Reverse Job Fair began with a panel, which included an employer, job coach, youth, and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. It resulted in 50 job seekers and 40 employers in attendance, which was an increase in both job seekers and employers from the previous year.

5. Veteran Services

In November 2018, this office partnered with the Pottawattamie County Veterans Affairs and VA Hospital to organize the Veterans Life Changing Conference, with 20 veterans registered. The conference gave information regarding different job opportunities, veterans' benefits, and a discussion concerning healthcare.

Wegner Peyser staff spoke about the different types of programs that are offered to veterans at the AJC, including one-on-one help for veterans with any significant barrier to employment including service connected disabilities. They also focused on the Home Base Iowa (HBI) program, which connects veterans and transitioning service members with HBI partners and resources. This program also helps connect Iowa businesses with qualified veterans looking for career opportunities. Staff received positive feedback from veterans who intended to take advantage of the information that was given by the presenters.

Region 13 continues to promote the food pantry at the Pottawattamie County Veterans Affairs office. In its inaugural year, our office has partnered with local cosmetology school and beauty shops in our community to give out over 50 free haircuts to veterans throughout the year..

Success Story: Penny Barnett, a proud Veteran and LPN, found herself filing for unemployment when her company closed its doors. She interviewed at a few companies, however, was frustrated when she was not offered any positions. Although Penny had years of experience in the nursing field, she needed to learn how to talk

about them in a compelling way. On the day of a scheduled interview, Wegner Peyser Career Planner conducted a mock interview with Penny and coached her on how to make her interview process more positive and productive. In April 2019, Penny came into the office to thank our team and inform us that she got three job offers and accepted an offer from Midlands Living Center in Council Bluffs starting at \$24 per hour.

6. Priority of Services

In Region 13, priority of all services within the AJC are to Veterans. This also includes first priority of services to Veterans and eligible spouses for job training programs. All eligible Veterans are referred to the region's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist to receive case management services for job seeking assistance and referrals to community resources, as appropriate. We also created a Veteran resource area which are job seeking computers reserved specifically for Veterans and includes Veteran specific resource information.

The region also put in place a policy related to priority of service for training funds associated with the Title I Adult program. This priority of service is defined as: (1) Veterans and eligible spouses, (2) recipients of public assistance, (3) low-income individuals, (4) individuals who are basic-skills deficient and (5) individuals with barriers to employment. A system was then put in place to track priority of service for training funds associated with the Adult program to ensure compliance with this policy.

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