

# REGION 2 PY18 ANNUAL REPORT

## Executive Summary

Program year 2018 has been a year of collaboration and integration. We continued to maximize the momentum from the last program year that saw new levels of collaboration between Titles I, II, III and IV as we partnered on job development, recruitment activities and job seeker services. We continue to build and revise processes to ensure seamless and excellent service for the customers.

Our co-enrollments have continued to result in success for those that we serve. The stories below will demonstrate this collaborative success. With the activities we have done together we have had more of a collective impact on the region, the communities we serve, and the customers. Our partnerships with other providers, employers and each other will be beneficial as we continue to meet the needs of our region.

## Regional Snapshot

The American Job Center (AJC) located in Region 2 has Title I, Title III and Title IV co-located on a full-time basis. Title II is not currently co-located, however has some office hours and a presence at the AJC. Co-enrollments are a demonstration of the collaborative efforts that are made. Leadership maximizes the collaboration by ensuring all titles are represented in the activities, projects and events carried out in the region.

## Regional Initiatives and Partnerships

Partnerships throughout the region have continued to be innovative and responsive to the needs of the area. As the focus for employers has been recruitment and retention the partnerships have also focused on these elements. The project from the previous year that Title I, Title III and Title IV worked collaboratively to develop for the Advanced Manufacturing Sector Board has continued with a couple of businesses utilizing this method to acquire information from their employees.

Partnerships with businesses and other providers are frequently explored. The American Job Center partners have been instrumental in facilitating partnerships between the schools and local business. Assisting in these partnerships have provided opportunities for discussion on how to utilize the partnerships to continue to improve the job ready pipeline for employers.

## Employer Services and Business Engagement

For the past year, our Business Marketing Specialist and Business Engagement team have made 325 contacts with new businesses as defined by no services provided in the past year. We've also made an additional 652 follow up contacts. We hosted 58 hiring events during that

time frame and promoted our services at 56 separate outside events. Meetings with businesses will cover all services from all partners based on needs expressed by the employer. Services include WOTC, Registered Apprenticeship, Job postings, Home Base Iowa, Work based learning opportunities, Job Shadow, Internships, OJT, Accessibility services, and many more.

Region 2 has established and grown the Employer's Council of Iowa (ECI) in our local area. This past year has seen ECI start from scratch to now having over 70 employers that participate in monthly training opportunities driven by an employer chair and co-chair.

The Mason City AJC also employs the use of integrated Business Engagement teams. All core partners have designated staff that cover each county in our region. Those team members attend regular meetings to bring job seekers to the team for placement opportunities and also share knowledge of happenings in the county. These meetings allow for all partners to discuss the best possible integrated plan moving forward for that job seeker and helps us as a team leverage the relationships already built. These teams can also share business needs to help guide future job seekers that may be interested in those opportunities.

One example of a satisfied business that happened to stop in the Mason City AJC: An employer, KO Enterprises who a team member had known and worked with in the past, brought in WOTC forms for a new hire we had been working with, Ted. He wanted to know if it was something that would be worth his while. Ted was a resident of BeJe Clark, the local half-way house for transitioning residents. Our team member explained that WOTC would give him a tax credit. She then attached the scanned copies of the completed form and sent them to the email address listed on our WOTC info cards. The WOTC contact, Barbara Murray responded almost immediately, advising that they were entered and certified and they would mail the certification to the employer in a couple of weeks. The employer was very happy with the process.

## Promising Practices and Success Stories

### 1. Rapid Response

Over the program year we have had several closures and/or downsizing events in our area. Some of these events were small businesses in the area, such as two local Pizza Ranch locations,, a paramedic provider and a local grocery store located in two towns. Others were national companies, such as Younkers, Shopko, Trinity Financial Services (MercyOne's billing) and United Healthcare.

When these events occur Title I and Title III and the employer, when possible, work together to plan a Worker Information Meeting and follow up services that meet the employers needs. For some, such as United Healthcare, this is a mailing to all impacted individuals in our area. For others, such as Younkers, we held meetings at the local American Job Center, as well as their place of employment. For employers such as Trinity Financial Services who provided a years notice for the impacted individuals we have provided workshops and informational sessions throughout the year.

Community partners are informed and choose to either provide representation of their services at the Worker Information Meetings or some have chosen to provide the information through other means, such as brochures. All information regarding partners is available at the meetings for the impacted employees.

## **2. Registered Apprenticeship**

Region 2 holds monthly Registered Apprenticeship workshops for job seekers interested in learning more about Registered Apprenticeships. These sessions provide insight into the 5 core components, assist with exploring local options, identifying areas of interest and laying out next steps for job seekers to take to connect with RA openings. For those interested in pursuing a RA position after the workshop, the AJC will prepare them with workshops, and refer them for Case Management.

The Mason City AJC has had one new program started and one expansion with one hired Apprentice. We also had an additional RA program started, but cancelled due to lack of action by the employer. There are three program/expansion referrals currently waiting for DOL approval (sent 8/23, 9/19, & 10/22).

We held a Registered Apprenticeship Week event at SeaBee (Hampton Hydraulics) to help recognize and promote their recently approved program for Industrial Maintenance Repair. They opened their doors to over 20 students from Hampton Dumont High School.

## **3. Offender Re-Entry**

Most of our offender population are directed to the Mason AJC from Beje Clark Residential Center, which is within walking distance. We work in partnership with staff there to hold workshops when requested, including an intensive HSED course. Residents are required to find work and are allowed time to visit the AJC. We work to connect those that are willing to any WIOA partners they are eligible for. Staff from Beje Clark also present to AJC staff each year to update us on their rules, regulations and hold open conversation to best serve this population. One example, a customer who is a United States Army Veteran. He had the opportunity to take up residence following a two year incarceration for sexual assault. Veteran had previously worked as a forklift operator for several years before going to prison. He had a GED, but no post-secondary education. He was eligible to work with our Veteran Career Planner (DVOP), who quickly made referrals to partners and understanding the urgency that this population must find work, began assisting him in building a resume highlighting his prior work experience. Our Veteran Career Planner worked with our business engagement team to identify employers that would be open to hiring him given his background, and allow him to build up his work history. He quickly received an interview request from a local restaurant and was hired.

Another customer is a US Army Veteran that came to us from the Beje Clark Facility. He was eligible to work with our Veteran Career Planner, who enrolled him in several classes including Essential Tools for Job Seekers, Create a Great Resume and Second Chances, a class specifically geared toward offenders. He worked diligently given the information he learned with his Career Planner. The Veteran Career Planner then worked with the Business engagement team to identify potential employers. Shortly after, he was called in for an interview that we prepared him for and he was subsequently offered a position at a local Manufacturer starting at \$18 per hour.

Another example is a customer who happened to walk into the Mason City AJC to job search. Through conversation with a Career Planner, she was referred to and attended Second Chances. She successfully completed the class and used that knowledge to start building a favorable job history through a staffing agency. After a time of consistent employment, she then applied at Goodwill and was hired on full time. She wrote a touching note to the AJC staff that worked with her, stating she was very appreciative for the support she received at IowaWORKS and believes that the information she learned in the workshop is what taught her how to find a job.

#### **4. Serving Customers with Disabilities**

The Mason City AJC is Co-located with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), 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 will be referred to IVRS if appropriate.

One great collaborative example is a Ticket holder highlighted in SSA's Ticket to Work page this past year. She experienced an aggressive form of cancer that led to having her leg amputated before high school. Because of her disability, she received SSI, which in turn made her eligible for the Ticket to Work program. She reached out to IVRS who then reached out to our Ticket to Work Career Planner to receive employment-related support and help her learn how two specific work incentives could help her reach her goals. That partnership helped her reach two milestones that were important to her. She was able to receive Orthotist and Prosthetist certification from St. Petersburg College and recently moved back to Iowa to be near family, now working at the Hanger Clinic helping people with limb loss see their potential ever since. She states that "At 15, I worried that life as I had known it was over...Ticket to Work helped me get here. It's an amazing program where I found people who said, 'You can do this. We will find a way together...'and we did!"

One collaborative event led by our IVRS partners is FutureFest. FutureFest brought in 20 area high schools students to participate in a variety of hands on activities. On day one, students participated in sessions with the Iowa Motor Trucking Association, tour the new STEM Center at NIACC, the Diesel Mechanics Program, Building Trades, as well as

the Virtual Reality simulator through the ISU Extension. Lunch hour included an etiquette activity focused on appropriate manners, during a pasta & salad lunch. Day two featured the Game of Life activity to illustrate the budgeting required for daily life. Business rounds were completed in the afternoon that featured careers in a dozen local businesses crossing several sectors.

## 5. Veteran Services

During this past Program Year, the Mason City AJC exited 51 Veterans into successful employment or improved wages, and an additional 11 achieved another successful outcome. Many of these Veterans were co-enrolled in WIOA programs and connected to community support resources. According to an IVRS report that shows Veteran Closures for 2018, the Mason City office had 26 Veteran referrals to Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services that were entered into their case management, the highest number in the state. Nine of those were either Significantly Disabled (8) or Most Significantly Disabled (1), also the highest in the state. Co-enrollments and collaboration greatly increases the effectiveness of our employment plans and sustainable wages for our Veterans. This is demonstrated by our average hourly wage for co-enrolled Veterans of \$18.43, \$0.50 higher than the next closest region (Cedar Rapids).

Also in order to connect Veterans to employment opportunities, all new Case Managed Veterans ready for work are immediately registered on Home Base Iowa during intake to achieve maximum exposure to Veteran friendly businesses.

Here are a couple of examples of co-enrolled Veteran successes:

One United States Marine Corps Veteran was found to be eligible for services from both our Veteran Career Planner and Title I. He was quickly enrolled in both programs, attended workshops, received job readiness services as well as job referrals and assistance with applications. Through that preparation, he received an offer from a business in Charles City to manage two local dry cleaning facilities. He was thrilled about the opportunity and the wage.

Another United States Marine Corps Veteran who last worked as an industrial maintenance technician in Ames. He told our Veteran Career Planner (DVOP) that he was burned out on maintenance and wanted to look for an occupation with a change of pace. He was interested in retraining as a truck driver, so he was referred to Title I. Through that partnership, he obtained a Class A CDL. He also attended our Home Base Iowa workshop, registered and uploaded his resume that DVOP assisted him with. Shortly after, Anthony Bill Trucking, a Home Base Iowa partner from New Hampton reached out to him and offered him a position as an over-the-road driver. He now earns over \$30 per hour as a full time driver.

## 6. Priority of Services

Priority of Service postings are visible throughout the lobby. When customers enter the building, they are greeted with the standard greeting of 'Good morning, have you or your spouse served in the US Military?' If yes, we shake their hand, thank them for their service and provide them with a Veteran specific folder identified with an American flag. Once registration is complete, if they are identified with a SBE, we offer them a meeting with our Veteran Career planner if available, or will schedule a meeting. 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 a caregiver or family caregiver of an eligible Veteran as defined in VPL 08-14.

To ensure we capture all eligible/covered Veterans, AJC team members pull a report for all persons registered in IowaWORKS which allows us to identify Veterans that may have registered outside of the center. We will then contact them and invite them in for any necessary services.

The Priority of Service Policy is also attached to the Region 2 Local Service Plan: Proposed rule 680.650, re-affirms that Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority of service for all DOL funded programs amongst all participants. A Veteran must still meet program eligibility criteria. Program eligibility and priority considerations must be made first and then the Veteran's priority is applied.

The Mason City AJC also has a designated pod (set of four computers) that indicate in the event that our exploratory area is full, they are designated for Veterans. These stations also have additional posting & resources specifically for Veterans.

Veterans are also identified during our annual North Iowa Job and Career Fair with a star on their nametag, so employers can also easily apply Priority of Service and thank them for their service.

## Completed By

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