Region 1

Annual Report

of

The Workforce Investment Act

For

Program Year 2011
Program Year 2011 was a year of tremendous change in Region 1. While the year included many challenges in terms of the economy and employment opportunities it also included some very exciting developments in the areas of workforce system development, grant opportunities and “green” initiatives. The local Workforce Investment Act service providers, along with our partners in the workforce system, experienced many successes in helping our job seekers to prepare for and obtain employment. Federal funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Emergency Public Jobs (EPJ) program, and National Emergency Grants have continued to play a critical role in helping to meet local employment and training needs.

Specific examples of the programs and initiatives designed to help meet these challenges in Region 1, as well as the effects these efforts, are highlighted in the following report.

A. Waivers

- Waiver of 20 CFR 667.140(a) transfer of Adult and Dislocated Worker Funds with the transfer authority limited to 50%. We have not utilized the transfer waiver due to a need for the full amount of funds in both the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. However, we appreciate having this waiver as an option in case it is needed at some point in the future.

- Waiver of provision at 20 CFR 663.530 that prescribes a time limit on the period of initial eligibility for training providers. This waiver has allowed Region 1 to continue to use programs of proven effectiveness in training participants for careers in high demand, high wage occupations, without putting undue burdens on the training institutions to verify effectiveness on an annual basis.

Region 1 funded 250 participants in 96 different short term certificate and long term training programs at 19 different training institutions throughout Northeast Iowa and surrounding Wisconsin and Minnesota schools in PY 11. The Career Pathways chosen by participants aligned with areas of demand occupations in Region 1.
B. Use of Discretionary Funds

Region 1 had five active National Emergency Grants (NEG) and one active Green Grant that served four hundred ninety three participants in the past year. Below is a listing of these individual grants along with the number of participants receiving services through each grant:

- Atwood Mobile (ARRA) NEG - 112
- Featherlite/Eagle Window (ARRA) NEG - 107
- Rockwell/DECO (TAA) NEG - 76
- OJT – Statewide NEG - 4
- Thermo Fisher (TAA) NEG - 182
- Green Grant - 12

These state funds were critically important in assuring that the workers affected by the above layoffs received the services they needed and that they received them in a timely manner. Participants received assistance with retraining through going back to school for GED, short term and long term classroom training and on-the-job training with employers. They received support services in any one of the following areas: transportation, child care, interview clothing, counseling, health, and miscellaneous.

Three of the NEG’s were dual enrolled TAA projects where WIA staff provided a full array of WIA activities through wrap around case management to a large number of enrollments.

C. Veteran Services

Twenty-three veterans were enrolled in short term certificate and long term training in WIA for PY11 in Region 1. As veterans seek assistance in membership, they are flagged as a veteran, thanked for their service and given a preferred status for enrollment.

Veterans were enrolled as a priority in Region 1. A wide variety of training interests were demonstrated using both short term certificate and long term training options. Some programs that veterans are enrolled in are: Associate Degree in Nursing, Welding, Computer Analyst, Mechanical Engineering, Business Specialist, Computer Support Technician, Advanced Manufacturing
CNC, Gas Utility Construction, Commercial Industrial Electrician, RESNET/Green, Automotive Technology, and Human Services.

➢ The Decorah office served a veteran, Gerald, who was discharged in March. Gerald attended the 6 Steps Workshops and received assistance through the skill development portion of integration with multiple job searches. Gerald applied on-line and uploaded his resume for a position available with Dish Network. Within 5 minutes he received a phone call from the recruiter and was asked to do an on-line assessment. He was called again later that night and interviewed over the phone for 1 ½ hours. This was followed by an in-person interview where he was asked only 2 questions and was offered the position. He started at $13.50 an hour with full benefits on July 17th. He feels this is a very good fit for him and feels lucky to have landed this job. He is looking forward to a good future with them with advancement possibilities.

D. Employer Services - Workforce Solutions

The Greater Dubuque Development Corporation last year conducted employer interviews and roundtable meetings that revealed a large number of local manufacturing businesses were facing recruitment challenges when looking for qualified employees to fill their open positions. To address this issue, local businesses and organizations created a partnership called Opportunity Dubuque which included East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA), Dubuque Community Schools, Dubuque Works, IowaWORKS, Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC), Project Hope, as well as, several area manufacturing employers including AY McDonald, Bodine Electric Company, Decker Precision Machining, Dubuque Stamping & Manufacturing, EIMCo, Giese Manufacturing, Mi-T-M, Premier Tooling & Manufacturing, and Uelner Precision Tools & Dies.

This collaborative effort developed the Advanced Manufacturing Pilot Project for entry level positions as Computer Numerical Control (CNC) operators. Sixty individuals attended a three hour orientation at NICC in Peosta on January 13th where they participated in presentations by employers and NICC staff along with employer tours of EIMCo and Bodine. Those who were interested in pursuing careers in manufacturing were asked to submit an application and complete a two hour assessment on January 17th or 18th at the IowaWORKS office in Dubuque to determine their reading level, math level, and aptitude. Partnership members then conducted interviews with prospective students between January 23rd and 27th.
Using the test scores, interview results, and other information, a committee selected the twenty best candidates to receive scholarships for participation in the Advanced Manufacturing Pilot Program which started on February 2\textsuperscript{nd}. Seven participants received funding from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Adult Program, two from the WIA Dislocated Worker Program, two from the WIA Youth Program, and nine were funded through other resources.

The curriculum developed by NICC included the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) and consisted of three components: Introduction to Advanced Manufacturing, Basic CNC, and Intermediate CNC. Nineteen of the twenty students graduated on May 22\textsuperscript{nd} with a CNC Certificate. Of the nineteen graduates, ten are already employed, five are looking for work, and four are continuing their education at NICC.

Chad and Clint, two of the unemployed individuals who were selected to participate, had worked in a distribution center that closed shortly before the project started. Both of them successfully completed the program, attained their certification, and entered full-time employment with AY McDonald in Dubuque. Follow-up documentation confirmed that they were very appreciative of the opportunity to gain new skills in a demand field leading to re-employment with a local employer.

Due to the success of the Pilot Project, Opportunity Dubuque recently conducted their second process of selecting students for an Advanced Manufacturing career field and have scheduled a third orientation for later this fall.

In addition, similar collaborative projects have occurred in Manchester and Cresco in the welding career field by ECIA, NICC, and Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission. In Cresco, employers involved were Alum-Line, Featherlite and McNeilus, along with Howard County Economic Development, Howard-Winnesheik Community Schools. Additional opportunities for future projects are currently being discussed within Region 1.

E. Regional Activities:

**Integrated Service Delivery System**
The Dubuque Workforce Center has been in the integration model since August of 2009. In accordance with a state wide initiative to gradually establish an integrated service model in all workforce centers, two years later, the rest of the Region entered into integration in August of 2011. The Decorah Workforce Center moved into a new location in Decorah on August 5\textsuperscript{th}, staff received
Integration training the week of August 15\textsuperscript{th} and began providing services through the integration model on August 25, 2011. This model has resulted in a large increase in the number of WIA participants and, consequently, in the number of job seekers who receive services through the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The closure of the Manchester, New Hampton and Oelwein IWD offices in September increased numbers of job seekers to both the Decorah and Dubuque centers.

In program year 2011, a total of 3,179 Adults and Dislocated Workers were served through the WIA Program in Region 1. In comparison, a total of 2,834 Adults and Dislocated Workers were served through the WIA Program in Region 1 during program year 2010. This represents more than a 10\% increase for the past year.

While there continues to be changes and adjustments to the Integration services offered in both Decorah and Dubuque, it has also been a very exciting process and has yielded many positive results in terms of the quantity and quality of services being provided. Based on customer feedback, continuous improvements will be made in the future.

Members of the center have embraced these changes and have responded enthusiastically. A sampling of the testimonials and comments given by job seekers is provided below.

- Very nice staff, easy to talk to and eager to help
- Fantastic service! Great help!
- Exceptional help, relaxed me and helped me with my self esteem
- I plan on bring my 16 year old son down for help with job searches!
- Always polite, prompt and helpful!
- Everyone was very nice and helpful!
- Very helpful and knowledgeable
- Very pleasant experience!
- Everyone was eager to help and very friendly!
- You are all very helpful and encouraging
- The staff was extremely helpful when I had questions.
- Thank you for all your hard work.
- It helps find what jobs are available
- Had a good day and had lots of wonderful help to accomplish what was done.
Learned about things that I have been having problems with. Helpful information. She was very friendly. Took the time to show every step of what to do.

I was taught a lot of computer skills.

It is a good class to take if you get lost on a computer.

The staff was very informative and helpful. No need to ask questions because they gave me the answers.

The ladies were very helpful in the knowledge on helping one find a job in many different ways. Very friendly and didn’t look down on you because you are unemployed.

I’ve always had excellent help at your facility. Thanks for all you’ve done. Nice new place too, you needed it!

It takes cooperation, patience and working together to accomplish goals. I find this at this Iowa Workforce location.

**Energy Training Partnership Grant**

The Energy Training Partnership Grant including Iowa Region 1, southeast Minnesota, and southwest Wisconsin ended midway through the year. This grant trained over 300 participants in a variety of “green” occupations. Trainees had the opportunity to earn a Diploma or A.A.S. degree as a Wind Turbine Repair Technician, a RESNET certification through successful completion of the National Rater Exam and completion of probationary ratings with a RESNET Rating Provider, and Green Residential Builder and Green Commercial Builder certificates through the Iowa Center on Sustainable Communities based on Iowa energy code and the International Energy Code. The majority of the participants were incumbent workers looking to expand their skills and increase their employability. However, Region 1 Employment and Training was able to provide support services to 49 of the low-income eligible participants.
Youth Services

Region 1 continued its tradition of providing quality services to youth most in need of and most likely to benefit from these services. These initiatives helped to assure that youth with the greatest barriers to employment were provided with services that would help them to overcome these barriers and secure employment. The WIA Youth Program is making a difference one at a time. Some examples are:

- One youth we are currently assisting is Kristina, a 19 year old parenting youth. Within her three months of enrollment in the WIA program, she has obtained her GED, successfully completed the Nurse Aide class, and found a part time job as a waitress to provide income while she waits to test to become a Certified Nurse Aide. She is planning to enroll at NICC in the fall for the nursing program.

- Another WIA youth, Jamie, was a very active senior in high school who participated in sports and other extracurricular activities. Since being kicked out of the house by her mother, Jamie had been basically living on her own. She moved in with her boyfriend’s parents, went to high school as a full-time student with good attendance, worked part-time as a waitress and part-time in the local pizza place. She completed the Certified Nurse Aide course and now holds down two jobs, one as a waitress and one as a Certified Nurse Aide. Jamie successfully graduated from high school in May. She is now working part-time at the nursing home as a Certified Nurse Aide to improve her nursing skills in a practical setting and is attending NICC in the nursing program with the assistance of WIA.

- Mercedes, a WIA Youth enrollment, graduated from high school, completed nurse aide training, attained her Iowa Certified Nurse Aide License, and began employment as a Certified Nurse Aide at Stonehill Care Center. In addition, she began attending classes at NICC with a goal of becoming a registered nurse.

- Jessica, a WIA Youth enrollment, graduated from the University of Dubuque with her Bachelor Science Nursing (BSN), attained her Iowa Registered Nurse (RN) License, and accepted a surgical nurse position at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics.
Lauren, WIA Youth enrollment, graduated from the University of Iowa with her Bachelor of Arts Degree in International Studies and began employment as a settlement auditor with the John Deere Financial Division.

Success Stories

Margaret was laid off from Northern Engraving in 2008 due to a plant closing. She had been working as a C.N.A. part time at a local nursing home while working at Northern Engraving and decided to recently continue her training in the healthcare field. Through the Northern Engraving National Emergency Grant, Margaret attended NICC for their Associate Degree of Nursing program. She graduated in December of 2011 and soon after, found a full time job working as a Registered Nurse for $20.36 per hour.

Margaret wrote to us saying:

“Without WIA services I would not have even considered going back to school. WIA services gave me peace of mind financially. First WIA gave me a career assessment test to help me find a job that would fit me. Then WIA services were there for me assisting with tuition, fees, books, transportation expenses, overnight stay expenses when I needed to be away for clinical, uniform expenses required for training, and my LPN and RN board testing fees. WIA also assisted me with my resume and filling out job applications. There are no words to express how grateful I am for all the services I was blessed with from WIA. I would not be where I am today without these services. Thank you to all involved in making this all possible.”
Additional Information

- **National Career Readiness Credential** – the NCRC initiative continues to expand in terms of both job seekers obtaining their credential and business that recognize the value of the credential and recommend this process for all of their applicants. Since last December, sixty-three job seekers and fifty-nine students have completed the NCRC testing in Region 1.

- **Basic Computer Workshops** - The Decorah center implemented weekly Basic Computer workshops every Monday afternoon starting in January of 2012. Dubuque offers Basic computers workshops three Tuesdays each month, as well as, Computers All in One Workshop offered monthly. During the past year, one hundred seventy two participants took advantage of these opportunities to upgrade their computer skills and increase their employability in Region1.

- **6 Steps Workshops** were implemented in December in the Dubuque Center and January in the Decorah Center. These workshops include a Successful Career Transition Program Overview as part of Re-Employment Services (RES) followed by the following workshops:
  1) Maintaining a Positive Attitude during a Job Change or Career Transition;
  2) Designing Your Future, Developing an Effective Career Transition Plan
  3) Labor Market Information – Research Industry Trends
  4) Creating a Great Resume to Get the Job You Want
  5) The Top 5 Most Effective Job Search Strategies
  6) Interviewing and Negotiating Tips to Land the Job

The RES classes run two to three times per week and recruits into the monthly 6 Steps Workshops. This has proven to be a successful marketing tool for us, as well as, referrals from Promise Jobs and WIA. Four hundred three participants have attended the Six Steps Workshops since they were implemented in Region 1 last fall.

- There were four National Emergency Grants, totaling $1,785,766 active during PY 11 (Thermo Fisher, Rockwell DECO, Atwood and Featherlite Eagle). Four hundred seventy seven workers have been served to date in these grants. Atwood & Featherlite were ARRA National Emergency Grants.
- Region 1 continues to recognize the importance of establishing partnerships with local faith based and community organizations as an effect method of extending and enhancing workforce services to job seekers. An example of this philosophy is our continued partnership with the Barnabas Uplift Program. Though this partnership several WIA and TANF clients have obtained funding to complete the Certified Nurse Assistant training.

- The Regional Innovation Grant partnership between Region 1 and the WIA services providers in southwest Wisconsin and southeast Minnesota continued this past year and has been successful in completing an analysis of various economic factors of importance in the tri-state region.